

ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020

ART315214 – ART STUDIO PRACTICE

Art Studio Practice provides an opportunity for students who have completed Art Production to continue and consolidate their art practice at TASC 3 Level of difficulty. The course enables students to extend the depth and breadth of their studio practice in the context of creating and refining an exhibition proposal and completing it to resolution through a self-directed inquiry and studio-based investigation.

In 2020, the number of candidates enrolled in Art Studio Practice remains consistent with 225 year 12 students enrolled from the 8 Department of Education Colleges and 12 non-government schools statewide.

At the close of 2020, it is impossible not to reflect on the impact COVID-19 has had on our students and teachers with disrupted learning environments, widespread uncertainty, increased levels of anxiety and TASC adjusted assessment requirements.

The number of exceptional individual exhibitions reflecting an exemplary EA standard has remained consistent with the data from previous years. Exemplary folios demonstrated the consolidation and refinement of technical skills, a clear communication of conceptual content, the resolution of all aspects of the proposal aims reflected in the outstanding standard of the final exhibition. Similarly, the CA/HA standard represented a consistent pattern but overall, it was notable that more students attained at the higher rather than the lower end of the rating scale than in previous years. This year has also seen a polarisation of standards and extremes at both end of the spectrum with a few more withdrawals and PA's than in other years.

The breadth of specialised studio investigations undertaken included folios from the following areas; ceramics, photography (film and digital) digital art and media, printmaking, painting and mixed-media, drawing, collage, graphic design, sculpture, video and installation. The overall standard and diversity of the work was impressive.

In general, it was encouraging to see the level of consistency in the interpretation of the course content and work requirements with most teachers demonstrating a clear understanding of criteria and standards.

Maintaining a state-wide level of consistency in the application of standards as outlined in the course document and assessment guidelines is of critical importance to ensure consistent and equitable student outcomes. Teachers and students are encouraged to revisit and refer to the course document and the external assessment guidelines when in doubt.

Criterion I: Design, Manage and Implement a Studio Exhibition

TASC External Assessment Guidelines

'It is not intended that the proposal be in essay form but rather as a plan and sequence of intentions – 'the 'what' 'how' and 'why' of the exhibition. The final proposal should use concise language and be approximately 500 words in length. The proposal is not an artist's statement but a plan or series of intentions.'

Students and teachers are again reminded that proposals do not need to be essays. When the written material in Proposals and Statements is overly long it not only hinders the examination process but makes it much harder to focus on the candidate's key ideas.

This year in many cases the Proposals were too long, exceeded the word count, lacked clarity or confusingly contained exactly the same content as the artist's statement or were simply a reflective statement "this year I did this and then I did that ...".

The proposal is not intended to be a reflective document, but rather a focus statement of intention – an exhibition plan. As such it should be written in future tense and be amended to reflect changes during the year. It should be written in sentence form and include the following in simple concise language:

- *Concept underpinning exhibition*
- *Context and influences of the work to be exhibited*
- *Selections of materials and media*
- *Selection of techniques*
- *Scale of exhibition*
- *Design elements of the exhibition space – how it will be displayed*

- TASC External Assessment Guidelines

It is not mandated that students require a specific **number of written Proposals** – but obviously need to provide some evidence that they have engaged with the process of editing and refining their intentions throughout the course. In some cases, students will not change their initial proposal only re-edit and refine the use of language and adjust the document to reflect their final exhibition plans.

Consistency in the display of proposals

Proposals need to be visible and clearly displayed on the wall or next to the display with one copy attached to the Major Research Paper. The examiners shouldn't have to search for the Proposal. Drafts and re-edits to reflect changes in the ongoing planning process should be dated and stapled together and displayed within the support material.

Adhering to the correct titles and course guidelines

The Proposal must be dated and titled correctly. There were several proposals that were more like checklists with headings that bore little resemblance to the course requirement or suggested format. Teachers are advised to scaffold the writing process through initial layout plans and headings, but the final proposal should be dated and entitled correctly as an 'exhibition proposal'.

Renaming the Proposal as an 'exhibition abstract' or 'concept outline' or 'project outline' creates confusion in the assessment process. Teachers are encouraged in the use of consistent terminology in accordance with the course

guidelines and syllabus document while instructing students to write their proposals using simple and concise language and not to exceed the word count.

Exhibition and resolution

The success of the proposal is reflected in the resolution of the final exhibition. An exemplary standard will be evident in the visual impact and cohesive strength of technical stylistic and conceptual elements – convincing in all aspects to effectively communicate the aims of the studio proposal.

Overall, the standard of exhibition displays this year was consistently high if less diverse and ambitious in scope. Displays were sometimes compromised by the inclusion of repetitive or formulaic content with a lack of variety and diversity apparent to the detriment of the final exhibition.

The refinement and quality of final displays is critical to the overall success of a student's exhibition. The exhibition hang is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their design skills and, as such, evidence of planning and display layout options need to be documented in their diaries.

Criterion 2: Communicate Artistic Concepts

'This criterion examines the degree and depth of understanding in the communication of artistic concepts evident in the support material, research and finally in the student's exhibited artwork and statement.'

- TASC External Assessment Guidelines

The communication of conceptual content is reliant on a candidate's capacity to develop a meaningful artistic context for their own work through relevant research and investigation.

This criterion represents a degree of discrepancy between internal and external ratings. It is perhaps important to recognise that it is one criterion which must be clearly evidenced in the straight 'A' exemplary folio of work. In many cases a folio will seemingly tick every box but when the conceptual content is further analysed the folio falls down on this criterion with some folios being overly reliant on a technique driven focus.

To attain an A rating against this criterion the conceptual content needs to be:

- communicated convincingly in the actual work
- developed over time and documented in the support material
- investigated and reflected in the Research Paper
- documented on the VSO
- clearly articulated and communicated in the artist statement
- avoid being overlaid or applied retrospectively to the work at the end of the year.

With a focus on idea generation and the communication of conceptual content, this criterion remains a challenge for many candidates and would benefit from more explicit teaching. In some examples it was difficult to see what was being communicated by a student, even when presented with an artist statement and proposal asserting the underpinning concepts. There were some examples where there was an obvious disconnect between the concept and work. The weakness in this area is often typified by the 'last minute' overlaid concept – designed retrospectively to suit the final work – rather than being developed with clear evidence documented in support materials.

'The Artist's statement is a short (150 - 300 word) statement to convey the conceptual meaning and context of the student's exhibition. It represents a communication between the artist and the audience and does not include details of technical processes. It must be displayed with the exhibition work.'

- TASC External Assessment Guidelines

Artist statements varied greatly from school to school in terms of length and language used. In some instances, the Artist Statements contained identical content to the Proposals which indicates a serious disregard or lack of understanding of the course requirements.

Many artist statements were too long or lacked conceptual depth and clarity or were totally confusing and just required editing. The most successful statements were brief, concisely written and communicated a clear message. It is important that teachers guide students through the process of writing their artist statement, but they should also be mindful that a student's voice can be lost when over edited by teachers. A few schools' statements were clearly dominated by the 'teacher voice' with a similar 'academic speak' evident in all candidates' work. Authentic, straightforward and concise writing is a skill that teachers need to encourage in their students' work.

In any given year the commonality and consistency in conceptual themes that emerge across the state is always fascinating to observe and 2020 was not dissimilar to previous years. However, one dominant exception and reoccurring theme was the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of candidates, echoed in the introspective mood and emotional content of the work throughout the state. Other popular themes explored included: animal extinction, self-portraiture, climate change, environmental issues, adolescent angst and rite of passage, youth culture, social media, animal cruelty, nature and the sublime, identity, abstraction, emotional states, relationships, humour and art, fantasy and mythology, dragons, social and political issues, surrealism and pop art, the beauty of nature and escapism.

Criterion 6: Apply the Principles of Reflective Practice

The reflective practice criterion for this course requires the production of a range of supporting evidence that demonstrates a rigorous engagement with the development of conceptual content, technical exploration, artist research, and relevant investigations appropriate to the nature of the individual student's self-directed inquiry.

'Reflection needs to be thorough, relevant and thoughtful.'

Evidence will include a thorough and meaningful VSO reflecting interconnections and progressive development between research investigations and the making process.

Support material will be extensive and should include visual diaries evidence of active investigations documented experiments and evidence of sustained involvement.'

- TASC External Assessment Guidelines

Although the delivery of the course may be typified by a range of approaches reflecting different educational settings it is important for teachers and students to recognise that Art Studio Practice is designed at TASC 3 level of difficulty. The level of engagement and involvement in studio practice during the course (in any normal year) is equivalent to 150 hours design time. In a few schools there still exists the tendency for the over production and exaggeration of the work requirements for this criterion. This is clearly evident in the mass production of multiple scrap books and visual diaries without relevant or meaningful annotations or overly detailed and written text on VSO's and the presentation of additional investigations written up as essays. The focus on 'quantity' often conflicts with the production and 'quality' in the actual artwork and the provision of authentic relevant and genuine evidence required against this criterion.

Further discussion needs to reflect on building a more consistent approach to the Visual Diary across all sectors – do we need a clear position on how many diaries are actually needed? or what is 'a' diary? Honest documentation of ideas and artist research is needed. There is a 'creeping assumption' and practice emerging that a candidate must have 4 or more visual diaries to get an EA. This is not mandated nor is it necessarily a meaningful message to communicate to candidates.

Another impact of the 2020 context this year was the number of authentic self-directed and inquiry based 'active investigations' which were thin on the ground. Many schools continue to deliver the active investigations as a series of 3 generic essays or set theory tasks complete with cover pages that are not specifically relevant to the candidate's individual folio.

Documentation of active investigations, including but not limited to:

- *display folders/ collections of documented research*
- *interviews with artists/curators/gallery directors/art industry professionals*
- *email documentation*
- *analysis of artworks*
- *photographic documentation*
- *exhibition reviews*
- *commentary on exhibition hangs*
- *relevant art events/local/national/international*
- *catalogues/catalogue essays*

- TASC Art Studio Practice Assessment Guidelines

Although the artist interviews are not mandated their value needs to be recognised and where appropriate promoted within this course. As an 'active investigation' they have always represented a powerful tool to engage students in authentic learning but must be relevant to the candidate's folio and should be encouraged by teachers where possible. In most schools and colleges, it is clear there exists a shared understanding and consistent approach to the production and format of the VSO. In general, there were more examples of VSO's that fulfilled expectations of communicating *involvement and commitment to artistic intention through relevant research and studio practice* beyond the most basic level.

However, there is still a degree of inconsistency in how information is communicated on this document. Too often the VSO is limited to a brief outline of how the year unfolded in terms of, 'I did this ...then this....', with limited relationship to relevant art influences or the VSO being presented only as a list of influential artists without direct, explicit and clear links to a candidate's own art practice being reflected on the VSO.

The progressive development and interconnection between research, investigations and art practice needs to be clearly documented on the VSO. Candidates need to show the explicit links between their artistic influences and how these have impacted their conceptual and aesthetic decisions as well as technical development.

'Major Research Paper: The Paper will demonstrate the depth complexity of your conceptual knowledge and will establish the artistic context for your body of artwork and final exhibition (minimum 3500 words). The paper must be identified with a cover page that includes a title and word count.'

- TASC Course Assessment Guidelines

With consideration of the 2020 context taken into account, the standard and presentation of the Major Research Paper was still noticeably inconsistent in comparison to previous years. Some Major Papers were completely missing, many were under the word count or titled carelessly or incorrectly; 'Critical Analysis' or 'Major' or 'Research Essay' or without a specific title as required in the course guidelines. A formal cover page with a relevant title of the paper, a course code word count, images and bibliography are basic requirements.

Rather than consisting entirely of reflective comments written in the first person the content of the Major Research Paper should represent a degree of rigour in the level of theoretical research undertaken. This research enables the student to build the artistic context for their work. As such it would be expected that the paper be written predominantly in the third person in addition to first person reflective comments when summarising key influences.

To maintain the integrity of the theory component of this course more rigour and attention to the assessment standards and course requirements is needed. The Major Research Paper is a required evidence. As such it represents a candidate's grasp of the context for their own work and evidence of research and investigation over time – conceptual depth and their level of engagement with the subject. It must be included in the support materials to avoid impacting on the overall rating on Criterion 6.

Teachers and candidates are also advised to remove all evidence of internal ratings and assessments from visual diaries and the support materials. The anonymity of the candidates is a TASC requirement and all names must be removed from displays prior to the assessment process.

Criterion 7: Use Artistic Techniques Media and Technologies

The consolidation of technical skills remains consistent with previous years with a comparative number of folios exhibiting an exceptional standard of technical skill and application of technologies across a diverse range of studio areas. This is indicative of the tendency for the majority of candidates to remain with the same studio specialisation over two years with the opportunity to consolidate and refine their skills.

This year as a consequence of the disrupted learning space there appeared to be less evidence of risk taking and experimentation in choice of mediums and techniques with the continued resurgence of interest in more traditional and illustrative styles. Mixed-media and digital photography were the dominant studio specialisations represented. There were fewer experimental and installation-based exhibitions with minimal representations of printmaking, Graphic Design and sculpture. Digital Art, painting and illustration remains strong, taking over from Graphic Design as a preferred style in the digital illustration space. Graphic Design remains at risk of being absorbed into a photo/digital/illustration space and losing its unique identity. Where possible teachers need to promote Graphic Design as the pure design-based subject it represents within our studios as it provides a clear pathway to tertiary and vocational studies in the creative industries.

The popularity of ceramics continues to surge across the state with some outstanding exemplars in this medium. The variety and diversity in the application of glaze and surface treatments, the ambitious installation of sculptural displays and technical skill demonstrates an excellent level of engagement by both teachers and students, indicative of a renewed confidence in the medium as a vehicle for artistic expression.

Painting and drawing as disciplines remain strong with some outstanding folios across a diversity of genres and mediums. There is also a resurgence of interest in traditional media with an increase in the number of folios based on observational drawing and detailed illustrative techniques. Classic still-life compositions, Photo-realism and expressionistic portraiture

were all popular with limited folios of abstraction. Illustrative techniques and the use of circular formats and miniature scale painting were prevalent with interpretations of the natural landscape gaining in popularity. Often the choice of a smaller- scale did not necessarily translate into an exceptional level of technical skill and similarly large-scale work often amplified technical flaws. The competent use and manipulation of design elements was often an area of weakness in some mixed-media folios.

As in previous years digital photography is a dominant medium with a limited number of film-based folios but an increase in the genre of photo-montage and digital collage. In general, there were varying standards of photography with a level of inconsistency in the exploration of design elements and development of conceptual content. There appeared to be a prevalence of self-portraiture and obvious social media influences in the production of similar content at state level. This is probably symptomatic of the COVID-19 context this year rather than a desired trend however more focus on explicit teaching of concept development needs to be considered in this space if the content is to communicate in any substance and depth.

Generally, the evidence of experimentation and documented exploration in digital folios remains limited and an inconsistent area. Students need to undertake a sufficient number of photoshoots during the course of the year and document more extensively screen shots of tutorials, technique development and printing processes.

This year as in previous years, in both DoE and non-government sectors across the State there were consistent examples of excellence with a number of exceptional exhibitions where teachers and students clearly demonstrated their understanding of the course content, criteria and standards and the evidences required.

In this context teachers are reminded that the EA rating represents an exceptional standard across all criteria. A true EA satisfies all criteria to an A standard in the curriculum document. Awarding students straight 'A' ratings internally where the folio is clearly not exceptional against all criteria or defaulting to a norm referencing model is strongly discouraged. In 2021 teachers are encouraged to promote the rigour of the course and continue to challenge their students to engage with experimental technologies and to embrace a 'risk taking' approach through creative exploration in their studio practice. In 2021 we can only be optimistic in anticipating a return to normal practice with more opportunities for students to access galleries, museums, exhibitions and re-engage with the local arts communities.

Congratulations to all Art Studio Practice students who successfully completed the course and exhibited their work in 2020. The diversity and quality of exhibitions presented across the state and the excellent outcomes attained are undoubtedly a credit to the resilience of our candidates and the determination and support of their teachers in overcoming the challenges during what has been an extraordinarily difficult year. Well done everyone!

Thank you to our colleagues in all government and non-government schools and colleges for your ongoing support, generosity and collegiality that you have extended to the members of the Art Studio Practice assessment panel during 2020.

We look forward to the continuing development and successful delivery of Art Studio Practice in 2021.