

2020 VCE Studio Arts examination report

General comments

In 2020 the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority produced an examination based on the *VCE Studio Arts Adjusted Study Design for 2020 only*.

Most students responded well to the 2020 VCE Studio Arts examination and seemed to have been well prepared despite the difficult circumstances brought about by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Students generally wrote in detail and at length, with many researching contemporary artists for the development of their own artworks and carrying this through to provide strong responses to Question 7. This holistic approach to the course assists students in achieving a comprehensive body of knowledge about an artist, which helps them achieve very good results. Teachers are tending to move away from prepared responses to particular artists, giving students more scope to select which artists they want to research.

Specific information

Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

The report provides sample answers, or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

For each of the questions in Section A, students were asked to select one artwork from the 15 artworks in the detachable insert and use this as the basis for their response. Students were able to select the same artwork or a different artwork for each question in Section A.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	2	5	13	19	18	16	13	9	4	5.1

This question asked students to explain how the artist used art elements and principles to demonstrate aesthetic qualities in a selected artwork. The higher scoring responses demonstrated a broad understanding of the art elements and principles and how the artist used them to demonstrate aesthetic qualities. They used descriptive terms such as 'a rhythmic fusion of colour' or 'reflects elements of nature, creating a calm mood within the artwork' as in the student example below.

Lower scoring responses generally struggled to provide a fluent explanation and tended to discuss each element and principle in isolation. Their answers suggested that they struggled to understand the relationship between art elements and principles and aesthetic qualities, often discussing the art elements rather than the principles, which weakened their answers.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby's 'Dwell: Aso Ebi' utilises a rhythmic fusion of colours to create a variety and invite the viewers gaze to many points of the artwork. The over use of cool colours featuring greens and blues reflects elements of nature, creating a calm mood within the artwork. The warm yellows on the individuals presumably displayed on the wall enact a calm and loving approach which contrast to the bleaker cool greens the room depicts, in which the woman is sitting. The variety of pattern showcased on the wallpaper and floor contrast against each other and create a sense of business to the piece. The repetition of two images of couples standing together contrast the woman in the room and suggest she is challenging conventional views but also can't escape her culture, demonstrated by her clothing having some parts of yellow, paralleling the couple on the wall. The pink jug contrasts against the colours of the artwork but also connects to the pink behind the yellow-clothed individuals, further emulating the connection between the room and the woman and the picture on the wall.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	12	5	7	11	16	17	15	10	5	4.1

In this question students were asked how a selected artwork would be promoted in a public gallery and in one other exhibition space. It required students to provide detail about promotion of the artwork and tested the depth of their understanding of the methods of promotion in different galleries and exhibition spaces.

High-scoring responses described innovative approaches to promotion and linked this to the selected work and gallery type. Lower scoring responses tended to list methods of promoting the artwork but did not describe how they would be used with the selected artwork.

A significant number of students misread the question and talked about the conservation and/or display of the selected works and not the promotion. A number of student responses appeared to be rote-learned and did not relate to the selected image or apply to the selected gallery. Some described the role of the gallery and then gave only a few details about the promotion.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Public Gallery

As a public gallery aim to educate, engage, and empower people with artworks it would be their goal to promote the artwork to as many people as possible. This could be done through emailing a subscription list, as well as social media advertisements on facebook and Instagram, in the hope of drawing people to this artwork. Additionally, due to the bold colours of this piece such as yellow, pink and blue, the pattern could be printed onto coffee cups at local cafes, in an attempt to make the people wonder, and attend the gallery to discover more about these artworks.

Selected exhibition space

In a commercial gallery, the aim is to sell this artwork to generate a profit. Due to this, artwork such as this one can be promoted in an email subscription list, as well as social media, and even through online bids. Due to the variety of colours in this artwork, it could be the cover of the gallery's advertising poster, this being a method of promotion. Additionally, it could be the background of the gallery's website, and even a printed brochure, subconsciously attracting the audience, this promoting it adequately. The artwork could also be printed to a large size to both attract the audience and also act as a method of promotion.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	2	3	9	18	20	17	14	10	6	4.4

This question asked students to analyse the ways in which the artist has used materials, techniques and processes in the production of this artwork.

High-scoring responses selected an artwork with materials, techniques and processes they are familiar with and were able to demonstrate their knowledge and experience of these areas, including detailed descriptions of specific areas in the selected artwork.

Students are reminded to look at the artwork in the coloured insert and specifically refer to it in their response rather than just writing generally about the three areas in the question. Students who did not score well tended to give step-by-step instructions about a process without relating it to the selected image.

Some students wrote generalised descriptions, formulaic or rote-learned responses or incorrect information that indicated that they knew little about the materials, techniques and processes used in the selected artwork.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Hung Liu's Mother and Daughter (1997) (203.2 x 355.6 cm) would have used a direct painting method. Gesso would have been painted on the canvas as an underpainting first. This oil on canvas would have used fat over lean, which is the process of placing the thick oils first on the canvas and then going over it to create fine details on the face and clothes. Blending technique as well as wet on wet would have been used to paint the smooth water, with the use of thick brushes. To achieve this blended aesthetic, linseed oil may have been used to smooth out the paint, which uses the process of mixing linseed oil with oil paint to make it smooth. Small sable brushes could have been used for the shadowing of the clothing and skin of the 'mother and daughter', using blending techniques to achieve tonal variation, which is the process of using brushes to apply the oil paint on the flesh delicately, in smooth strokes ensuring colours are blended.

Section B

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	1	6	16	23	22	16	10	5	4.7

This question asked students to identify their sources of inspiration and to discuss how these have influenced the development of ideas in their exploration proposal.

High-scoring responses gave specific details about their sources of inspiration and described how these directly influenced the development of their ideas, including their approach to subject matter, selection of materials, techniques or processes, and their use of art elements and principles and their relationship to concepts and ideas. The best responses responded to the question in an insightful manner and were not just a rewrite of the students' exploration proposal.

Students who did not score well spoke only about themes and not the ideas and concepts that had evolved from their sources of inspiration. Some of the discussions were too general or superficial, at times repetitive and with little substance. Some responses were outside the scope of the question and discussed the evidence of the sources of inspiration such as trials, potential directions and final artwork, which were not relevant to the question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Sonia Delaunay's vibrant simultaneous artworks wherein the clashing of secondary and tertiary colours side by side creates visual vibration, inspired my desire to create dynamic works full of 'movement to subvert the inherent stagnancy of the urban environment' (exploration proposal quote). The ethereal transience light in 'Electric prisms no 41' influenced the identification of tranquillity as an aesthetic quality I wished to produce, which developed in to the discussion of using a cool colour palette of blues and purples in my trials. Further, the imbrication of theatrical and industrial motifs in 'Rythms' inspired me to consider combing organic, natural imagery with subject matter from urban environment.

Howard Arkley's polychromatic 'Suburban Exterior' influenced the theme of my exploration proposal, which was to reinvigorate the urban environment. While Howard Arkely achieves this via vibrant hues in the suburban landscape, I developed this idea into two conceptual possibilities – nature and patterns – as sources of vitality that could be embedded in urban imagery to reimagine and reinvigorate it.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	2	2	8	17	24	21	14	8	4	4.4

Students were required to explain the aesthetic development of the subject matter in the production of one of their potential directions. This question challenged many students as it required them to think about the aesthetic development of their potential direction and not just the methods, materials and techniques that they may have used.

A definition of potential directions is outlined on page 10 of the *VCE Studio Arts Study Design* as part of the studio process: 'Potential directions should aim to effectively communicate resolved conceptual possibilities, subject matter, aesthetic qualities, materials and techniques as documented in the exploration proposal. Potential directions are used as the basis of developing artworks.'

High-scoring responses were insightful, explaining the methods the student used to develop their subject matter and describing how the method the student selected and the choice of aesthetic qualities worked together to produce the potential direction. More thorough responses extended their thoughts to make connections between the ideas in the exploration proposal and how these evolved into a potential direction using the aesthetic qualities and relevant areas of the art form that they explored.

Lower scoring responses tended to simply describe a finished artwork and not their potential direction. They included complex information about the materials and techniques used but without reference to either subject matter or the development of aesthetics. They did not explain how art elements and principles were used, explored or refined. More superficial responses described the potential direction by referring to the subject matter without linking it to aesthetic development and the methods used in the finished artwork(s).

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

In the aesthetic developments of the subject matter in my 3rd potential direction I used various methods, both painting and digital. The focus of my exploration proposal was in identity and the overwhelming aspects of this topic, with my subject matter being a female figure surrounded by some form of chaos meant to represent the overwhelming ideas of figuring out who you are as a person. For this potential direction, the figure was lying horizontally on a chair, face to the ceiling with an arm stretched towards the viewer. In developing this aspect of the subject matter I completed a number of photo shoots with my sister to produce various poses that could show a person in discomfort. The other aspect of the subject matter in this potential direction was paper falling from the ceiling, covering the floor and part of the figure. In the aesthetic development of these papers I worked on different compositions of the paper falling by drawing the papers, painting the papers and using photoshop & manipulate the positions and sizes of the papers. Through these methods I was able to develop the most visually appealing composition for this potential direction.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	2	1	4	10	20	23	19	12	6	3	5.1

In this question students were asked to discuss how they have shown the development of their artwork(s) and how their finished artwork(s) would be presented for display.

Most students addressed both parts of the question, and although some may have focused more on one aspect, the question allowed all students to communicate their experience and thoughts about the studio process. The studio process is outlined on page 10 of the *VCE Studio Arts Study Design*.

Students who scored highly discussed folio documentation, annotation, exploration of materials, techniques and aesthetics that were developed from Units 3 and 4 in their finished artworks. They explained how they continued to develop their ideas and concepts. They also explained how they would want their artwork presented in a way that enhanced the work and enabled it to be viewed in the best possible conditions. They had very specific ideas about specialised requirements for the presentation of their artworks. The best responses were those that could explain their thoughts in detail about presentation as part of the art making process.

Lower scoring students only outlined their process from exploration proposal to final product or discussed work from Unit 4 only. On the whole, the answers were superficial, and the use of art terminology was only adequate. Some standard answers only mentioned wall colour, lighting and plinths for display and did not discuss the relationship of the studio process to the presentation of artwork(s).

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

In Unit 4 I produced 2 final images that collectively convey my theme of Human Connection. My first artwork is an A2 print that features hands interlocking in an abstract way; conveying the idea of connecting with others. The image was developed using a selection of my potential directions outlined in Unit 3. For example, in Unit 3 I trialled taking photos of human features whereas in my final work I refined the placement of these features and visually linked them together to better show connection. Furthermore, throughout my development process I continued to refine my colour palette to reflect the minimal aesthetic outlined in my exploration proposal. This refinement is demonstrated in the minimal background of my artwork and the muted skin tones of the hands. The overall image is quite dark, therefore if it was to be displayed, a white wall would allow it to contrast the wall and stand out. My second image is a large panoramic canvas print that depicts a blurred figure multiple times, moving through a space. This work conveys the concept of disconnection from one's self. My development of the blur from originally just adding an abstract quality to my works, I refined my choice in colours to reflect the theme; I used black and white to further enhance disconnect. If my second work were to be displayed, I would place it against a black wall to allow the white background of the image to best stand out on the wall. Further the black would compliment the dull, unstimulating aesthetic of the image.

Section C

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	4	1	2	4	8	9	13	13	13	11	11	6	4	7.0

This question required students to discuss two artists they had studied this year and how they have interpreted subject matter, influences, and historical and cultural contexts to communicate ideas in their artworks. Many students responded well to this question, demonstrating an excellent understanding of the practices of two artists and their artworks that they had studied during the year.

Higher scoring responses addressed all key words in the question, referring to specific artworks throughout the discussion. Most students did this very well, giving detailed information about the artists and the historical and cultural contexts, an explanation of the ideas in the artworks, and the interpretation of subject matter with specific examples. They also demonstrated a sophisticated selection of artistic influences and other influences in a well-articulated and knowledgeable response. The very best responses used a well-ordered construction of discussion as they did not treat the two artists separately. They were able to make parallels and connections between the artists and had an excellent use of terminology and language.

Lower scoring responses did not address all parts of the question and often only referred to one artist or artwork. They did not refer to specific artworks or give details on subject matter. They only discussed the historical and cultural context of two artists they had studied. Some also wrote about the personal lives of the artists without explaining how this was communicated in their artworks. Others were unable to show the connection between the interpretation of subject matter, influences, and historical and cultural contexts and the artists' artworks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Johannes Vermeer was a 17th Baroque painter residing in Delft, Netherlands. During this period in history, Europe was experiencing the Reformation, brought about by the teachings of Martin Luther. The Reformation saw great changes across Europe, and resulted in the church patronage of artists drying up in northern Europe. This meant that artists like Vermeer could no longer rely on commissions from churches and a new emerging class of merchants and bankers would form the source of income for artists like Vermeer. This new class resulted in the subject matter changing from religious scenes to portraits and landscapes, with artists adapting to these changes. Influences of Vermeer were his suspected teacher Carel Fabritius, who helped him develop his use of techniques such as the light flooded wall and Gerald Dou, whose art influenced the subject matter depicted by Vermeer. These influences and historical changes can be seen in Vermeers artworks such as Lady Holding a Balance; showing a woman holding a balance in front of a painting of the Last Judgement, with gold and pearls sprawled across the table in front of her. This work shows Vermeers influence in Carel Fabritius in his use of the light flooded wall while also showing the influence of the Reformation on the subject matter he depicted.

Francis Bacon was a painter that commonly depicted abstract and disturbing portraits and figures. During the period in which Bacon worked there was societal change occurring, with one of the largest events being World War 2. With the increase in technology, more information about the war was shared across the world through news and photography. These photos from the war had a profound impact on Bacon, giving him a disturbed cynical view of the world, influencing his subject matter. In many of his paintings, especially his triptych master work 'Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion', he depicts abstract figures in positions of anguish, presenting his views of the greed and obsession of mankind. Bacon was influenced by many artists, especially Pablo Picasso and the artists working along side him in the school of London.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Average
%	12	2	2	5	6	9	10	10	10	10	9	7	4	3	6.4

In this question students were asked to analyse the curatorial and conservation considerations involved in preparing two artworks for display in two different exhibition spaces viewed in their year of study.

High-scoring responses included highly informative descriptions with specific information about the curatorial decisions and methods, including decisions made about grouping and placement of artworks and specific conservation considerations about two different spaces. They also gave detailed explanations of the curatorial considerations, giving the reasons why and the purpose for which they were used. Some answers cleverly utilised curator statements published online from local, national and international galleries, indicating that students needed to broaden their research this year in order to gather relevant information.

Lower scoring responses focused on the conservation of works, but in a generalised, formulaic way and/or provided rote-learned responses that did not include information about the curatorial and conservation considerations. Many did not specifically address the processes involved in the preparation for artwork display, such as how the artwork fits in within the context or theme of the exhibition space and the surrounding artworks or wall preparation, preservation methods, cleaning, labelling, research and didactic panels. These responses also had few references to the different art spaces visited in the year of study.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Exhibition Space 1 Monash Gallery of Art

Exhibition Space 2 Blindside Art Gallery

'Untitled 1' is a photo print by Ponch Hawkins as part of her series 'Lay down your head' made for the Monash Gallery of Art exhibition 'the ties that bind'. It is a photo print, and is thus vulnerable to drastic temperature changes, which can cause it to warp or lose shape. Inconsistent humidity can also cause the print to grow mold or distort. To ensure this doesn't occur, the artwork is displayed in an air-conditioned gallery space with the temperature between 20°C to 25°C, and humidity between 45% to 55%. The artwork could also be discolored by strong light, there are no windows to let natural light in and light bulbs in the gallery are kept below 50 lux and it is measured with a lux meter. To prevent the print from losing shape or being damaged by physical contact and pests, it is best displayed in a frame with perspex glass. However, Hawkes' theme for the series was homelessness in Monash, particularly that of women. Therefore, to emphasize the theme of vulnerability and exposure to the elements, the prints are tacked onto the gallery walls directly in 4 corners. Because of this, it is inevitable that the artwork could be damaged, but any damage is a curatorial decision made to highlight the dangers of homelessness. Seeing as the artwork is displayed with many other artworks by 3 other artists in the exhibition, the curator set out to highlight the different artists by painting different wall colors for each series. Hawkes' works had a background of dark purple, which is a custom color desired from her artwork. The dark color also conveys the somber theme of the series.

'Natural Instincts' by Ximena Cuervo's is a video displayed in Blindside Gallery's exhibition, Tertulia. As the artwork is a form of digital media, it has no risk of discoloration or distortion, and the responsibility of ensuring the media does not go obsolete is on the artist, as the space only displays the artwork for a short period of time. To display this video, the curator has chosen to play it on an old box television positioned on a slab just below eye-level. The use of the old television conveys Cuervo's theme of nostalgia and international and/or cultural thinking, as 'Natural Instincts' conveys the concept of international misogyny and depicts a mother horrified at having a baby girl. The box television invokes feelings of childhood which links to Cuevos's ideas, and also suggests the thinking depicted in the work is, like the television, outdated. Although the gallery space has large windows, the blinds are drawn as much as possible and the television

is placed against the windows to make the video as visible as possible. The exhibition time is short, no other changes like wall colours are made.