Visual Arts

2011 Assessment Report

VISUAL ARTS

2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Assessment reports give an overview of how students performed in the school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Students generally demonstrated strong learning in this assessment type. The focus of the folio is on the development of the idea/concept or solution, and not solely a recount of the construction/creation process of the practical. However, such an approach may form a valid *part* of a folio where the final work undergoes significant changes throughout the final stages of production.

Students and teachers should discuss the relevance of such changes and how the documentation is to be constructed in order to give the best evidence of the performance standards.

This assessment type requires students to develop their own ideas and concepts with reference to the work of practitioners, or visual sources of inspiration. Part of this process requires students to investigate a technique, medium and/or respond to an idea. High quality images play a significant role in the research, exploration, and development of the fundamental knowledge and understanding. Therefore the use of low-resolution, pixelated web images, and direct copying of these should be discouraged. Where appropriate, students should be involved in taking their own photographs. Unfortunately, in some instances, plagiarism as opposed to appropriation appears to have re-emerged as an issue, with evidence of this practice more prevalent in design folios.

Students may submit one piece of art and one of design. These two forms of expression can at times be closely related, however students must be aware of the potential differences in the evidence required to meet the same assessment design criteria. The process of solving a design problem does not necessarily require a linear journey. Research, analysis, and evaluation must be addressed and be specifically related to the brief.

Design briefs do not need to be overly elaborate or specify every outcome in advance. The analysis of the problem and the ensuing research should inform the student in terms of concept development and directions to be taken. This approach helps students meet a number of the specific features, thus leading to an exploration of a range of different ideas, rather than concentrating on alterations to a sole concept.

Where students work in a design-craft or art-craft genre they need to be aware that they must create evidence against the performance standards. They must refer to idea development, problem-solving, and media exploration.

Successful design students understood the importance of the use of colour within the context of design briefs. They limited their folios to thirty pages and gave careful consideration and balance to all of the evidence required in the specific features. It is not necessary to provide numerous pages covering minor colour-sample variations that do not contribute to the search for a final solution.

Presentation considerations

Teachers may consider the following suggestions in relation to presentation of the folios:

- Sequential folios should be numbered and labelled accordingly with the student's name and practical number

- Where students do not use a full A3 sketch-book/folio it is suggested that the blank pages be removed to reduce the weight

- Resource materials, especially photographs need to be relevant and labelled, and with an indication of the support they provided in resolving the work

- Students are encouraged to submit their work in either A3 sketch-books or A3 display portfolios in order to present their work in a cohesive, clearly identified, and secure manner.

- Photographs of the final work play a valuable role in demonstrating the outcome of the journey.

Assessment Type 2: Practical

Teachers who clearly understood the requirements of the assessment type carefully guided their students to ensure that all specific features of these tasks (as nominated in the learning and assessment plan) were addressed and assessed.

Teachers are reminded that the content and evidence within the folio assessment type should not influence their assessment of student work for the practical. In 2011 the resolved practical task was assessed only against 'practical application of technical skills and use of media' (PA4).

Works varied widely as it has in past years. There was substantial evidence of quality teaching and student involvement. Successful students demonstrated skills of a high level using a range of media and processes. Works based on personal experiences and philosophies were stronger than those where the student sought a 'saleable' theme.

The most successful students worked in developing original ideas influenced by their studies of artists, artworks, techniques, or processes. The practicals produced were authentic works revealing true learning and synthesis of exploration, and the practitioner's statement reflected this synthesis of the student's personal learning.

Many successful students allowed the work in Assessment Type 3 (Visual Study) to inform their visual thinking and exploration, leading to the resolution of their practical pieces. This was particularly significant in the work of students who concentrated on a theme or concept across the two practical works.

Students should remember that it is in the folio assessment type where they need to show evidence of working through to the resolved artwork.

Successful students in design showed refined technical skill, sensitivity to the selection and use of media and/or technologies to communicate the design solution. Prototypes, models, and working diagrams need not be 'finished works of art', but they must effectively communicate the essence of a solution to the design brief.

Where successful students presented work in a digital format, (high-end skills and knowledge of file size, resolution, colour management and output), parallel skills were demonstrated in traditional media.

A number of familiar topics (such as Anime, Tattoo, Fashion, and Architectural Design) were presented. These can be a challenge for students. Teachers are encouraged to inform students of the risks, and the specific knowledge and skills necessary to achieve success in these popular areas of study.

Reference to the sources of ideas and the work of practitioners is an integral part of the Visual Arts. The use of the Internet as the sole source of visual research (for practical works and the visual study) is a trend, sometimes leading to shallow and often misguided analysis and understanding. Students need to be encouraged to reflect on, and use, their local environment and resources, and not rely solely on the Internet.

Large works are not necessary to gain high marks and they often restrict a student's ability to allocate their time. Balancing time constraints against requirements is an issue for most. Students can link their two practicals and rationalise the size and scope of each piece of work.

Teachers need to monitor, recommend, or negotiate suitable resource materials for the various artworks that their students undertake.

Practitioner's Statement

The practitioner's statement plays a very important role as it places the work in a context, and also provides evidence of authenticity, rationale, understanding, and learning. Students must be encouraged to spend an appropriate amount of time on this task as an integral part of the assessment type.

The best statements connected with the artist's imagery, technique, philosophy, intent, or influence, and made reference to more than one practitioner's influence on the students' learning journey, and the content/context of the work/s.

These students successfully wrote a strong piece including personal evaluations, reflections, and an indication of their philosophy and thinking. Less successful statements were far too frequently a narrative recount, focusing on how the student worked and what steps they took. Less successful design responses focused on evaluating the products, or on a simple description of the design process, rather than on personal learning.

The use of common scaffolds for an entire class was often evident, and while this approach provides a good starting model, students should be encouraged to be the author of their own personal statements and ensure that each practical work is appropriately and comprehensively discussed in their own words.

Highly successful students used clear and appropriate arts language and terminology, and referred to the role (or influence) that the works of other practitioners played in the resolution of their own works. Throughout their statements their personal philosophy or art aesthetic became obvious because of their decisions, or the explanation given of the subject content.

Sometimes students who carried a consistent concept through both practical works, presented one statement.

Onsite Moderation

Teachers are to ensure that all student works selected for the moderation sample, are clearly labelled, and that the practitioner's statement is presented in an accessible manner, and printed in an easily read font size.

The practical works for each student are to be exhibited together, and identified by student names and registration numbers.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Visual Study

It was pleasing to see how well teachers and students worked together to produce some exciting visual studies in this first year of the new subject. Many teachers have embraced the information provided at the clarifying forums, especially in understanding and interpreting the specific features.

A visual study that had a personal significance or interest for students demonstrated a depth of understanding and personal learning that addressed the performance standards successfully.

Some students who had a specific focus were more likely to succeed than those who undertook tasks that were too broad, for example, Australian Architecture, Surrealism or Graffiti.

Given the time for the visual study (i.e. 30% of the course), the demands of the specific features and limitations of 20 x A3 pages and 2000 words, a visual study with a specific focus is to be encouraged. This will prevent the study being little more than a descriptive project, thereby limiting opportunities to analyse and interpret discoveries.

Not all discoveries can be encapsulated into a final presentation; however the synthesis of these and relevance to the specific features should demonstrate high levels of inquiry, exploration, analysis, and synthesis.

It was clear that students who explored practical applications that had a strong personal connection, and were closely linked to their study, were able to address the performance standards well. In particular, it is noted that students whose practical explorations revealed increasing skills development and application, personal growth and understanding, were able to articulate a strong emerging personal aesthetic.

It was noted that sometimes where visual studies were heavily teacher-directed, the learning demonstrated was superficial, and these students were not provided with enough scope to engage in analysis, quality exploration, and personal input.

Similarly where students undertook two separate topics as a part of their visual study, they generally performed at a less satisfactory level, as this approach did not provide them with opportunities to undertake an in-depth study.

For students to be successful in a class that attempted the same topic they needed to be aware of the requirements to demonstrate their development of a personal aesthetic, learning, growth, individual authentic research, exploration and analysis.

There was a pleasing variety of topics undertaken in this assessment type ranging from those that were predominately practical to those that were a mixture of practical and theoretical information. This diversity of study is to be applauded and encouraged.

It is essential that students negotiate their intentions with their teacher. Topics that inform their practicals are a valuable approach to increasing learning opportunities and improving the quality and resolution of final practical works.

Teachers should ensure that the topic chosen is suitable, that is not too broad or too shallow, but one that provides sufficient scope.

A 'Statement of Intent' placed at the front of the study clearly explains what the student was attempting to undertake. It is the précis of their intended journey, and is not considered as part of the word count. It serves to help keep the student on track, and to inform the marker.

Working in the style of an artist/designer can be a very informative and valuable approach. Students should, however, be discouraged from simply copying works for the entire study. This restricts the student's ability to re-interpret, personally explore and analyse their own learning, and hence generate further personally relevant ideas. The intent is to learn and apply information. An exception would be to conduct a study of, or as, a pastiche artist. In such a case the specific features and criteria would still need to be carefully considered and addressed.

Unfortunately there was significant evidence of plagiarism in some visual studies. Large amounts of photocopied material and/or printed information from the Internet was presented as a part of the visual study. Often the reason for including this material was unclear. Teachers should encourage students to present this type of material as appendices, and only use the relevant abridged text in their presentation, appropriately footnoted.

Including a large amount of artists' biographical information may impact on the effective use of the word limit. This type of information must also be carefully considered in relation to the intent of the student's topic.

There were several instances (frequently in design) where students approached the study as another practical development folio. That is, they provided evidence of idea generation, brainstorming, research, and idea and concept development, leading to a final work. This approach did not allow the students to meet all of the required specific features of the visual study. In these cases students evaluated the final product but did not reflect on or evaluate their own learning, discoveries, and journey.

Practical Application

Students are encouraged to pursue the development of ideas or conceptualisations, understand context, technique, content, or create their own authentic works, inspired or influenced by other artists.

Students are also encouraged to document their creative visual thinking and problem-solving processes.

Analysis and Synthesis

Students present a critical analysis of the works of other artists and/or their own works. In addition they make final conclusions about their study and their personal learning.

Analysis, examination, and response should be based on more than just a visual description, and should include sufficient information on technique, characteristic marks, depth of texture, and even subject content.

Conclusions are a valid method of addressing criteria. They should summarise the students' learning and improved awareness or realisation. Students should use conclusions to reflect on, or inform, readers of their tastes, aesthetic preferences and points of view that make up their personal aesthetic or philosophy.

Students should present their annotations clearly in pen or in a word processing format.

The visual study provides a flexible opportunity for students to practise their observational and analytical skills, and improve their awareness and understanding. As well, students look, question, and understand what they are looking at, not just the subject content. Consideration needs to be given to elements such as:
- how are tones used
- what tonal range is present
- what types of pattern and texture exist
- have highlights been used
- what level of contrast exists
- can the colour scheme be categorised or analysed in terms of its relationship to the intended effect or message.

Inquiry and Exploration

Students present a list of references, including resources, that allows them to develop a deeper insight into the aspect of visual art that they are exploring. Students should be encouraged to make use of available quality texts, visit local galleries, and use other primary resources.

Where students were personally involved in their study through research, interviews, email, books, magazines and other investigative processes, they were able to use the information to successfully develop a personal aesthetic which was evident in their self-analysis and exploration of their topic.

It was heartening to see a rich and diverse approach to this assessment type. Students who were given explicit and ongoing support in their studies, and clear directions in preparing their final presentation, were most successful.

The visual studies that were awarded the highest grade were a testament to the creativity of students, and the quality support of teachers.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Teachers are encouraged to think strategically about the selection of the specific features of the assessment design criteria for the two assessment types. Those teachers who attached fewer features for each task or type made it easier for assessment decisions to be made.

In presenting the visual study, teachers are reminded that for the external assessment type only, the student registration number and school number should be visible on the work.

Students need to acknowledge quotes and references throughout their study, as well as sources of information. Bibliographies are a required component of any written presentation, as are accurate word counts. Students should be encouraged to adhere to the required referencing conventions.

It would also be helpful if a cover page was attached to the front of the visual study, complete with word count.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Teachers are strongly encouraged to download the relevant information in the *Learning Area Manual* from the SACE website. This document gives clear guidelines on key dates and assessment requirements for moderation and external assessment.

The SACE Board will conduct clarifying forums for Visual Arts teachers early 2012.

Support materials will continue to be updated and available on the SACE Board web site during the year.

Chief Assessor
Visual Arts