2023 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Visual Arts
Level:	Level 2
Achievement standard(s):	91320, 91321, 91322, 91323, 91324

Assessment

Candidates presented a portfolio of individual candidate-led evidence for assessment, consisting of either a two-panel portfolio (folio board) or a moving image submission, representing the requirements of the standard.

General commentary

Most schools followed the guidelines provided when selecting folios for verification, ensuring that each set of submissions represented the school's range of performance for the standard. By sending a spread of grades, schools were able to use the verification process for clarification of the national standard, especially at the higher end of Not Achieved and lower boundary for Achievement, the significant threshold for students being awarded 12 credits.

A common occurrence at verification was the over-valuing by schools of higher achieving folios. In order to achieve with Excellence, candidates needed to clarify and regenerate ideas from subject matter. A requirement of Excellence is that candidates reflect on and identify best options from previous works, using these to advance ideas in distinct, new, or diverse directions.

In all fields, there was sophisticated, finished work without evidence of the means by which those outcomes had been arrived at. Where there was clear evidence of process, rather than exclusively finished works, candidates were more able to show learning, engagement, and understanding that met the requirements of the standard: to generate work within a system, to develop and extend ideas, and to regenerate ideas from previous works. Candidates who achieved with Merit presented evidence of idea generation, development, and extension.

Some schools chose to send an anomalous folio, i.e. one that was atypical within their programme of learning, or chose to submit folios to which they had assigned a very narrow spread of grades. Schools are reminded that the verification process is not a marking process, with the onus being on schools to make judgements about their candidates' work. It is likely that schools are in the better position to make a judgement on achievement for individual candidates, as they know them best as learners.

As a result of verification, some schools received results that changed the rank order of their candidates. This inevitably affects the grades of others around them in the overall rank order. Schools to whom this applied will have received a verification report, and will have needed to reconsider their candidate's work objectively, in the context of the commentary and the evidence descriptor for the standard.

Some submissions did not appear appropriate for the fields for which they had been entered, i.e. candidates did not work within the characteristics and constraints of the specified field. Instances of this included illustrative submissions, or mostly drawings on painting boards. In

these cases, there was either insufficient evidence of wet media and / or, in design, the nature of the subject matter should have been better aligned with an illustration proposal. In print, a number of candidates used digital media / manipulation that did not reflect art-making characteristics in that field. Teachers are advised to consider where the body of work sits within established practices, and should direct students towards applying the codes and conventions of that particular field in order to scaffold understanding.

Appropriate layout of works on the folio panels that clearly allowed for works to be read as groups, series or sequences supported the presentation of a systematic development of ideas. There were instances of montaged assemblages of paintings, which could be read as a whole work and limited evidence for sequential development.

Labelling of folios was generally consistent with the submission instructions. Schools are advised not to stick labels on top of candidates' work as, in some cases, it prohibited the reading of a complete body of work. A folding tab is acceptable. Schools should also consider the size of the number label and make sure the school number is included.

In terms of trends in 2023, subject matter, themes, and ideas on folios again reflected a broad variety of art-making practices and interests. Documenting place and space showed that candidates were able to connect with their world through, for example, marae, farms, urban environments, school, and the home. Candidates were able to reference their own culture in interesting ways, through fantasy, performance, and objects, as well as people, including peers, family, and whānau. A variety of relevant, established practices, and contemporary practices, appropriate to the chosen genre, subject matter, and / or context, were employed by teachers and school programmes to support candidates' own personalised proposals, and the exploration and realisation of their interests in art form.

Successful programmes allowed candidates to make decisions that were authentically their own, as a means to show understanding of art-making practice. Such submissions showed evidence of original thought and a beginning in something real: a place, a person / people, an object, or experience.

Successful candidates were able to show implicit use of artist models rather than explicit or derivative work. Teachers need to help students identify and use conventions seen in established practice. In doing so, students are more able to make informed decisions in order to develop ideas.

Where there was a reliance on narrative, it was seen as limiting achievement as it did not allow for the development of ideas. Story-telling overtook the need for students to explore alternative ways to present ideas and consideration of art-making options.

Candidates who acknowledged the use of sourced imagery that was not their own, but which had become part of their work, enabled the verifiers to see the thinking processes clearly.

Schools are required to attest that each portfolio submitted for verification is the candidate's own work. This is becoming an increasing issue of concern, particularly in the instances of submissions in design that utilise stock imagery without acknowledging its origin. In painting, some candidates had used image-generation software to produce what appeared to be highly derivative imagery. Typically, these folios consisted exclusively of highly finished works with little evidence of the processes (e.g. drawing in and investigation) candidates may have engaged in to generate their imagery.

As boundaries between candidates' original ideas and existing imagery are increasingly becoming blurred (sometimes through the use of AI), Visual Arts teachers are reminded of the processes and, by implication, the value that art-making inherently offers students: problem solving, thinking creatively, making, crafting, producing, documenting, and critiquing. This

complex skill set enables learners to engage with their surroundings in ways that challenge them and enable growth.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91320: Produce a systematic body of work that shows understanding of art making conventions and ideas within design

Commentary

Candidates typically adhere to recognisable design processes and procedures. Design boards commonly commence with a design brief accompanied by images. The generation and use of imagery by students often results in a more cohesive outcome, indicative of a higher level of understanding of the design process. The inclusion of original photographs and identifiable artist models contributes to a sense of ownership in the work, showcasing candidates' confidence in their design approach and informing outcomes. Reference material, original photographs, and identifiable artist models and approaches offer candidates opportunities for exploration and, consequently, enriched design projects. Similarly, those candidates who were able to develop coherence between approaches to treatment of text and image, informed by their thematic concern, showed a good understanding of design practice.

Candidates who integrate photographic conventions and engage in organised product or situation photography establish a strong sense of direction, fostering a unified and coherent outcome in their design projects. Conversely, where candidates overlooked the application of photographic conventions or neglected certain aspects, their work was compromised, impacting the overall quality of the design projects. On occasion, printing resolution issues posed challenges to viewing the work, restricting candidates' capacity to demonstrate their competency.

Programmes that exclusively showcase final works hinder the exploration of options. Candidates may find it challenging to exhibit the generation and development of ideas or an extension of their thinking. The adoption of whole-class design programmes may curtail candidates' freedom to venture into diverse and unique directions. Although the general structure of a design board may remain consistent, it is crucial for candidates to delve into and cultivate their own direction.

In the 2023 submissions, a variety of design themes were explored, including typography, web design, and package design. Notably, when candidates delved into an informed personal and individual exploration, their submissions demonstrated a strong sense of design purpose. However, when it came to common design projects like garment or product design, the integration of typography with the form was often missing. Instead, there was a tendency to rely on surface-level changes, such as changing colours, which did not contribute significantly to the depth of the design proposition. The distinction between designs embedded in personal exploration and those tied to conventional projects highlighted the importance of a thoughtful and integrated approach to typography within the broader design context.

In 2023, candidates exhibited a significant increase in their engagement with character design and illustration. This surge was marked by an interest and participation in the exploration of crafting characters and visual narratives. Particularly noteworthy were instances where candidates undertook the task of drawing the characters themselves. In such cases, the character design boards conveyed authenticity, as candidates delved into the details of figure depiction, character development, and the exploration of facial expressions or body movements. This hands-on approach not only allowed candidates to demonstrate technical

skill but also allowed them to demonstrate a sense of personal ownership over their character designs. This focus served as a foundational step, giving candidates a solid starting point for their design projects. Candidates were then able to integrate and explore other design solutions that connected to the specific project brief. This approach showcased their understanding of design elements and the ability to integrate their character / design brief across both panels. However, it is worth noting that in a few instances, the use of a character generator was evident in the design process. While character generators can be valuable tools for inspiration or idea generation, it became apparent that, when employed predominantly to generate characters, the resulting design boards lacked a necessary level of conviction.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- provided sufficient evidence of a systematic body of work across two panels
- presented a readable layout with evidence of selection and ordering.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- worked systematically and purposefully
- demonstrated a personalised or individual creative approach.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- demonstrated fluency in the use of media and technical skills.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- produced an insufficient amount of work on the portfolio.

Achievement standard 91321: Produce a systematic body of work that shows understanding of art making conventions and ideas within painting

Commentary

The definition of painting is evolving and acquiring new understandings. In the context of this standard, it is about applying selected media to represent an image or illusion of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface within the field of painting. The use of digital technology to create an image does not change the fundamental requirement that submissions for this standard require evidence of understanding and realising ideas through the use of painting conventions. Taking this aspect of the standard into account, schools should consider which field of practice best suits some portfolios.

It is both the school and the teacher's responsibility to authenticate the work for all their students. By signing the form accompanying submissions, the school affirms the work as original work. With the rise of AI, this oversight is increasingly important. Using AI to generate ideas may become more common practice; however, this must sit within the context of the standard and brings into question when the work actually fits the criteria of a digital painting.

The ethical use of AI in visual arts programmes will become more important in course design, and this is also the teacher's responsibility. The evidence on the portfolio should meet the criteria of the standard. At higher levels of achievement, candidates are required to show they can select and use appropriate art-making conventions to drive the development of ideas, and to demonstrate fluency and understanding throughout a personal investigation of their proposition to realise their intention.

Students should be encouraged to avoid sourcing imagery from the internet, and teachers need to make them aware of copyright requirements. Plagiarism, proved during verification, can disadvantage the student and result in a change of grade.

Using photocopies to replace drawing or planned compositions should be avoided. Painting over a photocopy or a Photoshopped composition is not digital painting. Digital painting includes applying traditional painting techniques such as watercolour, oils, or gouache, using a computer, a tablet, and software. Digital painting uses these computer-generated painting techniques to create an image directly onto the computer interface. Photographic elements may be incorporated into digital paintings; however, digital painting works are based on painting techniques and the elements and principles of art and, as such, sit within the interpretation of painting conventions.

Guidance must be provided to ensure the ideas under investigation are appropriate. 'Dark' themes and copying other students' ideas, compositions, images, or concepts – particularly characters developed by other artists – should be avoided. If the candidate develops their own character on which to base their work, they should still be aware of the danger of basing the work on a narrative to the detriment of developing a body of work that meets the criteria for Merit and Excellence. This trend to focus on a narrative for the portfolio was not always successful. Evidence of extension and regeneration of the ideas are needed to achieve in the higher grade range.

Portfolios that did not show a sufficient use of paint or were heavily reliant on drawing or photocopies were unable to provide evidence of competency using painting conventions. At Level 7 of the New Zealand Arts Curriculum, it is expected that candidates understand the specific characteristics of their selected field.

For painting, that means to provide evidence of a body of work that shows understanding of art-making conventions and ideas within painting. That understanding includes referencing established practice and applying their understanding to make their own original work.

Candidates need to develop a visual and technical vocabulary to realise their ideas within the conventions of painting and so demonstrate they understand the characteristics and constraints of their selected medium and approach. Watercolour behaves differently to oils or gouache. The submissions that placed at the top of the grade range showed this understanding at exceptional levels of performance.

A number of schools received a report to advise them of a higher level of performance by their candidates; others were advised of adjustments both up and down; and some were advised to clarify the grade boundaries and criteria. Reports are the verification process in action and should be used to guide future decisions.

In summary, while most candidates met the standard comfortably at Achievement and Merit, with more candidates choosing their own approach and less evidence of formulaic or whole class approaches this year, a selection of the submissions showed outstanding engagement, individual creativity, originality, exceptional ideas, and facility with media and technique. On an even more positive note, the number of these exceptional painting portfolios appears to be growing

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- provided sufficient evidence of a systematic body of work across two panels
- presented a readable layout with evidence of selection and ordering of the work on the portfolio

- produced related works in a series or sequence, sufficient to show the generation and some development of ideas within the artmaking process
- used paint conventions appropriate to the characteristics and constraints of the selected approach within painting
- referenced artists and / or established practice to support the artmaking.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- worked systematically and purposefully to develop and extend related, thematic or conceptual ideas
- made informed decisions in the editing, selection, and ordering of the work across both panels
- displayed a competent and proficient use of paint media and conventions
- referenced artists and / or established practice to inform their art practice
- demonstrated a personalised or individual creative approach to their artmaking.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- developed, extended, and regenerated a depth of ideas that could be read sequentially
- critically selected, evaluated, and ordered work to successfully communicate ideas and a creative intention
- demonstrated fluency in the use of media, technical skills, and painting conventions
- showed sophisticated exploration of ideas and a high level of conceptual understanding to drive the investigation.
- worked independently, using critical decision-making and a personal approach
- created new and original solutions, integrating the ideas, artist references, and stylistic and conceptual approaches with painting conventions.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- produced an insufficient amount of work on the portfolio
- generated but did not develop ideas across the two panels
- made unrelated, random work
- relied on large works, for example, one on each panel, generally preventing a systematic development of ideas
- did not use painting conventions appropriately
- provided minimal evidence of paint on the portfolio
- copied or used unaltered, plagiarised imagery or relied on photocopies in place of artworks.

Achievement standard 91322: Produce a systematic body of work that shows understanding of art making conventions and ideas within photography

Commentary

Most candidates chose their own subject to explore through photography. However, there were some candidates who sourced imagery from the internet. It was evident these candidates were more concerned with submitting a folio rather than developing their skills in this field. Initial themes may use artist models but the development should be entirely the candidates own work.

Competent camera skills were demonstrated in candidates' use of camera functions to control exposure, colour temperature, depth of field, and freezing / blurring movement. By tightly composing and framing subject matter, most candidates demonstrated good compositional skills when using their camera.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- produced a systematic body of work
- generated and developed ideas across two panels
- presented a readable layout with limited development
- began the portfolio with a limited proposition or subject matter
- generated and developed ideas systematically across the two panels
- made some decisions and considerations to the sizing, sequencing, and layout of works to show a development of ideas from the initial idea generation
- demonstrated some understanding of photography conventions
- demonstrated some understanding of light, camera controls, focus, framing and composition
- demonstrated some limited reference to established practice
- demonstrated an idea progression across the folio board that developed into related, connected ideas.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- purposefully generated, developed, and extended ideas
- presented evidence of clear decision-making in the sizing and sequencing of the individual works
- clarified their proposition across the folio board, even if it was unclear at the start
- demonstrated an appropriate use of established practice, which was linked to their investigation
- demonstrated a consistent and competent use of photographic conventions and techniques to best explore the chosen proposition
- selected two or three of their best ideas to drive their investigation
- made works informed by established practice.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- demonstrated fluency in the use of selected photography conventions and techniques
- developed, extended, clarified, and regenerated ideas within a body of work
- used established practice implicitly and synthesised artist references into own practice to create new and original solutions
- started with a clear, strong concept, and each phase of the investigation allowed the project to build in new diverse ways
- demonstrated evidence of careful consideration of each phase of the investigation to explore and present the best options.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- presented several unrelated series of works that were not connected as a body of work
- presented work from a singular idea or narrow proposition, which limited candidates in terms of providing evidence of developing ideas
- demonstrated limited understanding or inconsistent control of photographic conventions or techniques
- provided limited evidence or made no decisions regarding the sizing and sequencing of the works, which hindered the evidence of a systematic exploration of ideas in a body of work
- presented large works, which hindered idea development and affected the candidate in terms of providing sufficient evidence of work for this standard
- relied on repeating the same images rather than reflecting on what ideas could be developed from the initial idea generation.

Achievement Standard 91323: Produce a systematic body of work that shows understanding of art making conventions and ideas within printmaking

Commentary

In the dynamic landscape of printmaking in 2023, a rich diversity of approaches was observed across the national cohort. Building on past recommendations, it is heartening to witness an increased connection to specialist subject knowledge and best practices in print, as was evident in numerous school submissions. This engagement not only reflected collegial interest and connections, but also supported the quality of student work. Processes like Tetra Pak printing, dry point etching, and cyanotype, which have been recent focal points of professional learning, featured prominently in submissions, showcasing a commendable exchange of knowledge among visual arts educators.

The collaborative spirit demonstrated by teachers, particularly those actively participating in national and regional association conferences, is significant and highly commended. This immediate responsiveness speaks volumes about the strength and professionalism embedded in visual arts education, underscoring the potential for printmaking to continue to strengthen its position across the visual arts spectrum. Many schools are successfully implementing robust programmes that leverage cost-effective materials and processes, such as Tetra Pak, collagraph, and woodcut, thereby overcoming barriers to learning.

The verification panel identified a spectrum of programme-planning approaches, from strongly directed for the entire cohort to more individualised approaches. Both resulted in distinct strengths and weaknesses in candidate work. Notably, student-led propositions continued to be prevalent, reflecting the adaptability and flexibility inherent in teaching programmes. Successful programmes struck a balance between structured skill development and open-ended exploration, fostering high levels of individualised thinking.

A critical observation can be noted concerning candidates' source material. This report emphasises the limitation of appropriated imagery and urges teachers and candidates to generate work using their own primary sources. Found imagery was linked to limited achievement, indicating a clear need for programmes that encourage candidates to create original starting points through research, photography, observational subject matter, and diverse approaches to drawing.

A trend observed in 2023 was a shift away from traditional approaches to printmaking, with a greater emphasis on varied processes. While this diversification is welcomed, teachers should make reference to established printmaking practice in their programmes, so as to support learning and achievement. This report highlights the importance of integrating any varied approach to processes, as explored in Panel One, when candidates extend work onto Panel Two, if they are to achieve high grades. A further trend was a decrease in the incorporation of strong artist models in candidate submissions. This report emphasises the important role of relevant artist models in this standard and teachers are reminded to introduce candidates to an appropriate range of contemporary New Zealand and international printmakers.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- worked with a limited range of print processes but were able to do so well enough to generate and develop ideas
- used only a few print blocks, limiting their ability to extend their skills and ideas
- demnstrated some understanding and control of their selected processes, media, and techniques.

Candidates who were awarded **Merit** commonly:

- demonstrated technical skill, control, and understanding of printmaking conventions as they prepared and printed plates
- demonstrated consistency or increasing control of printmaking conventions throughout the submission
- created multiple print blocks specific to the conceptual or pictorial ideas being extended
- generated a range of ideas and options on the board.

Candidates who were awarded **Excellence** commonly:

- demonstrated clear intentions from the beginning of the folio and used drawing very purposefully
- established a range and depth of ideas on Panel One, successfully setting the portfolio up to show regeneration of ideas on Panel Two
- demonstrated high levels of skill and understanding in the preparation of their printmaking blocks.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not demonstrate sufficient skill in the use of printmaking techniques as required at Level 7
- presented individual, unrelated works without any systematic generation or development
- demonstrated limited understanding of print processes, materials, and techniques
- did not demonstrate understanding of basic print conventions related to surface, colour, line, mark, and media.

Achievement standard 91324: Produce a systematic body of work that shows understanding of art making and ideas within sculpture

Commentary

Sculpture continues to offer a broad exploration of both conceptually and technically focused approaches within an open-ended artistic framework. The open-ended nature of sculpture allows for candidates to move fluidly and fluently between modes of practice, resulting in diverse and innovative outcomes. This organic approach to artistic exploration is reflected in the wider world of art practice.

While there were fewer submissions sent for verification in sculpture this year, the scope of practice was expansive. Candidates successfully explored subject matter of personal significance, alongside culturally-based projects with a lens on trans-customary practices. Submissions that continued to build on initial propositions and advanced ideas in new and diverse directions were positioned significantly higher up the grade boundaries than bodies of work that contained preconceived outcomes. While teacher-directed programmes can support students and teachers alike to ensure that a sufficiency in a body of work is produced, care needs to be taken that candidates are not at risk of making work to order, and that there is sufficient scope for personal development of ideas that reflect candidates' particular sculptural interests.

There were a range of sculptural approaches taken this year, including soft sculpture, projection, and performance. The more successful submissions demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the mode of practice within which they were working. The chosen art-making conventions in these submissions were used assuredly to frame the investigations. In shifting appropriately between modes of practice, candidates effectively demonstrated both a clarification and a regeneration of ideas.

The quality of photographic documentation of sculptural outcomes was as high as it has been in recent years. It was pleasing to see that there were fewer submissions blurring the lines between sculpture practice and photography this year. Sculptural works were at the forefront of framing and lighting considerations, and enhanced viewing of the work rather than distracting from it. Images were of good quality, clear, and well lit.

Hierarchy of imagery is a consideration that needs to be front of mind for both teachers and candidates across all fields of practice when portfolio layout is being finalised. Sculpture documentation includes images of small material studies and maquettes, through to foundational works and final explorations. More successful submissions ensured that the images chosen were laid out in such a way as to support the reading of the process of an extension, clarification, and regeneration of ideas. Smaller works fed into larger ones, and stronger outcomes were identified and celebrated through thoughtful decisions regarding the size of each image.

Sculpture teachers are encouraged to send sculpture submissions for verification as numbers of submissions in this field are relatively low. Receiving feedback in relation to the standard is particularly valuable in smaller fields such as sculpture where there are fewer samples from which to select exemplars.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- generated ideas in a systematic way but often within a limited proposition
- worked within a tight, teacher-directed programme which resulted in predetermined outcomes

- presented a sufficient, though minimal, number of sculptural outcomes, which limited opportunities to extend ideas
- used appropriate sculptural conventions with the level of control and practical knowledge expected at the lower end of Level 7 of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- used materials and processes, with purpose, to extend ideas
- worked with a range of materials or the same materials in a range of ways
- demonstrated the extension of ideas but with inconsistent control of media and techniques
- presented a limited range of sculptural outcomes that did not allow for regeneration.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- identified a clear proposition that thoroughly explored a range of appropriate, established, sculptural conventions
- used highly appropriate, sculptural drawing techniques to effectively transition between series throughout the submission and demonstrated fluent use of media and processes
- used fluent photographic documentation to support the clarification and regeneration of ideas
- identified a hierarchy of work through strong editing and layout of images on panels.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- presented an insufficient number of sculptural outcomes for the 12-credit weighting of the standard
- demonstrated insufficient use of sculpture-making conventions throughout the submission
- used processes, procedures, materials, and techniques at a level that was below the practical knowledge requirements of Level 7 of the New Zealand Curriculum.