

Assessment Report

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Level 2 Visual Arts 2018

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Part A: Commentary

Verification of the Level 2 Visual Arts external assessment provides a valuable overview of current practice and trends. It is evident the results overall at this level are mostly positive. This is often due to the elective status of the school subject resulting in a cohort mostly of students who are talented and interested in these fields at senior levels.

Conversely, comments for less positive verification results at the upper grade ranges reflect that some believe the verification has become 'harder'. In these cases, the criteria of the standard bear some reflection. Fluency at Excellence level does not simply comprise of technical virtuosity. Media and techniques are often consistently handled at upper grade ranges. However, the ability to fluently

move between the various phases of a drawing study and make critical decisions to move the proposition forward within the framework of artistic intention is also required. Teachers appear to be very familiar with the external standard criteria, but some teachers would benefit from also referring to the explanatory notes.

Submissions generally looked more polished than in previous years, which some interpret as a change in the quality, but notice should be given to technological advances that support seemingly 'aesthetically pleasing' submissions. Prior to the current digital access enjoyed by many students, many design solutions were painstakingly hand-drawn and photographic folios were printed by hand, an undertaking that would have taken many hours. Both of these technological approaches led to slower development of ideas, as much time was spent on technical mastery. Now, series of digital works can be executed in an extremely short turnaround by comparison. This, in turn, has led to a greater amount of time that can be spent on the meaningful development of ideas. Where departments may have had a small selection of books, the internet and popular visual culture is now exposing candidates to a large volume of established practices, ensuring a greater aesthetic knowledge from the outset in some fields.

Folios used as an exhibition space for tenuously related works were more evident at lower attainment levels due to candidates' limited ability to engage with art-making processes to develop ideas. A few submissions from candidates with a high level of proficiency with processes and procedures did not demonstrate a systematic development of ideas, with the clarification and regeneration required. These candidates would have benefited from guidance about the intention of the standard and the criteria statements.

A historical report for these standards eloquently stated that the body of work on the folio should be a 'visual manifestation' of the candidate's 'decision-making'. Documenting progressive problem solving is useful for putting in place the habits required to reach multiple successful outcomes to a given proposition.

Digital Moving Image submissions

Whole-class programmes in moving image need to allow candidates the range and scope that they need to achieve at all levels. While class programmes can support the learning required, especially when dealing with new technologies, they must still allow candidates the opportunity to critically select and revisit previous visual ideas and methodologies in order to clarify, refine, reform and regenerate these. Having each candidate work through a preordained range of activities might not allow this to occur for all candidates.

Questions that candidates (and their teachers) who select the moving image mode of assessment may wish to ask when producing and viewing their submissions include: Do the individual works within the submission get better across the time given, or do they remain the same? If the individual works do not get better, how does / can the submission show both generation and development or extension?

The more successful candidates had clarity around which Visual Art conventions they were using.

Part B: Report on standards

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

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- engaged in the design process by generating and developing ideas
- made some decisions in relation to their design brief evident in series and sequences of works.

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

- showed evidence of 'creative play', lacking a range of ideas and decisions
- placed imagery onto design formats without consideration of design methodology
- showed a low level of technical skill and facility with their chosen media, and did not generate sufficient design evidence in support of the proposal.

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

- selected appropriate briefs that allowed them to explore a range of design conventions and outcomes

- had some understanding of the characteristics and constraints of their chosen design formats
- explored relevant options, such as thematic colour and font choice, to develop a 'look' or style
- extended ideas in new directions by understanding and using established design practices.

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

- showed fluent technical skill across processes and techniques
- showed critical thinking by reflecting on previous works to move their project forward
- produced original work that synthesised a range of appropriate established practices into the outcomes
- established an investigation that had the potential to develop in a wide range of possible directions with a rich selection of initial material.

Standard specific comments

Themes this year included music festivals, cultural events, bands and subgenres of music, coffee culture and cafes, fashion branding, makeup branding, sports, automotive, and illustration design. Common briefs included poster design, business cards, double-page magazine spread, magazine banner, logo / brand identity, phone apps and web pages, packaging, graphic novel covers, character design and storyboarding.

Many schools supported candidates by allowing them to explore their own topics of interest and, in some cases, recognised candidates' capacity for growth by supporting the extension of their ideas into individualised choices of briefs with alternative formats and design artefacts. Some whole-class programmes appeared to limit candidate choice and those with a prescribed brief selection did not always prove a 'best fit' for the potential inherent in the individual projects undertaken.

Where candidates attempted a large number of briefs, they were often not able to engage in sufficient depth with the characteristics and constraints of a particular format as a means to extend ideas. Conversely, when candidates attempted fewer briefs, the work was oversized and often became repetitive; ideas did not advance, as there was an obvious need to fill the space on the folio panels. Candidates are advised of the need to critically select and edit work for

presentation so that they can present evidence of having generated, developed, extended and regenerated ideas (see explanatory notes for the standard).

Repeating imagery and 'final designs' such as placing identical logos on a number of design artefacts (tote bags, t-shirts, business cards, containers etc.), without consideration for their inherently different properties and characteristics limited candidates from reflecting on and advancing ideas in new, diverse and distinct ways. It is appropriate to see, for example, a finished logo in context. However, within the branding proposition, there is opportunity for further exploration of size, scale, placement, colour, pattern and motif through reformatting the logo to suit the characteristics and constraints of other design formats. Higher-achieving candidates saw the potential in subsequent briefs to advance ideas and reflected on earlier works to move the proposition forward.

Mobile app design and web page design were more readable on folio boards as products when framed appropriately, i.e. when mocked up into screen formats. Double-page spread in print magazine form continued to be a popular brief and was handled consistently well. Access to, and use of, established practice supported the advancement of ideas and conventions. Treatment of the gutter, headline, body type, text-image relationships and the need to link the two pages in an interesting way were understood by the majority of candidates.

Within all facets of design, the use of type, and its associated conventions, needs to be a primary consideration by designers. This includes technical considerations about layout, readability, size, scale, mode of generation, combinations, as well as conceptual concerns; meaning, aesthetic, purpose and hierarchy. In a large number of cases, type appeared to be of secondary importance, or applied and dealt with as an afterthought, as opposed to a key ingredient of design propositions. Insightful and inventive ways in which type is used creatively as a visual component can be sourced in examples of established practice.

The content and use of mood boards and initial material was inconsistent. Candidates often included images they liked, colour swatches, source material, photography, type et cetera, and then largely ignored these in subsequent work. There was an over-reliance on images sourced from websites such as Pinterest, which, while fashionable, were not used effectively as established practice. There had been little attempt to consciously identify and use the techniques, processes and art-making conventions they contained.

The initial material and / or mood board, in combination with the brief, can establish a clearly defined proposition. This can then be utilised by the candidate and revisited in order to guide the process of design and the visual ideas being developed. By comprehensively establishing visual ideas such as the aesthetic,

colour, font type, and use of established practice, the brief and mood board can encourage systematic working, and be a reference point for re-evaluation and reflective thinking at each phase of making.

Appropriated imagery from suitable stock sources continues to be used in design practice. It must be acknowledged as such in the initial material. It can support students' learning and achievement, particularly at the lower end of the ability range, as it allows candidates to concentrate field-specific aspects of the design process, visual ideas, and conventions such as type design and hierarchy, layout and image manipulation.

The generation of students' own imagery is, however, a very worthwhile process, if the chosen subject matter is accessible. This process clearly allows students to take ownership of their subject matter, especially if the outcomes are successful. It often typifies a higher-achieving candidate, who can produce original work that synthesises a range of appropriate established practices and generates a rich selection of initial material.

Teachers should ensure the work is authentically the candidate's own. If in doubt, it would be helpful to do a reverse image search, for example, or to ask students to provide the original files that track source and modification history. This includes image and type sources from websites such as Pinterest, Behance and Creative Market.

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

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- began with a limited proposition or subject matter that offered possibilities for generation and development, but could not be sustained to show extension
- engaged with paint conventions, working systematically to produce a body of work

- chose techniques or media that limited their opportunity to show understanding of paint conventions.
- relied on a narrative approach to the detriment of picture-making concerns.

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

- presented individual, unrelated works without any generative or developmental links that did not represent a systematic body of work
- showed limited understanding of paint processes, materials and techniques
- had insufficient technical control in the application of paint at the expected curriculum level
- used found or appropriated imagery and lacked sufficient resource material or subject matter.

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

- began with a strong proposition that could be sustained across two panels
- identified traditional and contemporary artists and referenced them in their work, synthesising more than one reference to develop and extend ideas
- provided evidence of generation, development and extension of ideas in a systematic body of work
- demonstrated technical skill, control and understanding of paint conventions
- showed a purposeful decision-making process in the extension of ideas and progressive understanding of painting conventions selected.

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

- demonstrated clear intentions from the outset and used drawing as the central means to explore a range and depth of ideas
- refined their proposition, working with comprehensive understanding of how paint conventions can be used with fluency to clarify and regenerate ideas
- provided convincing evidence of further exploration of their proposition by introducing new artistic references to facilitate the clarification and regeneration of additional work
- edited and ordered works through critical decision-making to demonstrate the progression, clarification, regeneration and resolution of the proposition.

Standard specific comments

Pattern-making as a class programme can be problematic and the use of pattern as the subject matter for a portfolio may be formulaic from the beginning to the conclusion. Frequently repetitive and interchangeable, the opportunities to show higher levels of achievement through development, extension, synthesis and regeneration can be limited.

The introduction of suitable artist references to support the journey can improve understanding. In order to provide opportunities at all levels of achievement, developing different ways of using patterns is critical. This can include eliminating and adding layers, introducing different colour palettes, inverting colours or tones, exploring scale and overlapping, which may support the development and extension of ideas. Researching the cultural origins of pattern is also a good starting point and an integral part of appropriating art elements with consideration.

Abstraction as a proposition is challenging and needs to be based on research and a good knowledge of the genre. Based on this understanding and a conceptual proposition, a successful portfolio can work from minimalistic to complex. Candidates need to have a good understanding of the pictorial and conceptual conventions within abstraction. Adding to, rather than taking away, elements / subject matter can be a successful approach. Many abstract submissions 'emptied out' compositions progressively and subsequently struggled to show extension or regeneration of ideas.

Appropriation of characters from Pinterest, television, movie stills, cartoons, comics, graphic novels and magazines to create a narrative, without adding a personal creative intention, can limit candidates' ability to reach the higher level of achievement. Some candidates' achievement was hampered by an over-reliance on copying already established characters / compositions and using second-hand imagery to make individual unrelated images. Sourcing and colouring images does not meet the requirements for a systematic body of work in which candidates develop aesthetic and compositional ideas, and is not a recommended approach.

Painting conventions and painting media are intrinsic to this field-specific standard and established practices need to be analysed in this light. Collage, particularly the use of found, handmade and reassembled materials, when combined with painterly approaches, can be a very effective medium to layer an image or advance a proposition. However, cut-and-paste techniques used superficially can lead to the creation of random images that show little understanding of established painting conventions. Some samples began with an image bank of ideas at the beginning of the portfolio. There should preferably be the candidate's

and can be helpful to establish a direction for the investigation. However, random and unrelated use of photographic imagery throughout a portfolio can be a problem. There still needs to be evidence of paint conventions and photographic imagery needs to have a purpose and context for their inclusion.

Digital painting was also used in an appropriate way on some portfolios; many began with investigations using traditional paint techniques, subsequently transitioning to digital techniques and processes. At higher levels, the integration of traditional and digital painting was seamless and showed good understanding of media across both practices. There appears to be some confusion about the definition of digital painting and photocopies, photographs and collages are appearing on portfolios as part of this approach. Practices such as using a tablet and painting with the digital tools is considered digital painting and candidates should be guided by established contemporary digital painting practices and conventions.

Authenticity issues arose when candidates used explicit images from another artist without clear evidence of their intention or understanding of conventions related to appropriation. Pinterest continues to be a major source for ideas and images for candidates and using the internet, Pinterest and other second-hand imagery from a range of sources continues to be problematic at this level. Candidates do need to be open and honest in their use of what they find and how they find it. As it becomes easier and more common to take what you want without thought to ownership, originality or copyright, candidates leave themselves open to having the authenticity of their work questioned.

Students who took their own photographs as a source for their own ideas or image-making usually developed these into an investigation that was more genuine and the outcomes were more original.

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

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- presented a systematic body of work with a narrow proposition or beginning
- considered the sequencing and layout of works to demonstrate development of ideas, but made inconsistent decisions without editing out repetitive ideas
- showed some understanding of photography conventions, such as light, focus, camera controls and framing / viewpoint.

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

- presented work from a singular idea or narrow proposition, which limited the candidate's ability to develop ideas
- showed limited understanding or inconsistent control of photographic conventions or techniques
- provided limited or no evidence of decisions regarding the sizing and sequencing of the works and systematic exploration of ideas.
- presented large works, which hindered idea development and affected the sufficiency of work for this 12-credit external standard.

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

- worked within a broad proposition that allowed for the clarification of ideas
- demonstrated evidence of purposeful decision-making through the editing, sizing, sequencing and organisation of the individual works
- demonstrated the candidate had made clear choices in ideas and understood the hierarchy of images
- demonstrated sound, consistent technical control of photography processes, materials and techniques across the submission
- clearly extended ideas, with a sense that work had been 'selected' from more than what was evident on the board, allowing them to demonstrate clear extension of ideas connected to the earlier investigations.

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

- investigated a breadth of ideas exploring multiple options, revisiting and investigating the best outcomes further to regenerate ideas in new and interesting ways

- showed an in-depth understanding of photographic conventions with a strong understanding of digital processes, procedures, materials and techniques
- confidently and fluently investigated ideas through the chosen subject matter, which were connected conceptually and expanded on pictorial intent evident in preceding work
- made critical decisions around the layout, sizing and sequencing of the individual works to ensure evidence of the criteria was clearly demonstrated.

Standard specific comments

The majority of candidates explored subject matter based around their interests, family history and personal identity. Popular themes continued to include youth and social issues, cultural diversity, technology and the effects of social media. Political and environment issues were more popular and more successfully explored than before, including current issues pertinent to New Zealand. More popular were explorations of pictorial concerns and formal properties such as light, shadow and colour. Candidates had a good understanding of colour schemes, how to effectively use light to explore different colour combinations with a better understanding of colour theory as a result. Whole-school programmes were far less common, allowing candidates to explore subject matter or themes in which they were engaged and interested through the ownership and choice of their theme or subject matter. This allowed for individualisation and personal responses in their work.

The majority of candidates understood the achievement criteria requirements. Successful candidates established the folio proposition initially on board one with smaller series of works that clearly introduced the theme or topic. They also explored subject matter that could be regularly reshot and revisited. This provided opportunities to thoroughly investigate a breadth of pictorial or conceptual ideas. Highly successful candidates referenced a range of artist models implicitly to develop, extend and regenerate their ideas. Weaker submissions relied on artist models explicitly in a less authentic manner, attempting to explore and extend ideas, but only tenuously linked to the preceding work; for example, attempting to extend ideas through arbitrary digital collages created without an intention linked to the earlier ideas investigated.

Some candidates attempted to integrate text and images with limited conceptual or compositional consideration. This impinged on the pictorial investigation and the reading of the individual works. When used in this way, it was more design-specific than photographic, especially when used to 'explain' or make the proposition obvious. Text or typography needs to be used appropriate to art-

making within established photography practice. It is essential that photography submissions demonstrate an understanding of light, photography conventions alongside any decisions to incorporate text.

Overall, candidates demonstrated good technical skills. A small minority of candidates chose traditional analogue processes and demonstrated good technical control when using the darkroom. Successful candidates often used a range of photographic conventions to help them investigate and explore ideas. Most candidates used the camera effectively as drawing tool to investigate light and subject matter. 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, the majority of candidates demonstrated good compositional skills when using their camera.

Post-capture digital manipulation techniques were used with better understanding of associated conventions in 2018. Many candidates knew how to explore ideas conceptually and demonstrated an understanding of established and contemporary photography practices while doing so. A lot fewer candidates submitted submissions with technical faults such as low resolution, or blurred and pixelated photographic imagery. Overall, candidates continued to use colour highly effectively to explore conceptual, thematic or symbolic concerns, whether it was saturated colour, black and white, a limited colour palette, or selective colouring.

The presentation of the work on the folio boards often adversely affected the security or reading of the work. Images need to be well secured to the folio boards and Blu-Tack and spray glues are not recommended. Double-sided tape needs to be used in a manner that ensures work remains on the boards for the duration of the verification process. Whole-panel A1 prints need to provide adequate spacing between individual works. Candidates are encouraged to mount prints individually to enhance the readability of the individual works and to ensure the works are adequately secured to boards. Printing papers had a significant impact to the reading of the photographs. High-quality matte photographic paper was advantageous for the reading of the work and candidates are encouraged to use the best paper affordable. Candidate numbers should be provided on the submissions as per the NZQA specifications.

The majority of candidates were aware that careful consideration of the layout (sizing, sequencing and ordering of the work) is of crucial importance in photography submissions, as it helps show the reading and exploration of a range of options and ideas. Less successful submissions demonstrated poor decision-

making in the layout, with individual works overlapping, which limited readability of idea investigation and often appeared narrow and linear.

It was popular for candidates to digitally or physically collage photographic imagery as part of the format or picture-making process. This was done with varying degrees of success, but when purposeful and in an authentic context, it did allow the opportunity for the candidate to extend ideas. Some candidates attempted to explore ideas through manipulating appropriated imagery. Some candidates lacked understanding of the conceptual conventions of appropriation and for others it limited evidence of the candidate's understanding and use of photography conventions. Teachers are encouraged to have robust authentication processes, checking students' work regularly in order to encourage candidates to use appropriation intentionally without violating the copyright of others.

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

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- established a starting point (subject matter and pictorial possibilities) early in the portfolio sufficient to carry out a systematic printmaking investigation through a short journey of exploration across both panels
- made implied reference to artist models / conventions without demonstrating a clear link in their own work
- worked within a limited range of print processes (often one printmaking technique) sufficiently to generate and develop ideas at the expected level
- relied on imagery sourced from social media, a narrative, or collage techniques to advance ideas or to explore elements of print
- worked with conventional board layout, where ideas were edited, selected and ordered throughout the submission.

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

- began the portfolio with a limited idea or insufficient pictorial information to sustain ideas over two panels and relied on drawing, rather than printmaking, for the investigation of ideas
- provided insufficient evidence of a systematic development of ideas and / or use of print processes consistent with expectations of learners studying at Level 7 of the curriculum
- placed work on either panel with little regard to sequencing, selection and ordering of work from panel one to panel two
- repeated block / plate imagery without any clear purpose within the investigation due to an inability to identify pathways for the development of ideas
- used photocopied works / stock imagery as a means of framing an investigation, or relied on cut-out imagery from existing prints to provide a foundation of ideas.
- used print techniques / processes with limited control or understanding of simple print conventions such as surface, colour, ground and / or mark.

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

- established a sound initial starting point, sufficient to sustain a purposeful printmaking investigation across both panels of the submission
- developed ideas that did not rely on a preconstructed narrative with a wide range of options, allowing for subsequent exploration
- selected and ordered related works, showing the ability to edit and make decisions in developing a sequence or series of works
- demonstrated purposeful links early in the submission between drawing and the subsequent prints.

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

- developed ideas early in the submission through investigation and considered thematic exploration
- demonstrated good decision-making through a progression of ideas, evident in the ordering and sequencing of work

- exhibited clarity in the use of several compositional devices and printmaking techniques when developing both sequences and series of works across the entire submission
- presented clear links between drawings, developments, and regeneration of ideas, as well as conventions with printmaking media and techniques, before attempting the standard
- used a range of media and techniques with a high degree of facility, sometimes pushing traditional printmaking techniques in new directions.

Standard specific comments

For a portfolio to meet the requirements of this achievement standard, the work must show evidence of planning and ordering within the body of work. Portfolios assessed at the Not Achieved level typically provided insufficient evidence of both the planning and ordering of work. At Achievement level, candidates often relied on single pictorial ideas that were either minimal, or not able to be sustained in a series or a sequence throughout the submission.

Submissions at the Excellence level demonstrated sound knowledge of a range of print processes. In all cases, candidates could work competently within print. Identifying their proposition and then selecting appropriate print processes subsequently produced work that clearly demonstrated extension and regeneration appropriate to specific phases of their investigation. This process of regeneration often occurred early within the submission, allowing for options to be explored either at the end of board one or at the beginning of board two.

At the Excellence level, the practice of combining traditional and contemporary print practices is continuing to produce exemplary submissions. Where the candidates could successfully match print processes with their intention for images, they could demonstrate a clarification and extension of their work. This way of working often allowed for either a series or a sequence of work to be successfully developed.

Some printmaking submissions tended to rely on the use of collage (both traditional and digital forms) to make prints and to develop ideas. When used primarily as a tool for investigation, the use of collage helped to both frame and advance ideas. When collage was used solely as a printmaking device, the folio tended to lack development and direction. In all instances, the use of collage was used as a device for developing new work. This process of generating ideas through cut-out imagery may offer quick solutions but often limits student achievement if not used purposefully.

Where Chine collé was used as a printmaking process, the student created opportunities for clarification and regeneration of ideas. The use of digital collage has raised several interesting issues. The use of filters and software programmes to generate a print series was not as evident in this year's submissions, but the emergence of photocopied imagery is of some concern. This process of image-making can distance the submission from any actual printmaking. This process will generally disadvantage the candidate's submission.

As in previous years, there were several submissions with well-cut wood print blocks in a range of genres, both figurative and pattern-based. It is encouraging to see a growing confidence in the use of a range of processes in various programmes. Candidates in 2018 generally exhibited a greater facility with print submissions where the general skill of students allowed the subject to be more than simply process-driven. Students are to be encouraged to continue to develop higher degrees of skill in the techniques characteristic to each of these processes. The use of dry-point engraving and woodcut were again dominant choices for print exploration across all submissions, as well as reduced colour palettes across several submissions.

The use of artist models as a form of understanding printmaking conventions has all but disappeared. In most instances, candidates' work seemed to be process-driven. Where artist models were identified on the panels, they were predominately placed at the end of the final board, sometimes as a reproduced image or as a homage to a specific artwork. Investigating relevant artist models at the beginning of the submission with acknowledgement to established practice, regardless of the field, allows students to fluently drive and develop their ideas.

Candidates are encouraged to consider placement and sizing of works to allow clear reading of individual works and sequences; allowing space between works that are not intended to be read as continuous images is important. At times, the frame associated with traditional print practice allows for a clearer reading of works. The removal of the 'print gutter' may be problematic with the reading of individual works within the submission.

There are encouraging signs in the 2018 printmaking submissions, such as a noticeable trend in less prescriptive, more individualised programmes. This creates greater open-ended opportunities for candidates to achieve in the higher-grade ranges, as it allows for more individualised thematic developments and levels of thinking. Candidates were, therefore, more likely to explore ideas in more diverse directions and use processes and techniques appropriate to the investigation.

[Visual Arts subject page](#)

Previous years' reports

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