



Assessment in Visual Arts

What do we want students to learn and how do we assess what students know?

There are important principles to consider when designing learning programs and assessment strategies for your students. This article contextualises these principles in terms of the new 7–10 Visual Arts, Visual Design, and Photographic and Digital Media syllabuses. Most teachers would be familiar with the HSC assessment requirements but although the Stages 4 and 5 courses will also use a standards-based approach, the procedures will not necessarily be exactly the same. You can find more information on standards-based assessment on the following site

www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/eltis/index.htm

Some key principles

Faculties should:

- have assessment plans
- ensure that assessment strategies are valid and reliable
- have assessment practices which are time efficient and manageable.

Teachers should:

- plan assessment when planning teaching and learning activities
- make assessment judgements during teaching and learning
- be able to support judgements with examples or evidence of student work (this doesn't mean that work samples are required to support every judgement but that teachers can articulate how judgements were made)
- use a variety of appropriate assessment strategies.

In planning effective learning programs teachers design assessment activities that support the development of their students' knowledge, understanding and skills, and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate evidence of their learning.

Visual Arts students in all syllabuses are encouraged to be actively involved in their learning and to acquire skills to become self-directed learners. Assessment activities provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their achievement and progress towards achievement of syllabus outcomes through self and peer assessment.

The purpose and criteria of an assessment activity should be clearly articulated to students. The assessment should focus on what was taught providing valid (i.e. inclusive of all students) and reliable evidence of student learning.

Assessment for learning

The key idea is that students receive on-going feedback from teachers and peers and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through discussion, self-reflection and peer assessment. Teachers might record students' achievement as part of this strategy but students should know if these results will be used as part of a formal assessment and reporting practice.

Assessment of learning

Many teachers will know this term as summative assessment in that it is designed to show what a student knows and can do at a designated point in time—usually at the end of a unit or term or semester. Assessment of learning in visual arts usually involves amalgamating information recorded from a number different activities over time into a single statement or mark or award.

Assessment of learning should reveal students' achievement of all the syllabus outcomes over time (e.g. the stage of learning). This does not imply that each outcome is assessed individually. It is important that teaching programs allow for and encourage students to address all the syllabus outcomes and that assessment strategies allow for each student to demonstrate their achievement.

Feedback involves teachers communicating to students how well their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing in relation to the course outcomes. Meaningful and constructive feedback enables students to reflect on their learning, to identify and reinforce their strengths or to improve and correct misunderstandings.

Developing self-assessment skills through self-reflection and peer assessment is an important aspect of feedback, with students becoming increasingly more sophisticated and self-initiated learners as they progress through schooling.

Recording evidence for assessment involves teachers making decisions about which aspects of, and in what format, student performance should be recorded.

The information will identify a student's progress, the directions for future learning and form a basis for making judgments of student achievement at key points in a learning program.

Recording procedures may include assessment sheets for individual students, a class, group or cohort of students, across a range of assessment activities.

The recording of assessment information should be time efficient and manageable and reflect the reporting processes of the school.

Information for students about an assessment activity should include:

- a **description of the assessment activity** which clearly expresses the purpose of the assessment and is linked to the outcomes
- **criteria for assessing learning** which is communicated to the students with the task or activity
- **clear explanations of the assessment guidelines**, providing a marking range which reflects the nature and intention of the activity.

Assessment activities

The following components are central to all the Visual Art syllabuses:

- Resolved works: Artmaking in Visual Arts; Making Visual Design artworks and Making Photographic and Digital Media works
- Folios: The Visual Arts Diary; Visual Design and Photographic and Digital Media Journal
- Studies: Critical and historical studies in Visual Arts; Critical and historical interpretations in both Visual Design and Photographic and Digital Media.

Assessment in artmaking/making could refer to:

- how different conventions, strategies and procedures can be used to make artworks
- how different materials and techniques can represent ideas and interests in the world
- how a point of view and meanings can be developed in artworks
- how the frames and the agencies of the conceptual framework develop meanings and different points of view, and can be utilized in making artworks for exhibition and audiences.

Activities may include: investigations of the materials; techniques and procedures used in different expressive

forms (2D, 3D and/or 4D in Visual Arts, Print, Object, Space-time in Visual Design and Still, Moving and Interactive in Photographic and Digital media); and the development and resolution of ideas. Students may work individually or collaboratively and exhibit or present their work.

Assessment using the Visual Arts Diary or Visual Design or Photographic and Digital Media Journal may refer to research and experimentation, ideas and interests, investigations and explanations through preliminary sketches, notes, diagrams, photographs, mediated images and annotations.

Assessment in critical and historical studies/critical and historical interpretations could refer to:

- how and why artists, photographers and visual designers make artworks
- how the frames can explain and interpret artworks/works from different points of view
- how conventions, procedures and strategies are used by artists, visual designers and photographers to investigate ideas and interests in the world to make artworks
- how the relationships between artist, artwork, world and audience explain and interpret artworks/works and how they are made.

Activities may include: explanations and interpretations of artworks/works; debates and role play scenarios; research tasks investigating artists and their artmaking practice; and writing for exhibition catalogues or reports.

Detailed suggestions for Visual Arts, Visual Design and Photographic and Digital Media assessment activities are contained in the syllabuses of each course (7–10 Visual Arts, pp. 61–63; 7–10 Visual Design, pp. 61–62; 7–10 Photographic and Digital Media, pp. 58–59).

In the Visual Arts workshops in Semester 1 2005 teachers will be involved in discussing work samples and assessment strategies, including the relationship between the unit content, the assessment criteria and the determination of the standard for one or more of the 7–10 Visual Arts, Visual Design, and Photographic and Digital Media syllabuses.

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