

Visual arts

Comparative study assessment criteria clarification

This clarification must be read in conjunction with the *Visual arts guide* (2014, updated 2017).

When approaching the task of marking the comparative study, it is important that examiners are accurate in the application of each of the assessment criteria and resist the temptation to assess this component holistically.

Teachers and examiners must note that the visual arts syllabus demonstrates a clear distinction between the course at SL and at HL, with additional assessment requirements at HL that allow for breadth and greater depth in the teaching and learning. In the comparative study the assessment tasks require HL candidates to reflect on how their own work has been influenced by exposure to other artists.

Therefore:

- criteria A, B, C, D, E are the same at HL and SL
- criterion F for the comparative study applies only to HL submissions

The assessment criteria for the comparative study specifically state that candidates who fail to meet the course requirements cannot achieve the top marks. The following must be taken in account when marking:

- candidates who do not examine and compare at least three artworks by at least two different artists from at least two contrasting cultural contexts will not be awarded a mark higher than 2 for criteria B, C, and a mark higher than 3 for criterion D.

Please be also aware of the following:

Level descriptors: where a range of marks is available for a criterion level, the nature and extent of the evidence for each level descriptor will determine the mark to be awarded. A comparative study which has strong evidence for one element of a descriptor, yet where the other elements are poorly represented will not achieve the top mark. The mark chosen within each level will reflect the extent to which the work has met that level descriptor: the lowest mark if it has only just exceeded the previous level, the highest if it is approaching the next.

Methodology: for what concerns critical methodologies, there are no prescribed or preferred approaches. The comparative study is not an academic paper. Comparative studies should be assessed as to the effectiveness with which they meet the criteria, irrespective of the methodologies adopted.

Range of works: there is no maximum number of works studied. While some comparative studies will be sharply focused on the minimum number of works, in other cases candidates will want to discuss a range of works linked to their exhibition development. However, irrelevant works might affect the overall consistency and coherence of the study.

Cultural contrast: teachers and examiners should be satisfied that the approach taken to the study engages with more than one cultural context. This may be achieved within a similar time frame or cultural tradition provided that there is adequate consideration of how each work is seen within the cultural contexts in which it was created.

If the works chosen are from the same cultural origin then they will not be awarded a mark higher than 2 for criteria B and C.

Academic honesty in visual arts: compliance with the academic honesty requirements is still an area of concern in the visual arts course. According to the *Visual arts guide* (2014, updated 2017), teachers must ensure that the candidates acknowledge all sources used and reference them appropriately.

Overall there must be complete clarity in the submission about what constitutes the candidate's work and what inspired the work.

Teachers and candidates must refer to the *Visual arts guide* (2014, updated 2017) and may find useful to consult the publication *Effective citing and referencing* available on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC).

Additional details about complying with academic honesty in the comparative study submission are listed below, but in general teachers must remember that it is their role to ensure that all candidates understand the basic meaning and significance of concepts that relate to academic honesty.

All work submitted to the IB for assessment must be authenticated by a teacher and must not include any known instances of suspected or confirmed academic misconduct.

There is no marking criterion that rewards or penalises candidates for their referencing as this is a matter of academic honesty but failing to appropriately acknowledge sources could potentially lead to an investigation for breach of regulation which could have serious consequences for candidates.

Academic honesty in the comparative study: The *Visual arts guide* (2014, updated 2017) states that "Students must support their interpretation with reference to sound and reliable sources. Candidates are required to submit the list of sources used and in-text referencing is required throughout the comparative study. A recognized system of academic referencing must be used in line with the school's academic honesty policy" and candidates at both HL and SL must present a list of sources used during the study. This implies that:

- when selecting the artworks to analyse and compare in their study students need to make sure there are sound and reliable sources that they can access and to which they can refer
- a list of sources needs to be compiled for the comparative study, but this is not in itself enough to fulfil the academic honesty requirements: every source must be referenced at point of use in the comparative study.
- any work – text or image - and idea of others that has contributed to the completion of the comparative study should be referenced following a recognized referencing system

The *Visual arts guide* (2014, updated 2017) also says that:

- every image used must be appropriately referenced to acknowledge the title, artist, medium and date (where this information is known) and the source, following the protocol of the referencing style chosen by the school
- when HL candidates include any images of their own original work these must also be identified and acknowledged in the same way.

In addition to this it is worth clarifying that:

- where deliberately appropriating another artist's work, HL candidates must fully acknowledge the original work and make explicit reference to the appropriation process.

A judgement will sometimes need to be made by examiners between occasionally confused or incomplete citation (sloppy referencing) on screens and an academic honesty issue. When marking a comparative study that has incomplete referencing or is suspected of academic misconduct examiners do not need to spend time investigating the issue but need to complete the marking of the work at face value and then refer the case to the IB.

Clarifications about the application of the assessment criteria

Please note the more frequent use of the term “analysis” in the amended assessment criteria: this is to make clearer and more explicit what is expected in the comparative study.

It is helpful when assessing comparative studies responses to refer to the definitions of the command terms available in the *Glossary* on the last pages of the *Visual arts guide* (2014, updated 2017):

- Outline: give a brief account or summary
- Describe: give a detailed account
- Analyse: break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure
- Evaluate: make an appraisal weighing up strengths and limitations.

CRITERION A: Identification and analysis of formal qualities

There are many different acceptable approaches to the analysis of formal qualities. There will be various approaches to the relationship between description and analysis. While many comparative studies will demonstrate a clearly structured and sometimes explicit approach to the analysis of formal qualities, in others evidence of analysis of formal qualities may be contained in broader descriptions that also relate to the interpretation of mood or context. Where relevant, the analysis of technique and media is to be rewarded as part of this criterion.

To achieve the 5-6 level note that the work should show “consistent, insightful and informed identification”.

There are significant interconnections between **criteria B and C**. However, the outline below differentiates the criteria:

CRITERION B: Analysis and comprehension of function and purpose

The focus is on the selected artwork, the artist’s intentions in making the artworks, and the context of their original production as well as the cultural context.

CRITERION C: Analysis and evaluation of cultural significance

Cultural significance encompasses the cultural, socio-political and historical significance of the works with respect to the original audience and purpose, as well as to a contemporary audience.

This evidence should be focused on the analysis and evaluation of the selected artworks; not on the lives of the artists. To achieve the 5-6 level this analysis and evaluation should be ‘consistently insightful and informed’.

CRITERION D: making comparisons and connections compare and contrast

It is not a requirement that all three works should be compared which each other. It is sufficient to compare each work with one other.

Note that the 5-6 level requires “critical analysis”.

CRITERION E: presentation and subject-specific language

There are two different elements to balance here in assessment: presentation and subject specific language. There must be evidence of use of subject specific language. This criterion is not an assessment of the student’s use of English, but of their effective communication of ideas. Note the “visually...creative” phrase on the 5-6 descriptor: legibility and clarity alone are not enough to merit the 5-6 level.

CRITERION F: connections to own art-making practice

When applying criterion F to HL submissions, examiners are assessing the candidate's analysis and evaluation in relation to his/her art making practice, not the quality of the art works, which will be assessed if these are submitted as part of the exhibition or the process portfolio.

This assessment criterion concentrates on two elements. First on how the candidate analyse and evaluate the outcomes of the investigation and second to what extent their own art-making and pieces have been influenced by artworks, objects and artifacts examined in the comparative study. Analysis might be evident through drawing and other visual means as well as text, but evaluation will only be evident through text. It is a requirement that examples of the candidate's artwork are shown to document the connections and support the evaluation.

It might be appropriate for a candidate to make connections with their own artworks at an earlier point in the study, but it is on the final 3-5 screens that they should analyse and reflect on these links. Teachers and examiners need to check carefully that the correct number of screens has been included.