

Draft Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Leaving Certificate Art (including Crafts)

For noting

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1. Introduction

In 2007, a newly developed syllabus for Leaving Certificate Art was approved by the Minister for Education and Science but, due to the financial crisis which followed, was not introduced into schools. Since that time there have been significant developments in the area of art education including the publication of the *Arts in Education Charter* (2012) by the Departments of Education and Skills and Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Literacy* (2016) and the development of the specification for Junior Cycle Visual Art, which will be introduced in schools in September 2017. The introduction of the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) methodology in Ireland and the incorporation of Design Thinking as a methodology for innovation and problem-solving in art-related areas as well as the world of business are also developments of significance. Many of these developments are also supportive of the Key Skills of Senior Cycle, which are articulated in *Towards Learning* (NCCA, 2009) and a feature of all recently developed senior cycle specifications. Given the developments referred to above, there is some concern that the 2007 syllabus is now outdated.

This paper provides the background for the revision and updating of the 2007 syllabus. It explores the position in relation to the current syllabus and recent developments in the assessment of art at senior cycle. It also looks at curriculum and assessment developments in art in other countries. Finally, it explores some of the issues for consideration and sets out a brief for the Art Development Group charged with revising the 2007 syllabus.

2. Background

Leaving Certificate Art (including Crafts) Syllabus

The current Leaving Certificate Art syllabus has been in existence since 1971. Viewing it today it presents a very narrow approach to curriculum in that it is very focused on defined outputs, which almost reflect the notion of a hierarchy of genres in their descriptions. In terms of structure and curriculum approach, it is closely related to the pre-1989 Intermediate Certificate syllabus and states:

The course [Art (Including Crafts)] should be as broadly based as that for the Intermediate Certificate. It is important that a sense of unity should be maintained throughout the different sections of the syllabus in order to avoid a system of isolated lessons. (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 1983/4, p. 312)

It outlines the following structure in which the first area, Observational Studies, is seen as an overarching element as much as a component in its own right:

- Observational Studies
- Imaginative Composition and Still Life
- Design and Craftwork.

As part of the Design and Craftwork section, *the History and Appreciation of Art are included ... to afford pupils an opportunity of showing awareness of the place of the visual arts in our culture and community* (DES, 1983/4, p. 312).

The examination, at the end of the two years of study, requires responses to four papers:

1. Imaginative Composition or Still Life
2. Design or Craftwork
3. Life Sketching
4. History and Appreciation of Art.

The History and Appreciation of Art covers three specific fields of special study, which are:

- Section 1 - Art in Ireland (from Prehistoric times to the present)
- Section 2 - European Art (from 1000 A.D. to the present)

- Section 3 - General Appreciation (topics based on everyday visual experience in the candidates' own environment).

The current examination is based around the four papers listed in Table 5, below. However, these assessment arrangements will change from 2018 onwards.

The execution of these tasks as coursework over an extended period of time, rather than within the constraints of a comparatively short invigilated examination, will provide candidates with more time to develop and produce their work in line with best pedagogical practice. (Circular letter 0035/2015, p. 1)

Further details on this revised assessment can be seen in the *Revised Assessment Procedures for Leaving Certificate Art* section (p. 21) below.

Table 1: The marks breakdown for the Leaving Certificate examinations in Art

Leaving Certificate Examination	Marks	%
Imaginative Composition or Still Life	100	25
Design or Craftwork	100	25
Life Sketching	50	12.5
History and Appreciation of Art	150	37.5
Totals	400	100

Revised Leaving Certificate Art Syllabus (2007)

A revised Leaving Certificate Art syllabus was developed between 2004 and 2007 but was not introduced. This revised syllabus sought to equip students with a *visual language that enables them to communicate knowledge, emotions, ideas and insights in a visual medium and to understand and engage with the artistic work of others.* (NCCA, n.d., p. 1). It describes visual language as having four dimensions; Creative, Aesthetic, Critical/historical and Cultural.

The aims of the revised syllabus include giving students the opportunity to:

- *make personal, visual and tactile responses to experiences, emotions, ideas and environments*
- *develop the imaginative, creative, intellectual, and intuitive powers of the students*
- *support and develop investigative, analytical, experimental learning behaviours, technical and expressive skills, aesthetic awareness and critical judgement through participating creatively in a range of art, craft and design activities and the history and appreciation of art*

- *develop the student's capacity to enjoy, value, evaluate, speak and write about visual art and design and to articulate ideas, opinions and preferences using appropriate vocabulary*
- *promote knowledge and develop understanding and appreciation of the achievements and role of artists, craftspeople, designers and architects in the past and in contemporary society*
- *promote understanding of the role of art, design, architecture and craft in everyday life, further education, training, and in the work place.*
- *have an awareness of relevant health and safety practices in all aspects of the syllabus.*

(NCCA, n.d., p. 2)

The syllabus, although divided into three sections, was designed as a cohesive unit and as such, all sections were to be viewed as interlinked for teaching and learning purposes:

Section A: Drawing

- Unit 1: Observational Drawing
- Unit 2: Life Drawing

Section B: Studio Work

- Unit 3: Craft: Textiles, Photography, Woodcraft, Ceramics, Metal craft, Stage Design, Book craft, Puppetry, Printmaking, Film/Video Making
- Unit 4: Fine Art: Painting/Drawing, Printmaking, Sculpture, or a combination
- Unit 5: Visual Communication: Animation, Design for Printing, Multimedia, Graphic application in 2D and 3D

Section C: History and Appreciation of Art and Design

- Unit 6: History and Appreciation of Art and Design.

Section C was to have all students study an Area from Category 1 and an Area from Category 2. This unit aimed to approach the subject of History and Appreciation of Art and Design through the development of aesthetic and critical awareness with an emphasis on historical styles, the subject and content of artefacts, the cultural dimension and the built environment.

Category 1:

- Area 1: Early Irish Art and Architecture c1200

- Area 2: Romanesque and Gothic Art and Architecture
- Area 3: European Art during the Renaissance c1400-c1520
- Area 4: Art and Architecture in the Baroque Age
- Area 5: Architecture in Ireland c1700-c1837

Category 2:

- Area 6: Age of Revolution – French Painting
- Area 7: Modernism
- Area 8: 20th Century Architecture and Design
- Area 9: 20th Century and Contemporary Film
- Area 10: Contemporary Art
- Area 11: Islamic and Asian Art and Design

The use of ICT was viewed not only as a tool for research, but also as a way of creating, exploring, experimenting with and manipulating both still and moving images. The revised syllabus also noted that ICT can support student’s learning in art by:

- *providing additional tools to facilitate learning about visual concepts and visual communication*
- *facilitating greater levels of experimentation, exploration, development of ideas and collaboration by speeding up processes, reducing resource requirements and recording different stages of development of ideas electronically for review and further development*
- *providing modern, authentic and motivational methods and tools to plan, create, develop, present and communicate ideas*
- *enabling the production of electronic generated artefacts.*

(NCCA, n.d., p. 3)

While designed for all students, it was through assessment that differentiation between Higher and Ordinary levels would take place. Assessment was based on the aims and learning outcomes of the syllabus. The assessment components and weightings for this assessment were set out as follows:

Table 2: The proposed weightings for the components in Art

Leaving Certificate Examination	Marks	%
Section A: Drawing examination	No breakdown of marks decided.	25
Section B: Studio work		45
Section C: Written examination		30

The allocation of marks in assessing Studio Work was expected to vary slightly between Ordinary and Higher levels.

The syllabus was designed for 180 hours of class contact time (the equivalent of five periods of 40 minutes each per week), with double classes required per week to facilitate studio work. This revised syllabus built on the work and design of the rebalanced Junior Certificate Art syllabus and was designed to provide continuity with regard to the learning and experiences of students as they progressed from junior to senior cycle.

Junior Cycle Visual Art

The recent development of the Junior Cycle Visual Art specification, which replaces the Junior Certificate Art, Craft, Design syllabus from September 2017 onwards, places the student at the centre of their experience of Visual Art in junior cycle. It allows the student to *make a greater connection with learning by focusing on the quality of learning that takes place, and by offering experiences that are engaging and enjoyable for them, and are relevant to their lives.* (DES, 2016, p. 3)

The focus is on learning within the safe space of the art class and to engage in practical, hands-on acts of creativity in order to develop self-confidence, inquisitiveness, imagination, and creativity. The ability to engage in real-world problem-solving, building a capacity to work, over time, both on their own or in groups, as they design and execute artistic and aesthetic tasks is also a feature of the specification.

The learning at the core of junior cycle, as a whole, is described in twenty-four Statements of Learning, which, underpinned by the eight principles, are central to planning for the students' experience of, and the evaluation of the school's junior cycle programme – *Schools will ensure that all statements of*

learning and the eight key skills feature in the programmes offered to their junior cycle students. For Visual Art, there is a focus on six of the 24 Statements of Learning (SOL) in the specification.

(DES, 2015, p. 12)

SOL 3	The student creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts.
SOL 4	The student creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the process and skills involved.
SOL 8	The student values local, national and international heritage, understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change.
SOL 20	The student uses appropriate technologies in meeting a design challenge.
SOL 21	The student applies practical skills as she/he develops models and products using a variety of materials and technologies.
SOL 23	The student brings an idea from conception to realisation.

(DES, 2016, p. 7)

The eight Key Skills of junior cycle have also been integrated across the Strands and Elements as well as throughout the learning outcomes of Visual Art.

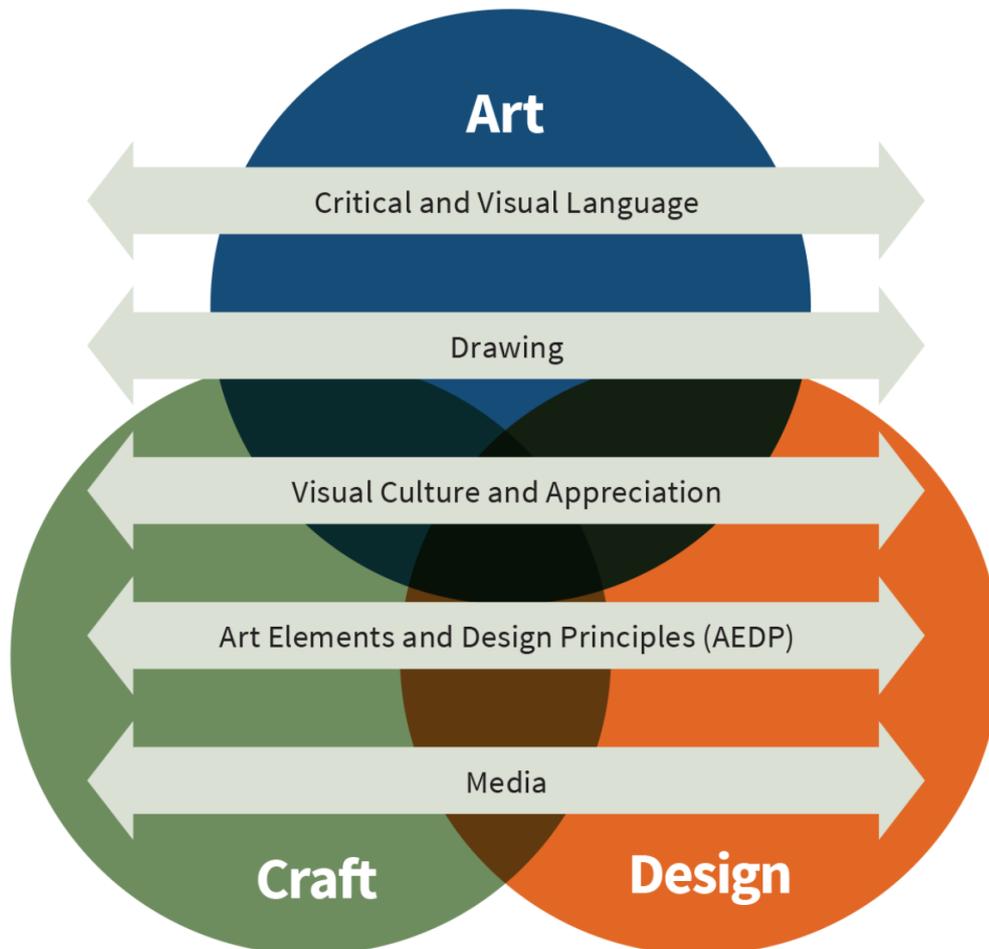


Figure 1: Integrated nature of the Strands and Elements in Junior Cycle Visual Art

The three strands are familiar to art teachers and reflect the previous work involved in the Junior Certificate. However, they have been redefined with the approach of the junior cycle in mind. Briefly they are:

Art, or fine art, is the expression of creative skill in a visual form. It emphasises ideas, feelings and visual qualities through imaginative and/or technical skill. Apart from the creation of artworks, fine art also encompasses the study of art through appreciation and critical discussion.

Craft is the application of a range of particular artistic skills and knowledge to produce artefacts of aesthetic worth. With an emphasis on processes and materials, the artefacts created may represent either traditional crafts or a more individual approach by the craftsperson.

Design is the process of planning, problem-solving and creating. It can be a response to a brief, a need or a situation. Emphasising the process of planning, problem-solving and completion, with drawing as a means of thinking, formal visual elements and imagery are used to communicate messages and ideas.

(DES, 2016, p.12)

The Strands, however, should not be seen as stand-alone in any way. Just as many artists transfer their skills across the range of work they are involved in, so too the elements of the new specification should be seen as naturally cross-cutting the strands.

There are five elements in the Visual Art specification, which are:

Critical and visual language: used by students to discuss, understand and assess an artistic work, whether it is their own or another's.

Drawing: the fundamental language integral to all of the activities undertaken by students in the three strands of art, craft and design. It is essential for enquiry, expression, documenting and communicating visual information.

Visual culture and appreciation: recognising that the modern world has become a more visual place encompassing a wide range of visual stimuli such as architecture and urban design to advertising, new media, the internet, fine art, craft, design, photography, fashion and more.

Art elements and design principles (AEDP): the building blocks of any work of art a student will create. Their application in 2-D, 3-D or digital works can be analysed by considering their use either collectively or individually.

Media: The means to interact, create, connect and communicate with others. In the work which students undertake, they can use traditional tools and methods or new, contemporary or digital means. Media also encompasses the knowledge of techniques or processes too.

There is a distinct move towards process over product in the new Junior Cycle Visual Art specification, which can be seen throughout the document, in the Classroom-Based Assessments and the final examination – *Within the safe space of the art class, students will experience the authentic visual art processes of imagining, investigating, experimenting, making, displaying and evaluating.* (DES, 2016, p. 6) It is important that continuity in the subject from junior to senior cycle is maintained and the current Junior Cycle Visual Art specification provides a strong basis for this.

Senior Cycle Developments

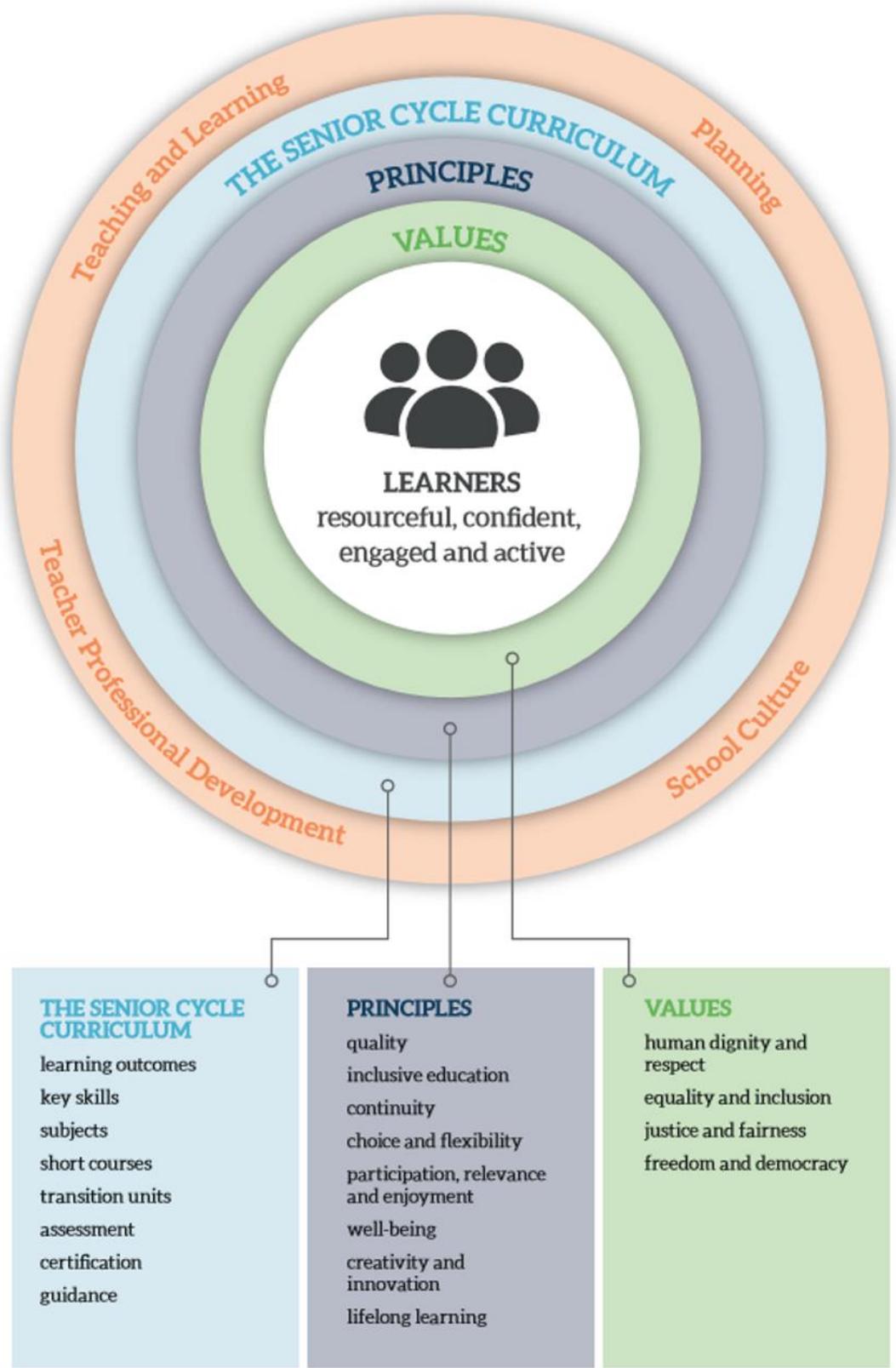


Figure 2: Overview of Senior Cycle

The vision of Senior Cycle education places the learner at its centre. This vision is built on the values and principles of the senior cycle curriculum including subjects and courses, embedded key skills, clearly expressed learning outcomes and diverse approaches to assessment. It is an experience designed to enable the learner to be:

- resourceful, where the learner can show their imagination, intelligence and intuition through enquiry, innovation, creativity and reflection
- confident, where the learner develops their physical and mental wellbeing by becoming self-aware, learning to cope with setbacks and engaging with ethics, values and beliefs
- engaged, where the learner participates in the social, community, national and international dimensions of their lives through making informed decisions, showing respect for others and taking an interest in and responsibility for their social and physical environment
- an active learner, where the learner pursues excellence in learning to the best of their ability and develops a love of learning through experiencing passion for, rigour in and commitment to learning, managing both their learning and learning choices and developing critical thinking skills.

Key skills

The ability to think critically and creatively, innovate and adapt to change, to work independently and in a team, and to be a reflective learner are prerequisites for life and for the workplace in the 21st century.’ (NCCA, 2009, p.2)

A framework of skills, in line with international trends, has been developed as part of the curriculum, learning and teaching at senior cycle. The key skills are central to the development of subjects and as such, learners will encounter the key skills in an integrated way through the learning outcomes of each subject. There are five key skills, illustrated and explained below, which are further developed and detailed through the elements that form them.



Figure 3: The five Key Skills of Senior Cycle

Information Processing helps learners develop the specific skills of accessing, selecting, evaluating and recording information, as well as appreciating the differences between information and knowledge and the roles that both play in making decisions and judgements.

Critical and Creative Thinking assists learners in becoming more skilled in higher-order reasoning and problem solving by reflecting critically on the forms of thinking and values that shape their own perceptions, opinions and knowledge.

Communicating helps learners to become better communicators in both formal and informal situations, develop specific skills in a variety of media and form a deeper understanding of the power of communication, particularly language and images, in the modern world.

Working with Others helps learners appreciate the dynamics of groups and the social skills needed to engage in collaborative work where they come to recognise that working collectively is important for social cohesion and for engaging with diverse cultural, ethnic and religious groups.

Being Personally Effective contributes to the personal growth of learners as they become more self-aware and to using that knowledge to develop personal goals and life plans, including building the

know-how of learners in recognising how to get things done and how to act autonomously, according to personal identities and personal values.

Education for Sustainable Development

The National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020, provides a framework for the education sector to support and contribute to a more sustainable future. The Strategy aims to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the 'what'), the key dispositions and skills (the 'how') and the values (the 'why') that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed, active citizens who act for a more sustainable future. (DES, 2014, p. 3)

In referring to education, a key objective of the strategy is to provide learners with the knowledge, dispositions, skills and values that will motivate and empower them to become active citizens and take measures to live more sustainably. This has been integrated into the new Junior Cycle Visual Art specification through the development of the Strands, Elements and learning outcomes as well as through the integration of the key skills. It is also made possible by teachers and/or students choosing to integrate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) themes in their work.

One example of including Sustainable Development in Initial Teacher Education in Ireland is the partnership and collaboration between NCAD and the Ubuntu Network. This forms an integral part of teacher education whereby student teachers explore Human Rights, Social Justice and Environmental themes through creating a body of art work that responds to a specific area related to these overarching themes. They then unpack this experience and work it into their scheme planning for their school placement. It is a very involved process, but one that enables the student teacher to reflect on the work they have done and to adapt and strengthen it in the future in a more local context of working in their own school and with their own students. In researching, creating and communicating contemporary issues, through an ESD approach, students can use the methods of contemporary artists. Art education in the senior cycle can build on these possibilities where appropriate.

Arts in Education Charter

The Arts in Education Charter (2012) was developed by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills (DES). An online portal <http://artsineducation.ie/en/home/> allows resource sharing across art-related organisations and schools as well as housing a directory for Arts provision and training nationally, updates and news on current and past projects being undertaken and a section containing useful videos and PDF resources for individuals and organisations looking to bring the Arts into education. In generating the charter the place of the arts across all sectors of formal education was reviewed. The Charter was relevant to the work on the Junior Cycle Visual Art specification and it will be interesting to see its possible impact on the development of a new Leaving Certificate specification.

The Charter recognises that the current Art syllabus at senior cycle enables students to *specialise in components best suited to their interest and ability ... assesses their knowledge of art history and their appreciation skills*. (DAHG/DES, 2012, p. 9) The Charter notes the difference between art education, which is the formal, *mainstream teaching and learning of the arts as part of general education [and the arts-in-education, which] refers mostly to interventions from the realm of the arts into the education system*. (DAHG/DES, 2012, p. 3)

The Charter also focuses on the benefits of arts-in-education including that this practice

Makes a distinctive contribution to school-based arts education and to public arts practice;

Makes available to schools and to artists and arts organisations opportunities outside their normal scope. Many artists attest to the personal and professional benefits of working with schools;

Helps to connect the school with the wider community.

The Charter also points out that programmes based around it

Enrich the curriculum. They complement the pupil's own arts education and support learning in other curricular areas;

Are important gateways to the arts;

Assist schools in addressing their responsibility to reveal to young people the life-enhancing pleasure to be derived from high-quality arts experiences.

(DAHG/DES, 2012, p. 11)

These possibilities are reflected in the sample opportunities, listed in the table below, that can be made available for students through the integration of Key Skills in a Leaving Certificate Art specification.

Table 3: Sample opportunities for integrating the key skills into Leaving Certificate Art

Key Skill	Element	Example
Information Processing	Presenting information using a range of information and communication technologies	Students can research and present their findings digitally on an Art movement of their choice.
Critical and Creative Thinking	Thinking imaginatively, actively seeking out new points of view, problems and/or solutions, being innovative and taking risks	Students can develop their skills in a craft by trialling new methods of approach to further their own artistic language.
Communicating	Analysing and interpreting texts* and other forms of communication	Students can set, follow, realise and explain the rationale behind their own work.
Working with Others	Working with others in a variety of contexts with different goals and purposes	Students can operate effectively as a member of a group on a large scale artistic project.
Being Personally Effective	Being able to appraise oneself, evaluate one's own performance, receive and respond to feedback	Students can realise a piece of work within a given timeframe and evaluate it honestly and use the learning from it to plan ahead.

** 'texts' should be understood using the definition currently in the Junior Cycle Visual Art specification, which includes all products of art, craft, or design as well as oral language, written texts, audio, music, tactile, electronic and digital.*

Arts-in-education can take the form of interventions by the arts world into schools and/or through student engagement with the arts in the public domain. These experiences can range from a once-off visit to a school by a practising artist to collaborative projects that extend over time. The arts/school

relationship is further enriched by involving parents and community arts organisations and by involving the wider school community.

Through the Charter the two departments recognise the *strong need to build real and virtual networks of skilled and experienced practitioners (teachers and artists) to share good practice and to enhance collaborative approaches to arts-in-education practice.* (DAHG & DES, 2012, p. 14)

The importance of the work of contemporary artists for students is also reflected in the Framework for Junior Cycle where *research has also shown that the quality of students' engagement – with the school, with teachers and with learning – is central to developing the skills and competences that are necessary for students in today's world.* (DES, 2012, p. 1) It is important for students to gain not only an understanding of the historical and cultural significance of art, but that they also learn about current practices and practitioners too. The Charter also notes that this understanding and experience of contemporary practice makes it

essential that the work of contemporary artists (in its broadest definition) be made available to curriculum planners. The works of living artists should complement existing curriculum priorities and be referenced as part of the practical realities of classroom teaching. In that regard, the engagement by funded artists and arts' organisation with schools, as outlined earlier, shall be part of the public funding contract. (DAHG & DES, 2012, p. 15)

3. Assessment in Leaving Certificate Art

Chief Examiner Reports 2005 and 2013

It is worth looking at the numbers of candidates, as outlined in the Chief Examiner’s reports of 2005 and 2013, who chose to study Leaving Certificate Art and compare this with the number of students that currently study art at junior cycle, with a view to establishing the number of students who continue with the subject as they progress into senior cycle.

Table 4: Breakdown of candidates taking Leaving Certificate Art (SEC, 2013, p. 6)

Year	Candidates taking SC Art	Total SC Candidature	SC Art as % of total	No. at O. Level	% O. Level	No. at H. Level	% H. Level
2009	10,693	54,196	19.7	2,615	24.5	8,078	75.5
2010	10,786	54,481	19.7	2,608	24.2	8,178	75.8
2011	10,783	54,341	19.8	2,567	23.8	8,216	76.1
2012	10,283	52,589	19.5	2,425	23.6	7,858	76.4
2013	10,296	52,767	19.5	2,430	23.6	7,866	76.3

Table 5: Breakdown of candidates taking Junior Certificate Art (DES, 2013, from website)

Year	Candidates taking JC Art	Total JC Candidature	JC Art as % of total	No. at O. Level	% O. Level	No. at H. Level	% H. Level
2009	20,933*	54,862	38	6,480	31	14,453	69
2010	21,308*	54,862	39	6,680	32	14,628	68
2011	21,188	56,930	37	6,258	30	14,930	70
2012	21,943	58,798	37	6,225	28	15,718	72
2013	21,752	59,822	36	5,786	27	15,966	73

* Numbers approximated based on candidature for JC English examinations

In broad terms, the figures show the same total number of students (candidature for the examinations) at both senior and junior levels. However, the number of students taking Art in their Leaving Certificate, as a percentage of the total number of candidates, is halved. Part of the reason behind such a dramatic fall in numbers is the reduced number of subjects a student can undertake in senior cycle. Anecdotally, retention of students in Art as they progress to senior cycle has been difficult, for several reasons, some of which include the workload at junior cycle and the perceived workload at senior cycle, a lack of understanding of the syllabus covered at senior cycle, not wanting to follow an art-based university/college course or future career and/or a need to choose a different range of subjects to suit future directions in education or the world of work.

The perceived difficulty in achieving an 'A' grade at Higher level in Leaving Certificate Art has also been noted as a reason for students to drop the subject as they progress into senior cycle. This was also highlighted in the Art Teachers' Association of Ireland #StateOfTheArt campaign held in October, 2016. The subject association highlighted the need to bring the curriculum into the 21st century and make it more relevant to students (ATAI website, 2016, '#StateOfTheArt – The facts and figures', para 9).

In their analysis of the Higher level Leaving Certificate Art examination results, The Irish Times, in 2012, noted that

'Students are highly likely to get an honour, but A grades are thin on the ground. Over the past three years 79 per cent of Higher level students have been awarded an A, B or C grade. Students are least likely to get an A in art, however, with just 1 per cent of students achieving an A1, and a further 4 per cent being awarded an A2 last year. (Irish Times, February 12, 2012, 'What are the easiest Leaving Cert subjects?', para 17)

A similar report appeared in the newspaper in 2016, noting that of the 7,789 students who sat higher level art, 80.9 per cent got an honour, although only 5.2 per cent secured an A grade. (Irish Times, August 17, 2016, *The easiest and hardest subjects of Leaving Cert 2016*, para 5) The figures from previous years, as stated in the Chief Examiners' Report in 2013, also bear this out and can be seen in Table 6, below.

Table 6: Percentage of candidates awarded each sub-grade in Higher level Art, 2009-2013

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2009	1.0	3.9	7.5	10.1	13.5	14.8	14.0	13.3	9.9	7.0	3.9	1.1	0.1	0.0
2010	1.5	4.4	7.6	11.1	13.9	14.0	13.3	12.6	9.4	6.4	4.5	1.4	0.1	0.1
2011	1.2	3.8	8.0	11.8	15.0	14.9	14.0	12.7	9.0	5.4	3.3	0.7	0.1	0.0
2012	1.0	4.1	8.0	11.0	14.1	14.6	13.2	12.8	9.1	6.4	4.0	1.3	0.2	0.1
2013	1.0	3.8	7.4	10.0	12.9	13.1	13.9	12.7	9.9	7.7	5.3	1.9	0.2	0.0

Other comments from the Chief Examiner's reports raise concerns about rote learning of answers to a specific narrow range of topics/questions in the written Art History and Appreciation examination as well as a lack of understanding in the artistic process and development of realised work in the Still Life/Imaginative Composition, Craftwork/Design and Life Drawing practical examinations.

Regarding the Art History and Appreciation examination there was, *concern that the spread of questions being answered has narrowed considerably over recent years. Examiners also noted that in both Section I and Section II it appeared that individual artefacts, artists and periods are being taught in isolation, with little or no appreciation of chronology or the contextual development of movements and disciplines. This is not in the spirit of the syllabus and is not helpful to candidates.* (SEC, 2013, p. 22) Where illustrated questions were chosen, weaker answers were generally due to an unfamiliarity with the image and work of the artist with the students relying on describing and copying the illustrations provided.

In the Craftwork/Design options it was noted that *where candidates' preparatory sheets were populated with collections of printed material, with little or no personal drawings or studies, these were associated with weaker development and resulted in a weaker finished design proposal or craftwork.* (SEC, 2013, p.12) A lack of any personal research into the chosen topic by the student also pointed towards a less well realised final piece of work. In particular, some similar imagery appeared across examination centres, which pointed to a general use of the topic as a search term on the internet.

For the Imaginative Composition/Still Life examination the Chief Examiner's report pointed out that *weaker submissions interpreted the passages in very limited ways, basing their work, for example, on one word from the passage, resulting in less well developed and limited works.* (SEC, 2013, p.18) In general, candidates were much more confident and able to use media effectively and aesthetically in

their still life option, where the objects were in front of them much like primary source material, than in the imaginative composition option.

The lower end of the attainment range [in the Life Sketching examination] was characterised by an obvious lack of practice in both representation and the use of media. Lack of knowledge was evident from approaches used by candidates, such as ... the use of landscape format for the standing pose [or] very small figures afloat in a sea of white. (SEC, 2013, p. 20)

Revised assessment arrangements for Leaving

Certificate Art

Revised arrangements have been put in place for students entering Leaving Certificate Year 1 in September 2016 and taking their examinations in 2018 and thereafter (until the introduction of a new specification). The revision to the practical components will include execution of the Imaginative Composition or Still Life component and the Craft or Design component as coursework in schools over an extended period of time. Both components will also be based on a single set of stimulus materials, which is in line with practice at junior cycle – *This thematic approach will facilitate the development of ideas and allow students a better opportunity to display their skills.* (Circular letter 0035/2015, p. 1) The Life Sketching and History and Appreciation of Art examinations will continue to be held after the other, now combined, examinations are completed. Life Drawing will be held shortly after the first two components are completed and will be marked alongside them. Art History and Appreciation will still be examined as part of the usual June State Examination timetable. These changes were outlined in Circular letter 0035/2015 and followed up with a further Circular S81/16 as issued by the SEC. The advantages of these changes can be summarised as:

- the execution of coursework over 10 weeks within schools (a minimum of 30 hours)
- both components will be developed from a single theme chosen by the student
- the current short, invigilated exam times have been replaced with an extended period of time
- all preparatory and developmental work will be contained within the one workbook.

When it comes to awarding marks, the previous total marks for each component will remain (see table 1, page 8). However, in *recognition of the increased emphasis under these new arrangements on the developmental aspects of producing artwork, 40% of the marks awarded will be based on the evidence*

presented in the candidate's workbook, with the remaining 60% being based on the realised artefacts produced. (SEC, S81/16. P. 4)

The workbook in relation to each realised piece will be assessed under three headings:

- Initial research and interpretation
- Primary source exploration and development (including final artefact proposal)
- Art elements and technical aspects.

4. Developments in Art Education

Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Literacy

The Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Literacy (CEFR-VL) was developed by the *European network of curriculum developers and teacher trainers for the school subjects related to Visual Literacy* (Wagner, E. & Schönau, D., 2016, p. 64). The prototype, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, takes the form of a model which:

1. Systematises and structures competencies for dealing with images, objects and signs
2. Operationalises the main sub-competencies in reception and production
3. Formulates, where possible, competency levels using scales.

As a reference model it allows individual countries to select specific competencies that fit their view in the domain of Visual Literacy. The Framework aims to offer orientation for the development of curriculum and teaching and learning materials as well as in the observation and description of the visual competencies of learners.

The CEFR-VL defines the concept of Visual Literacy in two ways:

1. To describe the domain of competencies covered by the related school subjects such as art education, art and design, visual arts, handicraft, photography, etc.
2. To define the content of the domain, adhering to the definition of Brill, Kim and Brand, who define Visual Literacy, independent from specific areas, as *a group of acquired sub-competencies for interpreting and composing visible messages. A visually literate person is able to:*
 - a) *Discriminate, and make sense of visible objects as part of visual acuity*
 - b) *Create static and dynamic visible objects effectively in a defined space*
 - c) *Comprehend and appreciate the visual testament of others*
 - d) *And conjure objects in the mind's eye.* (Brill, Kim, Branch, 2001)

Across the education systems of Europe, competencies in Visual Literacy are often acquired through practical artistic tasks and in Ireland this is very much the case.

The structural model of the CEFR-VL in the domain of education is explained in the diagram below.

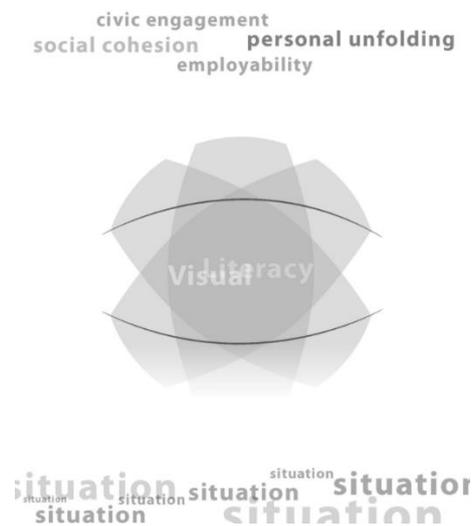


Figure 4: Structural model of the CEFR-VL

The key goals of the educational domain are described as civic engagement, personal unfolding, social cohesion and employability. Visual Literacy, when understood as a competency in its own right, is seen as contributing to a range of situations. These situations may include using visual media to design a public space, to document a process or event or to simply use visual media for leisure activities. However, all situations consist of *two basic dimensions: producing of and responding to images/objects*. (Wagner, E. & Schönau, D., 2016, p. 66)

The structural model, in the diagram below, has been further analysed to show these two basic elements and their relationships.

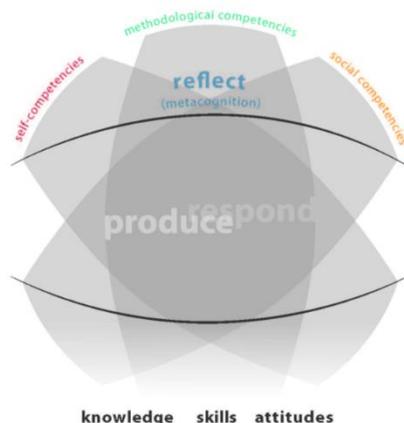


Figure 5: The basic elements and relationships of the structural model

Visual Literacy, as a competency, is also related to the person who produces and/or responds (self-competencies), and who expresses and/or communicates (social-competencies). It must take place in a social context and because much of this happens within the classroom in education it relies on students learning new methods and skills (methodological-competencies). Reflection, or metacognition is seen as essential to learning and the understanding of a student's own learning and as such is both important when referring and relevant to all sub-competencies.

The Framework goes on to suggest 16 sub-competencies, based around a survey of curriculums across Europe. The reason for the large number is to avoid the risk of the Framework being applied to one teaching methodology or one national practice.

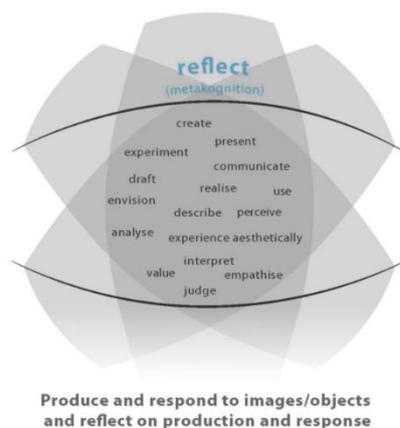


Figure 6: The sub-competencies and reflection (metacognition)

The CEFR-VL lists the following sixteen sub-competencies: analyse, communicate, create, describe, draft, empathise, envision, experience aesthetically, experiment, interpret, judge, perceive, present, realise, use, value. It also goes on to define each one, suggest how it is related to other sub-competencies, including with regard to self-, social- and methodological competencies as well as how the skills, knowledge and attitudes are also related.

The CEFR-VL further defines the term '*image/images*' for its international audience to mean

- *Everyday images and objects*
- *Works/objects of applied art*
- *Works/objects of art*
- *Additionally, the perception of phenomena in the visible world as well as visual imagination/internal images.* (Wagner, E. & Schönau, D., 2016, p. 70)

General scales or levels, not related to specific ages, were developed to allow for the student's level in the various competencies to be assessed and to enable the teacher to plan ahead. However, it is possible that they can *be defined more exactly for specific tasks, ages and learner groups, and differentiated from one another* (Wagner, E. & Schönau, D., 2016, p. 81). The levels are determined by:

- the quality of the input based on the difficulty of the task
- the quality of the process including student independence in the task and their problem-solving skills
- the quality of the output/s.

The higher level on the scale always includes the abilities of the lower competency levels and three distinct levels have been identified: elementary, intermediate and competent.

Visual Thinking Strategies

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is both a methodology and a curriculum. It emerged from the research of Abigail Housen, who discovered that viewers understand works of art in predictable patterns, or stages, from the basic Stage 1, Accountive, where the viewer relates to artworks as they see them to the more advanced Stage 5, Re-Creative, where they can use their personal experiences to accept an artwork in order to better understand it. The more *essential primary experience* (Yenawine, P. 2014, p. 7) a person can build up through observing artworks, the nearer to Stage 5 they are.

The VTS method and curriculum emerged from a combination of Housen's research and the findings of New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) visitor research. Evaluations showed that visitors enjoyed MOMA. However, even after only a short time, they were unable to recall accurately either the information they had been told or the complete visual images they had seen. They also did not seem to know what it means to describe art, to interpret meaning or understand how a museum/gallery presents its artwork. This is relevant for the development of a new specification because, as noted in the Chief Examiner's Report (2013), *Question 17, the gallery question, was the most popular question in Section III* (p. 23) and the students' visits to the gallery *had a very positive impact on their education, which resulted in informed personal opinions and analysis.* (p. 24) The results of the MOMA study articulated the effects of the marginal role of art, particularly modern and contemporary art, in our culture and educational systems.

VTS involves taking a group of students through the methodology, using artworks as the hook to engage the students. As students can be at different ages and stages of learning, this is why time was also spent in developing a collection of images suitable for various age ranges. A brief summary of the methodology is as follows:

- Students are invited to quietly view the artwork for a short time
- Three carefully crafted questions are employed to illicit responses
 - What's going on in this picture?
 - What do you see that makes you say that?
 - What more can we find?
- The teacher paraphrases each answer
- When paraphrasing, it is possible to weave answers together and include other terminology
- The teacher facilitates the session by repeating the last two questions
- After enough time has passed the teacher closes the session by thanking the students.

VTS is a student-centered model of engagement and learning, which would be very useful in the development of a specification in art as it enables learning to take place in a safe environment, where students do not have to always supply the one and only correct answer, especially with regard to more contemporary artwork. VTS encourages students to make a personal connection to art from diverse cultures, times and places and gives them confidence in their ability to construct meaning from it. It promotes active class discussions and group problem solving as well as the development of thinking, communication and writing skills and the transference of these skills to other subject areas.

VTS would be very useful in addressing these issues and would also be useful in discussions where students critique both their own work and that of others too. It also captures and promotes the use and integration of the Key Skills at senior cycle in its methodology. Similar findings in relation to Art History were noted in the Chief Examiners' reports of 2005 and 2013. Focusing briefly on the written Art History examination in 2005, the report concluded that

In line with previous years, answering tended to be concentrated on a small number of questions, indicating that candidates are being exposed to less of the Art History and Appreciation course each year.

Candidates do not apply their knowledge of art practice to their answering in the Art History and Appreciation component, particularly when discussing a particular work. (SEC, 2005, p. 51)

Similar comments were made in the Chief Examiner's report in 2013

The various art movements and genres relevant to the syllabus should be taught with respect to contextual and chronological development. Studying artists and periods in isolation without regard to the whole syllabus is ill-advised.

The practice on the part of some candidates of presenting schematic or stock answers in the History and Appreciation of Art component was still in evidence in 2013. This is a very poor strategy, as it does not promote the levels of understanding, application, analysis and evaluation required to be successful in the examination.

The spread of questions being answered in the History and Appreciation component has narrowed considerably over recent years. It appears as if individual artefacts, artists and periods are being taught in isolation, with little or no appreciation of chronology or the contextual development of movements and disciplines. (SEC, 2013, p. 26)

Design Thinking

There have been many approaches taken in identifying new methods or approaches to problem-solving. In general, they are practical in nature, hands-on, involving inquiry-based teaching and learning. One of these approaches is called Design Thinking. It is a methodology which outlines a set of steps that can be followed to create and realise a design solution to a problem. While obviously useful for work in the visual arts, it has also been applied to resolving issues that affect businesses and societies.

Design thinking follows an iterative process.

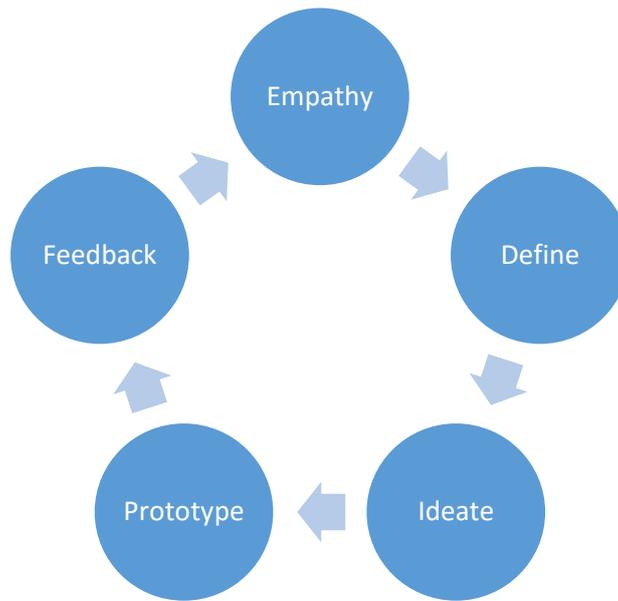


Figure 7: The iterative nature of the Design Thinking process

It is described as human-centred, always putting the user first, with a bias towards action. For groups, it involves radical collaboration between the participating team members within a culture of early prototyping or rapid iteration. The iterative process relies on almost playful experimentation to create actual examples that can be shown to users to generate immediate feedback. As a methodology, it relies more on ‘*show*’ rather than ‘*tell*’ and at all times requires those involved to remain mindful of the process. To achieve this, a process known as *Ideation* is employed. Developed at Stanford University and used by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, it is based on the work of Professor B. Roth (Design Process & Creativity, 1973). Ideation is defined as going wide in terms of concepts and outcomes to *explore a wide solution space [generating] both a large quantity of ideas and a diversity among those ideas. From this vast depository of ideas you can build prototypes to test with users.* (Plattner, H., 2017, p. 4) This approach of using wider and deeper exploration was noted in the Chief Examiner’s Report of 2013, when it noted that students should be encouraged to *include other methods of interpreting the stimulus, such as the use of mind maps, along with using drawing and personalised studies to clarify ideas. In this way [students] will be facilitated in translating the stimulus into visual imagery and in developing their own personal ideas.* (SEC, 2013. P. 13)

5. Art in Other Countries

The integration of the different dimensions of Art or Visual Arts education is a theme across the curriculums of other countries. Some countries have an integrated approach to the Arts as a whole, with Visual Arts being recognised as a subsection of an overarching curriculum, as is the case in the Irish Primary Curriculum. Others view Art or Visual Arts as a standalone area from their other Arts-related areas, such as Dance and Drama and Music. Some, like Ontario, further break down their approach to Visual Arts by emphasising an area within it, in this case Media Arts, as a separate course entirely. The following examples offer some perspectives of curriculum approaches and developments from New Zealand, Ontario, the International Baccalaureate and England.

The countries here were chosen based on their supportive approach to students wanting to progress their studies of Art. However, they are also cognisant of the fact that not all students have previously studied the subject in a formal way which reflects the situation in Ireland also. The curriculums outlined below also recognise that not all students will go on to become artists, designers or craftspeople. They are designed to support students to develop a love of Art that they can carry with them throughout their lives.

New Zealand

The arts develop the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of human experience. They contribute to our intellectual ability and to our social, cultural, and spiritual understandings. They are an essential element of daily living and of lifelong learning. (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 9)

The learning and development of the essential skills, attitudes and values in the Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum are outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum is structured on the four disciplines of Dance, Drama, Music, and the Visual Arts.

Eight levels of achievement objectives are identified for each of the four interrelated learning strands within each discipline. Learning in each discipline is seen as spiral and includes and builds on learning from previous levels to assist students to develop their learning and understanding of the Visual Arts in depth and ensure continuity and progression.

The Visual Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum include a wide range of fields, including sculpture, painting, printmaking, photography, design, electronic media and film, and the history of art.

The strands are overarching descriptions of the learning the students undertake and the different levels of achievement objectives direct student development throughout levels 1-8 with increasing complexity. The strands are discussed below and direct examples of the differences between level 5 (junior cycle in Ireland) and level 8 (senior cycle in Ireland) are included to illustrate the nature of continuity, progression and development in each.

In relation to the Visual Arts curriculum, the Strands are:

Developing Practical Knowledge (PK) in the Arts

In this strand, students make objects and images using the processes and procedures of the visual arts, developing practical knowledge of visual art processes through experiences in a variety of two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and time-based media by identifying, selecting, and structuring visual elements to communicate ideas and solve problems in the making of visual art works.

Exploring the relationships between elements and principles, the students use art-making conventions and techniques to organise and arrange their ideas. They develop skills in a range of techniques, investigate the properties of materials, and use appropriate tools and technologies.

Table 7: Comparison of achievement objectives for PK in levels 5 and 8

Strand	Level 5	Level 8
Developing Practical Knowledge (PK) in the Arts	Students will apply knowledge of elements and principles for a range of art-making purposes, using conventions and a variety of techniques, tools, materials, processes, and procedures.	<p>Students will apply knowledge of elements, principles, and conventions in a selected field of the visual arts (e.g., design, painting, photography, printmaking, electronic media and film, sculpture).</p> <p>Students will extend and refine skills with techniques, tools, and materials to produce a body of work in a selected field of the visual arts, using appropriate processes and procedures.</p>

Developing Ideas (DI) in the Arts

In this strand, students develop ideas through observation, imagination, and invention with materials, developing ideas in response to experiences and feelings and as they reflect on their own art making. They source ideas from a variety of motivations and extend and organise them in ways that communicate their intentions.

Students use selected methods to explore and develop their ideas. They conceptualise their ideas and express them through a range of materials. They reflect on, test, clarify, and regenerate ideas as they solve problems, both individually and collaboratively, in making objects and images.

Table 8: Comparison of achievement objectives for DI in levels 5 and 8

Strand	Level 5	Level 8
Developing Ideas (DI) in the Arts	Students will generate, develop, and refine visual ideas in response to a variety of motivations and a study of selected artists' works.	<p>Students will generate, analyse, clarify, and regenerate ideas in a body of work in a selected field of the visual arts.</p> <p>Students will use both recent and established practice in a selected field of the visual arts as the basis of study.</p> <p>Students will use a systematic approach to develop and refine ideas in a body of work in a selected field of the visual arts.</p>

Communicating and Interpreting in the Arts

In this strand, students interpret, and respond to meanings and intentions communicated through the various forms of the visual arts. They investigate how meaning in the visual arts is mediated through art works and the ways in which these works are presented and viewed.

Students engage with a range of visual texts. They learn how art works are structured and ideas conveyed and the ways in which this informs art making. They develop skills in analysing, interpreting, and evaluating meaning in the objects and images created by others. They interpret individual and communal sign and symbol systems used to make meaning and communicate ideas, and they use appropriate terminology to articulate ideas through a variety of practical and theoretical studies in the visual arts.

Table 9: Comparison of achievement objectives for CI in levels 5 and 8

Strand	Level 5	Level 8
Communicating and Interpreting (CI) in the Arts:	Students will describe and evaluate how ideas and art-making processes are used to communicate meaning in selected objects and images.	Students will research and analyse approaches and theories related to contemporary visual arts practice. Students will critically reflect on, respond to, and evaluate their own and others' practice and work in the visual arts.

Understanding the Arts in Context (UC)

In this strand, students identify the purposes and contexts of the visual arts in society, developing knowledge about the visual arts in public and private settings, and they investigate the objects and images and visual arts styles and genres of past and present cultures. Through practical and theoretical studies in the various media and forms of the visual arts, they examine the significance of the visual arts for individuals, communities, and societies.

Students identify contexts in which objects and images are made, viewed, and valued investigating the ways in which art works and traditions are maintained, adapted, or appropriated. They learn to understand that visual culture reflects and is shaped by the beliefs, technologies, needs, and values of society.

Table 10: Comparison of achievement objectives for UC in levels 5 and 8

Strand	Level 5	Level 8
Understanding the Arts in Context (UC):	Students will investigate the relationship between the production of art works and their social context.	Students will research how contemporary communications technologies affect the production, viewing, and valuing of art works.

		Students will research the ways in which art works and art-making traditions are maintained, adapted, or appropriated.
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In years 1–8, students study all four disciplines. In years 9–10, students as a minimum requirement, must study at least two disciplines. In years 11–13, students experience more specialist teaching and learning programmes in the arts disciplines.

This is an interesting all-round approach to defining the main areas that student learning will happen in and through: Developing practical knowledge in the Arts, developing ideas in the Arts, communicating and interpreting in the Arts and also understanding the Arts in context. This approach will be useful in looking at how to establish continuity between junior cycle and senior cycle. The idea of a more specialised experience for students at senior cycle is also one the Development Group will need to discuss further.

Ontario

Ontario has approached its Arts curriculum by emphasising a range of separate courses - Dance, Drama, Music, Exploring and Creating in the Arts, Media Arts and Visual Arts. It is interesting that the last three courses listed are all connected with Visual Arts, but allow for slightly different approaches to this area. This paper will look in more detail at two of them: Visual Arts and Media Arts.

Ontario - Visual Arts

Through participation in the arts, students can develop their creativity, learn about their own identity, and develop self-awareness, self-confidence, and a sense of well-being. Since artistic activities involve intense engagement, students experience a sense of wonder and joy when learning through the arts, which can motivate them to participate more fully in cultural life and in other educational opportunities. (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 3)

Visual arts courses, in Ontario, at the Grade 11 and 12 level (equivalent to senior cycle in Ireland) focus on studio work and critical analysis of a wide range of artworks. Students apply the elements and principles of design with increasing skill and creativity to produce art works that communicate emotions or comment on issues. Applying skills using an array of media, including alternative media, and current technologies students create two- and three-dimensional artworks for a variety of purposes. Students create increasingly complex artworks that integrate the fundamental components of design elements (colour, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value). Students continue to explore design principles (balance, contrast, emphasis, harmony, movement, proportion, rhythm and repetition, unity, and variety), organizing or arranging these principles in increasingly sophisticated ways to produce visual effects.

Students develop their understanding of how artworks reflect and affect the history, values, and beliefs of various societies and cultures. By experiencing a wide range of artworks, including the rich heritage of Canadian art, students enhance their understanding and appreciation of the range and significance of artistic expression.

In the arts program in Grades 11 and 12, three types of courses are offered:

- **University/college preparation courses** are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the entrance requirements for specific programs offered at universities and colleges.

- **Workplace preparation courses** are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the expectations of employers, if they plan to enter the workplace directly after graduation, or the requirements for admission to many apprenticeship or other training programs.
- **Open courses** are designed to broaden students' knowledge and skills in subjects that reflect their interests and to prepare them for active and rewarding participation in society. They are not designed with the specific requirements of universities, colleges, or the workplace in mind.

Students choose between course types based on their interests, achievement, and post-secondary goals or the pathways they are pursuing. It is possible for schools to offer focused versions of the Visual Arts course, which would involve printmaking, sculpture, painting, ceramics, film/video.

Students are expected to learn and use the creative process to help them acquire and apply knowledge and skills in the arts. Creativity involves the invention and the assimilation of new thinking and its integration with existing knowledge. Creativity is an essential aspect of innovation. Sometimes the creative process is more about asking the right questions than it is about finding the right answer.

The creative process in the arts is intended to be followed in a flexible, fluid, and cyclical manner. It comprises several stages: challenging and inspiring, imagining and generating, planning and focusing, exploring and experimenting, producing preliminary work, revising and refining, presenting and performing, reflecting and evaluating. Feedback, from teachers and peers and student reflection, takes place throughout the process.

Critical analysis is a central process in all academic work. The critical analysis process involves critical thinking, which implies questioning, evaluating, making rational judgements, finding logical connections, and categorising. Critical thinking also requires openness to other points of view and to various means of expression and creation. The process is intended to be used in a flexible manner, taking into account students' prior experiences and the context in which the various art forms and works are experienced. The critical analysis process includes the following aspects: initial reaction, analysis and interpretation, consideration of cultural context, expression of aesthetic judgement, ongoing reflection.

Visual arts activities engage students in the use of current technologies – including websites and graphic design software – both as research tools and as creative media. Of particular interest in all of the arts is an analysis of the impact of various technologies on contemporary society. Whenever appropriate, students should be encouraged to use ICT to support and communicate their learning.

Curriculum Expectations

The curriculum expectations identified for each course describe the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop and demonstrate in their class work, on tests, and in various other activities on which their achievement is assessed and evaluated.

There are two set of expectations, overall and specific expectations, which are listed for each strand, or broad area of the curriculum. Taken together, the overall and specific expectations represent the mandated curriculum. The overall expectations describe in general terms the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of each course. The specific expectations describe the expected knowledge and skills in greater detail.

The expectations for visual arts courses are organized into three distinct but related strands:

- **Creating and Presenting:** Students enhance their ability to apply the creative process to create and present original artworks. Students use tools, technologies, and the elements and principles of design with increasing sophistication to create artworks for a variety of purposes. Throughout, they document their approach to each stage of the creative process in a portfolio, which can be used for reflection.
- **Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing:** Through the critical analysis, students reflect on their responses to and assessment of artworks. They develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the communities in which they live. By exploring the context of various artworks, students expand their awareness of past and present societies. They explore opportunities for continuing engagement in postsecondary study and careers of personal interest in arts-related fields.
- **Foundations:** In this strand, students enhance their understanding of conventions, techniques, and processes that people use to produce visual artworks. Students refine their specialised vocabulary, engage in responsible practices when creating and presenting artworks, and investigate increasingly complex ethical and legal issues associated with visual arts as well as their safe and ethical use.

Ontario - Media Arts

The Media Arts course is also available to be undertaken as either Open, University or Workplace and in general focuses on a practical approach to a variety of media arts challenges related to the interests

of the student. The course provides them with opportunities to examine media arts and *refine* [their] *use of multiple media and their skills in the use of traditional and emerging technologies and tools.* (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 121) Students critically analyse the role of media artists in shaping audience perceptions of identity, culture, and community values, particularly within the context of the workplace. The technologies/processes used to create media art may be traditional, and can include photography, film, photocopy art, analogue and electro-acoustic sound, classical animation, and video/television. The technologies/processes may also be digital and can include computer software, digital imaging and graphics, digital sound recording and sonic sculpture, two- and three-dimensional animation, multimedia production, holography, and web-page design.

The three separate, distinct approaches to each course, depending on the path the student wishes to take is worth noting. It may be possible to use this example as the new Leaving Certificate specification is developed. One question it raises is the possibility of integrating the portfolio requirements for third level Art courses alongside the normal coursework students undertake. The other point to note is the distinct separation of what would be part of an Art course into more defined and separate stand-alone courses in their own right.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

The visual arts are an integral part of everyday life, permeating all levels of human creativity, expression, communication and understanding. They range from traditional forms embedded in local and wider communities, societies and cultures, to the varied and divergent practices associated with new, emerging and contemporary forms of visual language. They may have socio-political impact as well as ritual, spiritual, decorative and functional value; they can be persuasive and subversive in some instances, enlightening and uplifting in others. We celebrate the visual arts not only in the way we create images and objects, but also in the way we appreciate, enjoy, respect and respond to the practices of art-making by others from around the world. Theories and practices in visual arts are dynamic and ever-changing, and connect many areas of knowledge and human experience through individual and collaborative exploration, creative production and critical interpretation.’ (Diploma Programme, Visual Arts Guide, 2014, p. 16)

Students explore the visual arts from different perspectives and in different contexts in the Diploma Programme of the International Baccalaureate. They are expected to engage in, experiment with and critically reflect upon a wide range of contemporary practices and media. They are expected to develop analytical skills in problem-solving and divergent thinking, improving their artistic skills and gaining technical proficiency and confidence. The course is designed for students who want to go on to study visual arts in higher education as well as for those who are seeking lifelong enrichment through the visual arts. As part of its overarching rationale, the IB Visual Arts course encourages students to actively explore the visual arts within and across a variety of local, regional, national, international and intercultural contexts.

Students choose to take the Visual Arts course at either the Higher level (240 hours recommended) or Standard level (150 hours recommended). At both of these levels, the Visual Arts course requires no previous experience and is designed to enable students to experience visual arts on a personal level with achievement in this subject reflected in how they demonstrate the knowledge they have gained as well as the skills and attitudes they have developed that are necessary for studying visual arts. However, it does link to and further builds on the skills and knowledge of students who have undertaken the IB Middle Years Programme.

The Arts, which include Dance, Music, Film, Theatre and the Visual Arts share a set of overarching aims which are:

1. enjoy lifelong engagement with the arts
2. become informed, reflective and critical practitioners in the arts

3. understand the dynamic and changing nature of the arts
4. explore and value the diversity of the arts across time, place and cultures
5. express ideas with confidence and competence
6. develop perceptual and analytical skills.

In addition to this, there are three specific aims for the Visual Arts course itself, which enable students to:

7. make artwork that is influenced by personal and cultural contexts
8. become informed and critical observers and makers of visual culture and media
9. develop skills, techniques and processes in order to communicate concepts and ideas.

The latter three aims relate directly to the core areas of the Visual Arts syllabus

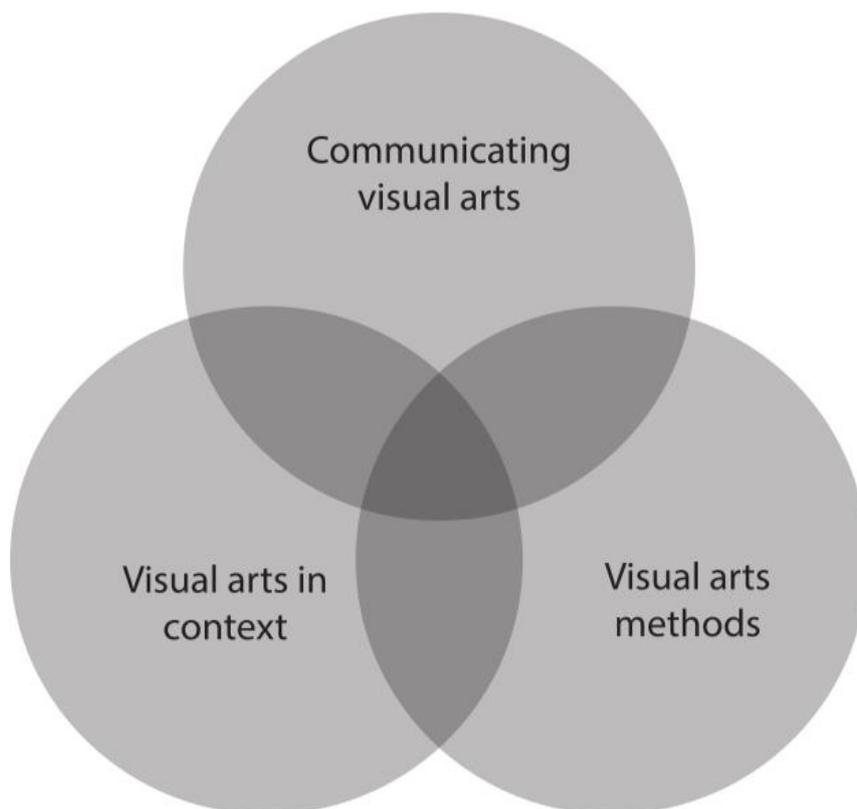


Figure 8: The Core Syllabus at Standard and Higher Level

- **Visual arts in context:** The visual arts in context part of the syllabus provides a lens through which students are encouraged to explore perspectives, theories and cultures that inform and influence visual arts practice. Students should be able to research, understand and appreciate a variety of contexts and traditions and be able to identify links between them.

- **Visual arts methods:** The visual arts methods part of the syllabus addresses ways of making artwork through the exploration and acquisition of skills, techniques and processes, and through engagement with a variety of media and methods.
- **Communicating visual arts:** The communicating visual arts part of the syllabus involves students investigating, understanding and applying the processes involved in selecting work for exhibition and public display. It engages students in making decisions about the selection of their own work.

Students are required to investigate the three core syllabus areas through exploration of the following practices:

- **Theoretical practice:** students at SL and HL have experience of examining and comparing the work of artists from different times, places and cultures, using a range of critical methodologies, considering the cultural contexts influencing their own work and the work of others.
- **Art-making practice:** students at SL and HL have experience of making art through a process of investigation, thinking critically and experimenting with techniques, applying identified techniques to their own developing work.
- **Curatorial practice:** students at SL and HL have experience of developing an informed response to work, with students beginning to formulate personal intentions for creating and displaying their own artworks.

Also important is the Visual Arts Journal, in which students keep a record of their two years of study. It includes work from primary sources, personal reflections, responses to different stimuli, experiments with media and technologies, evaluations and critical analysis of their own and others' work. The Journal is identified as a core activity of the Visual Arts course, however, only a selection of the work from the Journal is later adapted and presented for assessment.

When it comes to making artworks, students are required to do so based on choices from the three identified areas below:

- Two-dimensional forms (such as drawing, illustration, printmaking, etc.)
- Three-dimensional forms (such as sculpture, architecture, installation, textiles, etc.)
- Lens-based, electronic and screen-based forms (such as animation, graphic novel, still/moving imagery, software generated graphics, etc.)

HL students are required to gain experience working in a minimum of at least three art-making forms from two of the identified areas and SL students should gain experience in at least two forms also from two of the identified areas.

Within the Visual Arts course, there are four assessment objectives, which interact across and with the three core syllabus areas as they outline the objectives to be met by students:

- **Assessment objective 1:** demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specified content
- **Assessment objective 2:** demonstrate application and analysis of knowledge and understanding
- **Assessment objective 3:** demonstrate synthesis and evaluation
- **Assessment objective 4:** select, use and apply a variety of appropriate skills and techniques

The assessment itself is carried out both externally (60%) and internally (40%).

Students at Standard Level submit a Comparative Study (20%), which consists of at least three different artworks and works by two different artists. At Higher Level, a greater range of analysis is expected. At both levels, students also submit a Process Portfolio (40%) demonstrating their work and how they have developed and refined it over time. For Higher Level students it involves work demonstrating at least three of the art-making forms and at Standard Level two forms must be evidenced. This is externally assessed. The Exhibition work (40%), is curated from a selection of realised artworks showing their skills and knowledge of using ideas, materials and practice to communicate with an audience. At Standard Level, students submit 4-7 artworks, including a 400 word curatorial rationale and exhibition text for each piece (title, medium, size and intention). At Higher Level, students submit 8-11 artworks, a 700 word rationale and their exhibition text. These are externally moderated.

The International Baccalaureate creates a very holistic approach for students studying at senior level. It is integrated into the Visual Arts course and forefronted throughout the whole curriculum. Its core curriculum is very all-encompassing when it comes to the student experience of an art course and while the approach to assessment is not fully external, it reflects the learning required from the core curriculum.

England

The Art and Design specification outlines the course at both the AS (Advanced Subsidiary, the first component of an A Level qualification) and A (Advanced) Level. Students choose one of the areas listed below for study and can choose the same or different titles for AS and A-level. All courses have expectations where students produce practical and critical/contextual work in one or more areas of study.

- **Art, craft and design course:** Students produce work through a range of 2D/3D processes and media associated with two or more of the titles below.
- **Fine art course:** Students produce work through drawing, painting, mixed-media, sculpture, ceramics, installation, printmaking, moving image (video, film, animation) and photography.
- **Graphic communication course:** Students produce work through use of interactive media (including web, app and game design), advertising, packaging design, design for print, illustration, communication graphics, branding, multimedia, motion graphics, design for film and television.
- **Textile design course:** Students produce work in the areas of fashion design/textiles, costume design, digital textiles, printed/dyed fabrics/materials, domestic textiles, wallpaper, interior design, constructed textiles, art textiles and installed textiles.
- **Three-dimensional design course:** Students produce work in ceramics, sculpture, exhibition design, design for theatre, television and film, interior design, product design, environmental design, architectural design, jewellery/body ornament and 3D digital design.
- **Photography course:** Students produce work in portraiture, landscape photography, still life photography, documentary photography, photojournalism, fashion photography, experimental imagery, multimedia, photographic installation and moving image (video, film, animation).

Whichever course is undertaken, students must be able to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, values and understanding in usually one or more of the listed areas of study. They learn to observe and respond critically to related imagery, to create their own realised work and develop and appreciate the skills required to do so. The students become aware of intended audiences and how to use and understand the specific language of their chosen areas as well as to understand the art elements and design principles of these chosen areas. For the purpose of progression and assessment, it is understood that students at AS Level will not have progressed in their understanding and development of their work as much as students taking A Level.

Students are made aware of the 4 Assessment Objectives (AO), which are the same across all AS and A Level Art and Design specifications. These Assessment Objectives are:

- **AO1:** Develop ideas through sustained and focused investigations informed by contextual and other sources, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding.
- **AO2:** Explore and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining ideas as work develops.
- **AO3:** Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions, reflecting critically on work and progress.
- **AO4:** Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and, where appropriate, makes connections between visual and other elements. (AQA, 2016, p. 24)

Marks are awarded through the use of a rubric in each of these Assessment Objectives based on whether the student has demonstrated their work '*convincingly*', '*clearly*', '*adequately*' or '*just*'.

The specification offers progression for students from the GCSE Art and Design specification as well as progression to further and higher education. It has also been designed to *inspire a lifelong interest in, and enjoyment of, Art and Design*. (AQA, 2016, p.4)

At AS Level, students complete two components, namely a Portfolio, which carries 60% of their marks and an Externally Set Assignment, which makes up the remaining 40% of their marks. The Portfolio's contents, determined by the nature of the chosen course of study, consists of a selection of thoughtfully presented work demonstrating the breadth and depth of the course of study and at least one extended collection of work based on an idea, concept, theme or issue. The Portfolios may also include critical/contextual or other written work, sketchbooks, workbooks, test pieces, samples, storyboards, maquettes. There is no restriction on the scale of work produced. Work is presented to ensure that the student provides evidence of meeting all four assessment objectives. Students must identify and acknowledge sources which are not their own.

Students receive the examination papers at the start of February each year. Each paper carries five questions from which students choose one as their starting point. The length of the preparatory time is not specified, however students can only create their realised work during 10 hours of supervised time, the first 3 hours of which must be consecutive. Once started, no more preparatory work may be continued, though this work can be referred to. Both the preparatory work and the supervised, realised piece are submitted for assessment.

At A Level, students also complete two components, namely a Personal Investigation, which carries 60% of their overall marks and an Externally Set Assignment, which makes up the remaining 40%. The Personal Investigation requires students to undertake a practical investigation into an idea or theme and support this in their written material. The written support must help to clarify their investigation, be critical and show their level of understanding as well as be a record of their ideas and observations. It can be a continuous piece of writing, or interspersed throughout their work, but should be between 1000-3000 words at most.

The examination papers contain 8 questions, from which students choose one as their starting point. As with the AS Level papers, these also issue at the start of February. The AS Level, preparatory work which the students research and create must cease when the actual work on the realised piece begins. Students have fifteen hours of supervised time for this work, the first 3 of which must be consecutive, and can refer to their preparatory work during this time. Both the preparatory and realised work are submitted for assessment.

This curriculum model, first and foremost, supports progression from the GCSE to AS/A Level in English Art and Design education. It remains broad enough to allow students a large range of choice in the direction they wish to take moving into senior cycle. It is interesting to note the use of a selection of work across the two years of study is included in their portfolio submission. Also of note is the use of time allowed for preparation for the final practical examination and the time allowance for the examination itself.

6. Issues for Consideration

Curriculum Progression

Continuity between the curriculum at junior and senior cycle has yet to be fully realised for Art in Post-Primary education. Feedback from the focus groups during the consultation on the background paper for Junior Cycle Visual Art pointed to *a disconnect between the junior cert and the leaving cert.* (NCCA, 2015, p. 15)

It was suggested that the current Leaving Certificate curriculum is problematic, in that the focus in fifth year on Art History and Appreciation undermines continuity and can turn students off the subject. The current Leaving Certificate syllabus was described as *'stifling'*, with a perceived imbalance between the practical art work and theoretical art history being the focus of some commentary. The review represents an opportunity for the curriculum specification at senior cycle to be brought in line with the thinking and developments at junior cycle in order to improve curriculum progression. While students may choose to take up Art in senior cycle without having taken it for junior cycle, progression between the two specifications is important for those students who remain in the subject. This approach can also be seen earlier in this document in the review of the specifications of other countries.

Again, referring to the background paper for Art in junior cycle, it was suggested that to support continuity between junior and senior cycle specifications, the curriculum needed to change through:

- A scaling back of art history
- Development around assessment
- Use of portfolios/journals/notebooks
- Development of a curriculum that is closer to the lived experience of students and the real world
- Better connections between art history and contemporary practice
- Teaching art history thematically
- Seeing continuity to third level courses in art as a natural progression
- Focusing more on the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes of students towards art

- Using local and national art facilities (galleries, museums, etc.)

It is useful to reflect on earlier conversations looking at development of the junior cycle specification. The point in time has now been reached where the building of the bridge between junior and senior cycle specifications is no longer in the realm of 'blue sky' thinking and work on its construction can begin in earnest.

Assessment

Currently, students submit four assessment pieces for external examination from a choice of six. These are Still Life **OR** Imaginative Composition, Craftwork **OR** Design, Life Sketching, and Art History and Appreciation. In all this reflects between 8–10 hours of examination time. This is no longer reflective of the move to have the examination time replicate the actual approach to the work required for a subject such as Art. The recent revised assessment procedures, carrying through from the Junior Certificate's use of a longer time span, is more realistic. This will be used to complete all work for the Still Life **OR** Imaginative Composition, and Craftwork **OR** Design options. This alone gives 30 hours over 10 weeks for these assessments. In the new arrangements, Life Sketching and Art History and Appreciation are unchanged. The development of the new specification for Leaving Certificate Art presents an opportunity to keep this approach under review.

Approach to Art History

As has been noted in earlier sections, there is a need to reduce rote-learning for any written examination. The Art History and Appreciation course contains a vast body of work and selection of material studied and preparation by teachers and students has often been based on previous examination questions. Students have, therefore, lost out on the continuum that is necessary to view and understand later developments based on work that has gone before, but which they have either not covered or have only learned of through its main points. One example of a possible alternative approach is the Senior Cycle History Research Study Report, which carries 20% of the overall final marks and *aims to develop in students a spirit of inquiry about the past and a range of skills that will facilitate the conduct of the inquiry. It allows students to engage in a measure of self-directed learning that is grounded in the procedural values of the historian.* (DES, 2003, p. 14) While the student, in

conjunction with the teacher, chooses the topic for this study, there are criteria set against which it is assessed for examination purposes.

An alternative approach is to separate the Art History component from the practical artwork, however, competition for places in subjects at senior cycle would possibly not make this a viable option. In England, very few students took Art History itself and even with the development of a new specification for the subject it was almost removed as an examination subject in its own right - *with only 839 students taking the A-level, and 721 the AS-level this year, (overall, more than 43,000 took A-levels in art and design), the combination of breadth and small entry numbers are a problem for the exam board.*' (BBC Online News, 13 Oct, 2016, para 17)

However, it is important that Art History is used to frame the context for any practical artworks that the students research and/or create. Preparation of a new specification will need to review Art History and Appreciation in light of the developments at junior cycle.

Development of a specification for the 21st Century

Neither the original Art syllabus (1971) nor the revised syllabus (2007) take account of developments, including the vision of senior cycle, which is built around the principles of quality, inclusive education, choice and flexibility, participation, relevance and enjoyment, well-being, creativity and innovation and lifelong learning. It is important also that a new specification for Art integrates the values of senior cycle as well as the Key Skills as it is developed. The specification will also need to be future-proofed insofar as it can, as it needs to be built to take account of students entering senior cycle long after it is completed so that they find it interesting, attractive and relevant for the world they will become part of on leaving school.

All learning outcomes included within the developed strands of study for the new specification need to be suited for the world of today but also be open and flexible enough to be remain relevant to future students and their needs. For this to happen, they will require the Key Skills to be embedded throughout.

ICT in Process and Product

It is important that the use of ICT throughout the creative process is catered for in any new specification. Today's students are entering a technological world and those fields of the job market concerned with art and design are very reliant on its use. Students need to gain an understanding of

how this technology can be used in the creation and communication of their artworks. It is also important that ICT be used in the development and ultimately, should the student wish it, the creation of realised artworks that are assessed in the final examinations. The use of ICT for research into both art and art history should also be supported.

Assessment

The revised assessment procedures are allowing the approach to the subject of art at senior cycle to remain relevant to the practice of art. However, they are still based around the areas stipulated in the 1971 syllabus. The role of assessment will be very important in the development of the new specification. In maintaining curriculum progression it will involve, much like the new Junior Cycle Visual Art specification, more of a focus on the process. It may also include the assessment of a selection of work from sketchbooks, journals, which may be curated by the student. The assessment of work developed and realised through a combination of traditional and ICT-based techniques, or through ICT alone, needs to be addressed also.

7. The Brief

In line with current developments and the structures at senior cycle, the specification will be prepared by the Senior Cycle Art Development Group. It will be student-centred and outcomes-based, and follow the format of other senior cycle specifications:

- Introduction and rationale
- Aim
- Objectives
- Structure
- Key skills
- Strands of study
- Learning outcomes
- Assessment
- Assessment components
- Assessment criteria.

In general terms, the specification should be aligned with levels 4 and 5 of the National Framework of Qualifications. The specification will be at Higher and Ordinary level and it will be designed to be taught and assessed in 180 hours.

The specification will be organised around units and learning outcomes. It will consider the current developments at junior cycle and will review the units outlined in the 2007 revised syllabus to address issues of continuity while keeping the focus student-centred. It will address the nature of these units and the number of learning outcomes pertaining to each unit in line with the senior cycle template guidelines.

The key skills of senior cycle will be embedded, as appropriate, in the learning outcomes of the specification.

The content in some of the areas of the syllabus will be modified and future-proofed in light of the major changed viewpoints and developments in curriculum and assessment. It will be developed with cognisance of the connections and synergies with other subjects.

It will address assessment requirements, ensuring that assessment methods are in line with ongoing developments in assessment at senior cycle, where the emphasis on the demonstration of skills is being promoted and integrated into syllabuses. The question of process or product, in Art, as the focus for assessment is an important one in this context.

More specifically, the development of the revised specification will address:

- The rationale for studying Senior Cycle Art, making it transparent and evident to students, teachers and parents in the specification
- How the course will be organised: the number and nature of the units included in the specification
- How practical, inquiry-based teaching and learning will be promoted
- Continuity and progression: how to connect with and build on related learning at junior cycle as well as future learning in life, study and work.
- How the specification, in its presentation and language register, can be strongly student-centred, having a clear focus on what the students can do to develop and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, capabilities and achievements
- How the development of the key skills of senior cycle will be embedded
- How the specification can develop students' artistic literacies through the support and development of their knowledge, skills and attitudes
- How the specification can develop students' analytical and inquiry skills
- How the specification can develop in students a responsible attitude in relation to citizenship and society
- The emphasis placed on discussion and analysis of works of art of both the past and present and also those created by the students' personal understanding and relevance to contemporary life
- How student work will be assessed; the provision of multiple, diverse and appropriate opportunities available for students to achieve.

The work of the Senior Cycle Art Development Group will be based, in the first instance, on this brief. The draft specification will be completed for consultation in 2017. In the course of its work and discussions, elaborations of some of these points and additional points may be added to the brief.

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