



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2013

ART (INCLUDING CRAFTS)

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

Contents

- 1. Introduction..... 3
 - 1.1 Syllabus Structure..... 3
 - 1.2 Assessment Structure..... 3
 - 1.3 Participation Trends..... 6
- 2. Performance of Candidates 8
 - 2.1 Higher Level Statistics..... 8
 - 2.1 Ordinary Level Statistics 9
- 3. Analysis of Candidate Performance..... 11
 - 3.1 Performance by Component 11
 - 3.2 General Commentary on Engagement and Performance by Component..... 12
- 4. Conclusions..... 25
- 5. Recommendations..... 27

LEAVING CERTIFICATE Art (including Crafts) Higher and Ordinary Levels 2013

1. Introduction

1.1 Syllabus Structure

The syllabus for Leaving Certificate Art has been in place since 1970. The syllabus, which is downloadable from www.education.ie, outlines an integrated course which provides the opportunity for making artwork in tandem with studying art history and art appreciation. Visits to sites such as local museums, galleries, national monuments, etc., are suggested to support students' learning in both the written and practical subject areas. The syllabus is divided into five areas: Observational Studies, Imaginative Composition and Still Life, Design and Craftwork, Life Sketching and the History and Appreciation of Art. Observational Studies are intended to facilitate students in studying the world around them, including human figures, and in so doing to develop visual images for creative activity. The other areas of study described in the syllabus combine to form the various components in the examination. Implementing the syllabus can provide a wide variety of opportunities for the development of higher order thinking skills such as analysis, extrapolating meaning, inference, synthesis and evaluation.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination papers and the marking schemes which are available at www.examinations.ie

1.2 Assessment Structure

The syllabus content is common to both levels, differentiation between levels is by means of depth and breadth of knowledge and skills. The examination papers have almost the same structure and rubrics. The syllabus is examined by means of invigilated examinations, where candidates (a) produce artworks under specific conditions within a defined timeframe and (b) sit a written examination paper. Candidates receive the examination papers for the practical examinations approximately two weeks in advance. The practical components take place in April or May during a two-week period specified by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). The written component takes place in June.

The examination at both Ordinary and Higher Levels comprises four components: one written paper and three practical papers. A separate examination paper is issued for each component at each level, consisting of instructions, stimulus material and specific questions. The total mark allocation and weighting for each component is as follows:

- Design or Craftwork: 100 Marks (25%)
- Imaginative Composition or Still Life: 100 Marks (25%)
- Life Sketching: 50 Marks (12.5%)
- History and Appreciation of Art: 150 Marks (37.5%).

The time allocated to each of the practical components differs based on the nature of the skill being tested. Schools have the flexibility to conduct the practical examinations within the specified time frame. However, they must be held in the sequence specified in Table 1 below.

<i>Sequence</i>	<i>Component</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Time allowed</i>
1	Design <u>Or</u>	Higher and Ordinary	2½ hours (morning only)
	Craftwork	Higher and Ordinary	2½ hours (morning) and 2½ hours (afternoon). Total 5 hours
2	Imaginative Composition/ Still Life	Higher and Ordinary	2½ hours (morning only)
3	Life Sketching	Higher and Ordinary	1 hour (afternoon only)
June date specified by SEC	Art History and Appreciation	Higher and Ordinary	2½ hours

Table 1. Time allocation and sequence of examinations

Candidates must choose between the **Design** and **Craftwork** components.

The **Design** component examines the candidates' ability to create a finished design proposal for one of the listed craft options in response to a specific question based on the given stimulus materials. At both Ordinary Level and Higher Level there are eleven craft areas to choose from, with further options within each craft area.

The **Craft** examination tests the candidates' ability to design and execute a craftwork in response to a question with a specific topic or title. At both Ordinary Level and Higher Level there are fourteen craft areas to choose from with further options within each craft area.

The **Imaginative Composition or Still Life** examination is designed to test the candidates' ability to design and execute an Imaginative Composition or Still Life artwork based on their personal interpretation of a choice of given stimulus materials. Candidates may also design and execute an abstract composition following an imaginative composition or a still life approach. In 2013 there were five stimulus passages at Ordinary Level and four stimulus passages at Higher Level.

The **Life Sketching** examination is designed to test the candidates' ability to draw the human figure from direct observation. At both Ordinary Level and Higher Level, candidates are required to produce two drawings from direct observation of the model; the first is of a fifteen-minute pose where the model is in a standing position and the second is a more fully worked drawing of a thirty-minute seated pose. Candidates have the option of drawing the full figure or the head, shoulders and upper arms for the second pose.

The **History and Appreciation of Art** examination is a written examination and serves to test candidates' knowledge and response to the historical development and visual appreciation of Art in Ireland (Section I), European Art (Section II), and topics based on candidates' everyday visual experience in their own environment (Section III). At both Ordinary Level and Higher Level, candidates must answer one question from each of the three sections.

Each component has a discrete marking scheme with criteria designed to assess the specific skills involved. These are available at www.examinations.ie.

1.3 Participation Trends

Table 2 gives the overall participation rates of candidates in Leaving Certificate Art for the last five years. There has been a slight decrease in the number of candidates taking the subject in recent years.

Year	Number of Candidates Taking Art	Total Leaving Certificate Candidature	Art as % of Total
2009	10,693	54,196	19.7%
2010	10,786	54,481	19.7%
2011	10,783	54,341	19.8%
2012	10,283	52,589	19.5%
2013	10,296	52,767	19.5%

Table 2: participation in Leaving Certificate Art, 2009 to 2012

The breakdown in terms of participation at Higher and Ordinary Levels over the last five years is given in **Table 3**.

Year	Total Art candidature	Number at Ordinary Level	Number at Higher Level	% Ordinary Level	% Higher Level
2009	10,693	2615	8078	24.5%	75.5%
2010	10,786	2608	8178	24.2%	75.8%
2011	10,783	2567	8216	23.8%	76.1%
2012	10,283	2425	7858	23.6%	76.4%
2013	10,296	2430	7866	23.6%	76.3%

Table 3: number and percentage of candidates at each level, 2009 to 2013

In 2013, 76.3% of the candidature elected to take the examination at Higher Level while 23.6% took Ordinary Level. It is important that candidates take the examination at the level most appropriate to their skills and abilities. Generally, the number of candidates taking Ordinary Level is relatively low compared with those taking Higher Level. In the past there was a migration of candidates from Ordinary Level to Higher Level. Although this migration has not increased in the past five years, it has resulted in a higher number of candidates achieving at the lower end of the achievement spectrum than would be expected.

The breakdown in terms of gender at Higher Level and at Ordinary Level over the last five years is given in **Table 4** and **Table 5** respectively.

Year	Total Higher Level	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Female as % of total	Male as % of total
2009	8078	5351	2727	66%	34%
2010	8178	5419	2759	66%	34%
2011	8216	5451	2765	66%	34%
2012	7858	5310	2548	68%	32%
2013	7866	5375	2491	68%	32%

Table 4: gender composition of Higher Level cohort, 2009 to 2013

Year	Total Ordinary Level	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Female as % of total	Male as % of total
2009	2615	1407	1208	54%	46%
2010	2608	1318	1290	49%	51%
2011	2567	1289	1278	50%	50%
2012	2425	1161	1264	48%	52%
2013	2430	1171	1259	48%	52%

Table 5: gender composition of Ordinary Level cohort, 2009 to 2013

As in previous years, more females than males elected to take the Art examination. The gender breakdown in 2013 was 52% males and 48% females at Ordinary Level and 32% males and 68% females at Higher Level. This could indicate that higher achieving males are less likely to study the subject than higher achieving females. Generally, the overall number of males taking the subject is relatively low, at 37%, and remains consistent. The majority of Higher Level candidates are female and this trend remains static.

2. Performance of Candidates

The outcomes achieved by candidates at both Higher and Ordinary Levels are broadly in line with candidates' achievements in recent years.

2.1 Higher Level Statistics

The distribution of grades awarded over the last five years is given in **Table 6**.

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

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

4.9% of those who took the examination at Higher Level in 2013 achieved an A grade. 1.2% of candidates were awarded an E grade or lower. Examiners were of the view that candidates in receipt of a Grade E or lower would have been better served by taking the subject at Ordinary Level.

The distribution of grades awarded over the last five years by gender is given in **Table 7**.

Year/ Gender	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG	
2009	Female	1.3	4.4	8.9	11.3	14.4	15.3	13.8	12.2	8.9	5.9	2.8	0.7	0.1	0.0
	Male	0.5	2.8	4.7	7.8	11.7	13.7	14.2	15.6	11.9	9.1	5.9	1.9	0.1	0.1
2010	Female	1.7	5.3	8.4	12.7	14.5	14.0	13.2	12.2	8.4	5.2	3.3	0.9	0.1	0.0
	Male	0.9	2.6	5.9	7.9	12.6	14.0	13.4	13.2	11.3	8.7	6.8	2.2	0.1	0.2
2011	Female	1.4	4.4	9.6	12.9	16.2	15.5	13.4	11.5	7.7	4.5	2.2	0.5	0.1	0.0
	Male	0.8	2.6	4.8	9.7	12.8	13.7	15.0	15.0	11.6	7.1	5.5	1.0	0.2	0.1
2012	Female	1.2	4.8	9.5	12.3	15.5	14.8	13.1	11.8	8.2	4.7	3.2	0.8	0.2	0.0
	Male	0.6	2.7	5.0	8.4	11.4	14.2	13.4	14.8	11.0	10.0	5.8	2.2	0.2	0.2
2013	Female	1.2	4.7	8.7	12	13.9	13.5	14.1	11.6	8.8	6.4	3.8	1.2	0.1	0.0
	Male	0.6	2.0	4.6	5.8	10.8	12.3	13.5	15.1	12.3	10.4	8.6	3.4	0.4	0.0

Table 7 Percentage of candidates awarded each sub-grade by gender in Higher Level Art, 2009 – 2013

It can be seen that female candidates outperform male candidates across the distribution. For example, 5.9% of Higher Level females achieved an A grade in 2013 compared with 2.6% of Higher Level males, while 1.3% of males failed to achieve at least a D grade compared with 0.6% of females. This is a trend which remains reasonably consistent over time. As with the data in section 1.3 above, this suggests that higher achieving males do not take the subject in the same numbers as higher achieving females.

2.1 Ordinary Level Statistics

The distribution of grades awarded over the last five years is given in **Table 8**.

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

Table 8 Percentage of candidates awarded each sub-grade in Ordinary Level Art, 2009 – 2013

At Ordinary Level, 4.8% of candidates who took the examination in 2013 achieved an A grade. 2.1% of the candidature was awarded an E grade or lower in the examination. The drawing and writing skills exhibited by candidates who obtained an E grade or lower at this level were generally very weak. An analysis of the work of candidates at this level who obtained an E grade or lower revealed that in some cases the work was unfinished to a very significant degree and in the written examination candidates left questions unanswered.

The distribution of grades awarded over the last five years by gender is given in **Table 9**.

Year/ Gender	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG	
2009	Female	0.4	1.5	4.6	7.3	12.2	16.4	16.0	14.4	11.1	7.2	6.2	1.8	0.8	0.2
	Male	0.1	1.2	3.1	4.5	10.1	14.3	17.3	15.8	12.6	8.8	6.1	4.1	1.7	0.3
2010	Female	0.4	1.3	4.0	8.2	13.1	16.3	16.2	14.3	10.1	7.5	4.3	2.7	1.4	0.2
	Male	0.1	0.5	1.1	5.0	9.6	14.8	15.4	14.3	12.3	10.0	9.5	5.1	1.6	0.7
2011	Female	0.4	2.0	5.0	9.0	13.0	16.6	17.1	14.3	9.9	6.1	3.7	1.3	1.2	0.3
	Male	0.1	0.6	2.1	4.5	9.9	15.1	16.3	15.7	13.7	9.1	6.2	3.8	2.1	0.7
2012	Female	0.2	0.9	4.3	10.8	14.7	16.4	15.8	12.7	10.6	5.6	3.8	2.7	1.1	0.4
	Male	0.3	0.9	3.1	4.5	9.2	14.1	15.7	16.8	13.1	10.0	6.1	4.0	1.2	0.9
2013	Female	0.3	1.4	4.1	7.8	12.3	17.7	18.6	14.3	10.8	5.7	4.2	1.7	0.7	0.5
	Male	0.3	0.6	2.4	4.8	8.7	13.1	16.3	16.0	13.9	8.7	7.5	4.8	1.9	0.9

Table 9 Percentage of candidates awarded each sub-grade by gender in Ordinary Level Art, 2009 – 2013

Although in 2012 the percentages of females and males achieving an A grade was similar, at 1.1% and 1.2 % respectively, the trend of females tending to achieve better than males is nonetheless consistently apparent at this level too. In 2013, 1.7% of females achieved an A grade at Ordinary Level, while 0.9% of males achieved the same grade. At the other end of the spectrum, 2.9% of females failed to achieve a D grade compared to 7.6% of males.

3. Analysis of Candidate Performance

3.1 Performance by Component

Table 10 and Table 11 give the average marks attained by candidates in the various components of the examination, at Higher and Ordinary Levels respectively.

Component (available marks)	Average mark	Average mark as percentage of available marks
Design (100)	73	73
Craftwork (100)	70	70
Imaginative Composition or Still Life (100)	67	67
Life Sketching (50)	33	66
History and Appreciation of Art (150)	86	57

Table 10: Average mark by component – Higher Level

Component (available marks)	Average mark	Average mark as percentage of available marks
Design (100)	63	63
Craftwork (100)	69	69
Imaginative Composition or Still Life (100)	64	64
Life Sketching (50)	32	64
History and Appreciation of Art (150)	81	54

Table 11: Average mark by component – Ordinary Level

These figures reveal a reasonably consistent performance by candidates at both Ordinary Level and Higher Level across all elements of the examination. It is interesting to note that at Higher Level the performance of candidates in the Design and Craftwork components are close to each other, while candidates who chose Design at Ordinary Level were less successful than those who chose Craftwork. This may be due to some candidates at Ordinary Level not fully understanding the difference between the requirements of the Design and the Craftwork examinations.

Although the average marks for the History and Appreciation of Art at both levels were slightly lower than those of the other components, this did not have a substantial effect on candidates' overall results. This is due to the fact that there are four components required to complete the examination, which reduces the impact of any one component on the overall grade.

3.2 General Commentary on Engagement and Performance by Component

The practical art components in the Leaving Certificate Art examination require a combination of psychomotor and cognitive skills. These include knowledge and interpretation of stimulus, comprehension and the development of practical skills, application and co-ordination of steps, resolution and realisation, as well as representation and evaluation. While the marking schemes do not refer to these skills independently, they are included in the specific skills required for each component and design/craft area. The overarching skills of interpretation, development and realisation are incorporated into the schemes for each component area.

Design or Craftwork

Preparatory and Preliminary Work

In both the Design and Craftwork component of the examinations, candidates were required to produce a preparatory sheet which demonstrated the candidates' research into the given question. While these sheets are not marked *per se*, it is vital that they are given appropriate consideration as they demonstrate the candidate's interpretation and also provide a starting point for the development of the design proposal or craft piece. Highly successful preparatory sheets demonstrated substantial research, annotation and experimentation, while weaker submissions consisted of a small number of basic sketches loosely based on the theme. The very best preparatory work was exciting, colourful, ambitious and imaginative, as themes and topics were explored in depth. Those preparatory sheets that involved a high level of personal involvement by the candidate in terms of visual studies in various media – for example, pencil and paint – allowed for a more considered response to the questions. Such preparatory sheets were usually the precursor to high quality development and subsequent high quality design proposals and craftworks. Examiners 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.

Examiners of Craftwork noted that a lot of identical and similar imagery was submitted on preparatory sheets in the majority of centres nationwide. This was thought to result from the practice of candidates entering the subject titles in internet search engines and using or downloading the first few concepts and ideas that emerge. In some of these instances there was little or no evidence of additional research on the part of the candidate. Examiners also reported that in some cases, candidates presented large quantities of irrelevant printed imagery possibly found on the internet and in magazines. It appeared that at times these images were merely used to fill up space on the preparatory sheet. It is suggested that candidates 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 candidates will be facilitated in translating the stimulus into visual imagery and in developing their own personal ideas.

Where the preparatory sheet was successful, it provided a very sound base from which to develop the preliminary sheet. Those preliminary sheets which demonstrated high levels of observation, selection, experimentation, analysis and visualisation, with the use of a variety of media appropriate to the chosen question, gave rise to high levels of meaningful development. Excellent examples analysed the work in the preparatory sheet and combined and developed ideas on the preliminary sheet. Successful preliminary sheets included very good examples of observational drawing and colour studies. Where weaker preliminary sheets were presented, it appeared that candidates had decided that the imagery on the preparatory sheets was complete and that development was consolidated at this early stage. These types of preliminary sheets were characterised by copying or tracing images from the preparatory sheet and, because they did not avail of the opportunity to develop the work, could not achieve the associated marks awarded for development. Examiners reported that, at times, it was clear that candidates had completed the preliminary sheet after the craft or proposed design was completed, thus failing to take advantage of the potential for development the preliminary sheet affords. Some candidates did not submit a preliminary sheet, thus losing out on a significant step of the process and diminishing the potential for successful development.

In essence, the preparatory sheet provides the ideas for the preliminary sheet, which is used to finalise the ideas for the final design proposal or craftwork. These three artefacts form a project

from which the candidate's development of the idea into a design proposal or craftwork can be traced.

Design

14.5% of candidates at Ordinary Level chose the Design component. The most popular passage at Ordinary Level was passage A (about a fantasy figure the *Vampire Hunter*) followed by passage C (a description of Katie Taylor's winning Olympic Gold) and passage B (a description of vistas from *Donegal, Sligo & Leitrim A Walking Guide*).

9.6% of candidates at Higher Level chose the Design component. The most popular passage was passage A (adapted from *Monet's Garden Through the Seasons at Giverny*), followed by Passage B (from *Trees of Inspiration- Sacred Trees and Bushes of Ireland*) and passage C, (a fantasy piece adapted from *Games of Thrones*). The range of work presented indicates that candidates took full advantage of the array of opportunities afforded by the stimulus material to display their creativity and technical competency.

The most popular question chosen by candidates at both levels was Advertising Design, followed by Puppetry, Lettering and Calligraphy, Linocutting and Printing, Fabric Printing and Batik, Bookcraft and Embroidery in that order. It is noted that the Weaving, Pottery, and Stage Sets questions are answered by very few candidates at both levels, although some of these questions did result in high quality designs. The Modelling and Carving question is experiencing a minor resurgence in popularity at both levels.

Candidates' work was assessed under the following headings: **interpretation, development, realisation, presentation** and **finished design**. These headings broadly categorise the various steps involved in the examination.

In general, the design proposals were relevant to the passages and the question chosen. At both Ordinary Level and Higher Level, more in-depth interpretation of the passages resulted in successful works. Examiners reported examples of high quality interpretation, with evidence of candidates translating text to appropriate visual imagery which was then researched and recorded. In the best examples, both primary and secondary sources were used. Weaker work showed evidence of literal interpretation with a limited level of research carried out and a limited

understanding of how a visual image can be used to develop a strong design proposal. The more successful candidates were able to choose imagery which was appropriate to their chosen craft. In the case of some of the lower achieving candidates, imagery was the focus of their attention to the detriment of other important aspects, such as function.

The very best examples of development were where candidates demonstrated that they had researched and developed a number of possible solutions and chose to complete the solution with the best potential, resulting in a design proposal of superior quality. Good development was characterised by developing the concept as well as developing the visual aspects of the design. For example, a significant number of candidates chose the Puppet question and those achieving high marks typically produced design proposals which demonstrated their ability to communicate concepts and ideas by developing puppets which were based on highly detailed character studies. In the case of weaker work, some of the resulting design proposals were based on a well known film or cartoon character with very little further development.

Successful candidates had a very good understanding of the practical aspects of the craft that they were designing for. In some cases, candidates could introduce new ideas and explore options within the discipline. For example, candidates designing brochures experimented with the shape and the folds of the brochure as well as with cutting out areas so that illustration or text could be viewed through the aperture. Some weaker candidates appeared to have little knowledge of the practical aspects of the craft that they were designing for. For example, with respect to the Advertising Design question, some candidates used lettering which was quite weak in construction with little or no personalisation of the lettering to match the intention of the question. In some very few cases at Ordinary Level, no lettering was used.

Examiners observed that in successful work, candidates communicated their design proposals with high quality drawing and colour studies, annotation, and all the information that would be required to make the proposed design. Weaker work often lacked materials lists and measurements and gave no indication of the process that would be used to make the proposed design. In successful work, materials were used effectively to communicate ideas related to the design proposal, for example, paint was used very effectively to show the separation of colours for lino printing. Weaker work involved the use of inappropriate materials such as unfixed chalks and charcoal, which did not achieve the clarity required to communicate the design.

Examiners reported that in some few cases, it was obvious that candidates did not understand design as a problem-solving process and, instead of a design proposal, they produced a finished image. For example, at Ordinary Level a number of weaker candidates produced finished posters as opposed to a design proposal for a poster, in response to the Advertising Design question.

Craftwork

81.2% (1975) of candidates at Ordinary Level and 90.2% (7097) of candidates at Higher Level chose the Craftwork component. At Ordinary Level, the most popular craft by far was the Poster, followed by Blockprinting, Modelling, Calligraphy, Puppetry, Batik, Pottery, Embroidery, Bookcraft, Hand Printed Textiles, Screen Printing, Weaving, Metalwork/Construction, and Woodcarving/ Carving, in that order. At Higher Level, the popularity of crafts was very similar – the most popular was the Poster question, followed by Blockprinting, Modelling, Pottery, Puppetry, Calligraphy, Batik, Bookcraft, Embroidery, Hand Printed Textiles, Screen Printing, Weaving, Metalwork/Construction, and Woodcarving/Carving, in that order.

The craftwork submitted was assessed under the following headings: development of **ideas**, **design**, **process**, and **craft skills**. Each craft has its own marking scheme that depends on the specific skills associated with the craft.

Successful candidates demonstrated an ability to plan and develop their ideas with confident decision-making skills and showed capability in the selection of appropriate materials to create a technically sound finished craftwork. Candidates whose initial engagement with the process resulted simply in recording secondary source images, either through their own sketches or collecting printed images, often ended up with a very obvious design solution for their chosen craft. However, some candidates responded well to the secondary source material that they had researched, manipulating and transforming these images into a visually exciting work. These candidates displayed an awareness of materials and technical considerations and had the confidence and the ability to develop and express strong personal concepts. The best examples demonstrated a thorough understanding of the chosen craft and the skills required to make an appropriate and functioning final work.

In all of the craftwork areas, examiners reported that there were excellent examples of candidate's work displaying confidence and fluency in the handling of materials and in the exploration of the potential and limitations of techniques. Candidates at both Ordinary Level and

Higher Level demonstrated strong craft skills in the following craft areas: Modelling, Pottery and Blockprinting. In these areas, successful submissions demonstrated high levels of interpretation and research as well as development and realisation. Examiners reported that the most successful craftworks demonstrated high levels of technical ability and knowledge of the craft, as well as an ability to evaluate the work and resolve issues as they arose while making it. It is interesting to note that, although the Poster was the most popular option at both Ordinary Level and Higher Level, candidates often did not demonstrate strong craft skills in this area. High-achieving craftwork posters displayed an understanding of the craft, particularly the relationships between appropriately constructed lettering, typography and imagery, as well as the combination of elements such as shape and colour to achieve effective visual communication. Examiners noted an unwelcome trend in which candidates produced posters in which neither the lettering nor the images interpreted the question's topics in a meaningful way. For example, at Higher Level, many candidates used an image of a celebrity for a poster describing a *Horticulture Conference*, with the only reference to horticulture being perhaps a small flower in the celebrity's hair. Examiners were most disappointed when these posters displayed a high level of artistic skill in terms of drawing and colour, because it meant that the candidates could have developed highly successful posters had they interpreted the theme appropriately. It was also noted that some candidates at Higher Level used their technically competent drawing skills simply to replicate an image from their preparatory sheet, focusing on the realisation and neglecting the development of the poster.

The majority of candidates used appropriate materials and media to realise their craftwork. In exceptional cases candidates chose unusual media specifically appropriate to the theme of the craftwork, such as using a glass paint effect on acetate to reference glass work in an *Irish Craftwork Exhibition* poster. However, there were some cases of candidates using inappropriate materials, such as using seaweed or orange peel in Weaving.

In most cases, candidates used techniques appropriate to the craft, such as coil building in pottery. However, there were some cases of candidates choosing a technique which was not entirely suitable for the chosen craft. For example, some candidates who chose Calligraphy did not choose to use a specific type of font, but instead used a type of writing which did not allow them the full opportunity to display evidence of acquired skills in penmanship. Similarly, less successful puppets, made using inappropriate techniques, were not fully functional or durable, which was reflected in the marks awarded. Candidates should read carefully the instructions in

the Craftwork examination paper – both the general instructions and those related to their chosen craft – to ensure that their materials and techniques are appropriate to the question being asked on the examination paper.

Imaginative composition or Still life

Approximately 14 % of Ordinary Level candidates and approximately 25% of candidates at Higher Level chose the Imaginative Composition option, with almost 86% of Ordinary Level candidates and 75% of Higher Level Candidates taking the Still Life option. The number of candidates taking the Abstract Composition option at either level is negligible.

At Ordinary Level, passage B (a description of food from the *Greatest Ever Wok & Stir-fry*) was the most popular stimulus, followed by passage D (based on tea drinking in Ireland), passage A (an extract from *Lost in Ireland*) and passage E(a description of angels and witches from *The Amber Spyglass*). At Higher Level, passage C (from the *Fisherman and his Soul* by Oscar Wilde) was the most popular passage with candidates, followed by passage A (a passage from *Wild Ireland* which focussed on the Antarctic), passage B (a description of a scene from *Skyfall*, the James Bond film) and finally passage D (a passage from *Food Market in Galicia* by Fred Ferretti).

Candidate’s submissions were assessed under the following headings: **interpretation, composition, personal creative response, art elements** and **overall finish**.

Most candidates recorded their starting point, as required by the examination paper, which helped the examiner trace the candidate’s interpretation and artistic intentions, thus enabling marks for interpretation to be awarded. Examiners reported that highly successful candidates demonstrated high levels of interpretation, translation and creativity, by identifying images and objects beyond the obvious – thus enabling a creative and highly personalised work. 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. The majority of candidates at Ordinary Level who chose **Imaginative Composition** interpreted their chosen passage in a literal or direct way – for example, creating a countryside scene with sheep (passage A). Generally at Ordinary Level, imaginative compositions were traditional, in landscape format, and demonstrated a good understanding of foreground and

background. Less successful candidates interpreted their chosen passage in a very loose way, with little or no relevance to the stimulus materials.

Those candidates at both levels who chose relevant and visually interesting objects for the **Still Life** and who arranged them in a personal and creative way were awarded marks accordingly. Examiners reported that in some cases it appeared that candidates went to significant lengths to find objects which were relevant to the essence of the passage, as well as being visually interesting, to compose an effective still-life composition.

At Ordinary Level, still lifes were generally traditional with a small number of candidates opting for a close-up or cropped view. Where candidates worked from the same still life, there was significantly reduced opportunity for personal creative response and correspondingly therefore, for the achievement of the associated marks in this area. Examiners report that, at Ordinary Level, candidates developed compositions that were better and more composed than in previous years – for example, paying attention to organisational art elements, positive and negative space, etc. In some few cases, the practice of including apparently ‘practiced objects’ with no relevance was employed. This limits the candidate’s opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in a variety of ways, not least the expression of personal concepts. Examiners were concerned by the use of a formulaic approach by a small number of centres in which all candidates chose the same passage, question and approach to the question. This precludes candidates from fulfilling their potential in terms of displaying the requisite skills to achieve high marks.

At Higher Level, examiners reported some very high quality works demonstrating high levels of ability in using media effectively and demonstrating a good understanding of aesthetic knowledge. Where images were confidently rendered and subtle descriptive details were added using line, tone, colour, and so on, this helped to give the overall imaginative composition power and impact. Successful works demonstrated candidates’ ability to choose media to best suit the intention of the work, such as watercolour to illustrate mermaid and sea scenes. At Ordinary Level, the use of the art elements was generally poor, as it appeared that candidates focussed on drawing to aid storytelling as opposed to using art elements, such as colour and tone, to communicate mood. Examiners reported that, in general, candidates were much more confident and able to use media effectively in the still life option than in the imaginative composition option.

At both Ordinary Level and Higher Level, when viewing candidates' submissions as a whole, and considering how the various aspects come together in the completed work, candidates who were in the high achieving range presented relevant, well composed, well executed and expressive works. In the mid-range, much work was competent and candidates scored well through diligent application of the skills and competencies gained through practice. At the lower end of the attainment scale, much work lacked the basic representational and technical skills required.

Generally, the few abstract composition works which were submitted were weak.

Life sketching

All candidates at both levels were required to submit two drawings to complete the Life Sketching examination. The vast majority of candidates at both levels completed this task. This is a skill largely gained through practice in drawing and in selecting and using appropriate media to carry out such drawing. The first pose takes fifteen minutes and the second pose takes thirty minutes.

The following criteria were used to assess the work presented: **composition, proportion**, the use of **tone/line** and **form/volume**, and in the case of the second pose, marks were also allocated for the **treatment of detail**.

Candidates at both levels are required to draw the full figure in the first pose (the fifteen-minute pose). For the second pose (of thirty minutes), candidates may choose to draw the full figure again, or to draw a "half-figure", consisting of the head, shoulders and upper arms. The majority of candidates at Ordinary Level took the full figure option for the second pose, while at Higher Level approximately half the candidates chose the half-figure option.

Examiners report that, in general, candidates' ability to respond to the life drawing questions has improved in recent years. The very best work at both levels displayed correct rendering of the figure in an expressive and confident manner, with effective use of their chosen medium. Most submissions made a good attempt to represent the figure anatomically, although there were significant differences in candidates' ability to address proportion in their drawings at both Ordinary and Higher Level. High achieving work demonstrated evidence of internalised skills, while the lower end of the attainment range 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 drawing both poses on the same sheet, the use of

landscape format for the standing pose, very small figures afloat in a sea of white or a failure to plan the drawing to fit on the sheet. Schematic drawing of the figure, rather than observed drawing of the figure, did not result in good work.

Pencil on a white ground was the favoured approach. However, the wider use of oil and chalk pastels, charcoal, inks, collage and different grounds was noted as a positive development towards a more personal expressive approach. There were also some exceptional painted examples. Weaker submissions showed a limited knowledge of the potential of their chosen medium and a lack of aesthetic knowledge.

Art History and Appreciation

The questions on the *history and appreciation of art* component require candidates to produce extended text-based responses, as well as sketches to illustrate points. These questions test a number of skills, including **remembering, understanding, applying knowledge and skills, analysing, evaluating, and creating**. While these skills do not appear independently on the marking scheme, they are the base from which the marking scheme is developed.

Most candidates answered all questions within the available time and many wrote highly articulate responses that demonstrated a deep level of engagement with the subject. The most successful candidates displayed a high degree of knowledge and a depth of understanding of the topics as well as an ability to use art terminology. However, examiners noted with 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. It was also noted at both Ordinary Level and Higher Levels that some weaker candidates chose only questions which had illustrations presented in Section I and Section II. This was an unsuccessful strategy, as such candidates were generally not familiar with the image presented and found answering the related questions quite difficult.

At Ordinary Level, the most popular question in Section I was Question 1, about Newgrange; in Section II, the most popular question was Question 9, based on the *Hunt in the Forest* by Uccello, and the most popular question in Section III was Question 16, based on a gallery visit. A number of candidates answered only one or two questions, while other candidates answered many questions. At Ordinary Level, Section III often gave rise to the candidate's most successful answer, as candidates engaged meaningfully with the questions posed.

At Ordinary Level, examiners reported a poor understanding of basic art terminology among a significant number of candidates. Candidates at times made comments which were non-descript, such as that the festival 'was visually memorable because it looked great' (Question 17). Candidates have better potential to express their ideas and observations when they are fully in command of the relevant terminology.

At Higher Level the most popular question in Section I was Question 1, based on La Tène; in Section II the most popular was Question 8, based on the façade of a Gothic cathedral and

Question 17, the gallery question, was the most popular question in Section III. Examiners at Higher Level reported that when candidates had a good knowledge of a topic, including contextual knowledge, they were better able to apply knowledge to new situations and to make evaluative judgements, thus producing very successful answers. For example, many of those who answered Question 13 on Degas were able to discuss how unique Degas was amongst his contemporaries and also how photography influenced the work of the Impressionists.

Successful candidates at both levels demonstrated a high level of recall. For example, those candidates at Ordinary Level who responded to the question on Newgrange (Question 1), were able to discuss features such as the layout and structure of the site. More successful candidates clearly understood and were able to use technical terms such ‘corbel vaulting’. Weaker submissions demonstrated little recall, relied on the given illustration, and typically described the structure as a ‘circle’, which did not demonstrate a good knowledge of the topic.

At both levels, high-achieving candidates answered the later parts of the chosen questions by displaying contextual knowledge and understanding of the given topic. For example, describing a suitable example of stone carving or metalwork (Higher level, Question 1) candidates demonstrated knowledge of the production techniques, decoration and function. Weaker responses involved the briefest of descriptions and showed no in-depth engagement with the topic.

Lower scoring candidates frequently did not attempt the later parts of the questions. This was true for both levels, especially in both Section I and Section II, as weaker candidates often could not recall relevant information or confused the topic in question. Candidates often wrote some information about an artefact or topic, but not under the relevant headings. A number of candidates at both levels appeared to have misread questions. For example, in Question 2 at Higher Level, some candidates wrote about the Cathach or the Book of Durrow instead of the Book of Kells, as required, thus apparently misinterpreting what they were being asked and losing the opportunity to be awarded marks.

It was noted by examiners that some candidates at both levels wrote lengthy passages which did not answer any part of the question and therefore could not be awarded marks. For example, for Question 2 at Ordinary Level, candidates wrote about the lifestyle of the people who produced the Brighter Collar. Examiners suggested that perhaps candidates had memorised stock answers in the hope that a related topic would come up. 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.

Generally, candidates at both levels were apt at analysing artefacts, particularly if they were familiar with the artefact. Successful candidates were able to apply knowledge in their analysis of unfamiliar artefacts and topics. Annotated sketches were used by successful candidates at both levels to help analyse artefacts and topics as well as communicate their ideas to support their assertions. For example, when discussing perspective in Uccello's *Hunt in the Forest* (Higher Level, Question 9 & Ordinary Level, Question 9) candidates used sketches effectively to show how perspective was used. Low-scoring candidates tended to have a poor knowledge of subject matter and relied on describing and copying the illustrations provided. Low-achieving candidates did not present sketches, thus limiting their potential to be awarded marks.

Candidates who were able to draw on first hand experience of a site or artefact were very competent at analysing the experience and discussing reasons for their decisions in their answers. Those candidates who made a focussed attempt to engage with the question, as opposed to writing down all they knew about a topic, scored well. In Section III, a majority of candidates wrote about Alice Maher's 'Becoming' exhibition (Higher Level, Question 17 & Ordinary Level, Question 16). Their visit to the exhibition had clearly had a very positive impact on their education, which resulted in informed personal opinions and analysis.

Where candidates had a good contextual knowledge of the given subject matter, their judgement was informed in a positive way. For example, in answering a question about the façades of Gothic cathedrals (Higher Level, Question 8) the very best answers discussed the façades as a form of communication between the church and its congregation, and supported assertions with facts and inferences. Weaker submissions described the Gothic cathedral and made little reference to the discussion statement.

Highly successful candidates were able to discuss and analyse the given topic, demonstrate relevant contextual knowledge and give a personal well informed evaluation. For example, candidates who wrote about Louis le Brocquy (Ordinary Level, Question 5) were able to discuss a particular work and also were able to discuss the life and work of le Brocquy with accuracy and detail. When candidates were asked what a work was about, *in your opinion*, those who were successful offered opinions which were correctly substantiated by accurate interpretation of the work and contextualisation with the period, as opposed to guesswork.

These candidates were also able to evaluate how the art elements were used to form a coherent visual message – for example analysing the symbolic use of colour in an image.

Where candidates answered a question where they had personal experience of the topic – whether it was a visit to a gallery, a monument or personal experience of developing a piece of graphics or film – it impacted very positively on the response and demonstrated high levels of engagement, leading to high levels of analysis and evaluation.

4. Conclusions

- The outcomes achieved by candidates at both Higher and Ordinary Levels are broadly in line with candidates' achievements in recent years. Candidates engaged well with all aspects of the examination papers.
- High levels of interpretation and research on the preparatory sheets and preliminary sheets were associated with very effective final design proposals and craftworks. Effective development of an idea was characterised by developing the concept as well as developing the visual aspects of the final design proposal or craftwork. The use of preliminary and preparatory sheets has improved, although many candidates could still use them more effectively for research and development in the time available.
- Examiners of Craftwork noted with concern that identical and similar imagery was submitted on preparatory sheets in a majority of centres nationwide. This was thought to result from the practice of candidates entering the subject titles in internet search engines and using or downloading the first few concepts and ideas that emerge with little or no evidence of additional research on the part of the candidate.
- While there is scope for the candidates to express personal concepts, many candidates do not appear to fully appreciate that the work they produce is an answer to a test question and must therefore remain relevant and focussed on the chosen theme or topic.
- The very best examples of Imaginative Composition or Still Life artwork demonstrated the candidate's ability to interpret a stimulus using the art elements and principles to achieve an aesthetic quality which influenced the mood, feeling or meaning of the art work. In some cases very beautiful and expressive works were created.

- Examiners were concerned by the use of a formulaic approach by a small number of centres in which all candidates taking the Still Life option chose the same passage and approach to the question. This makes it difficult for candidates to fulfil their potential in terms of achieving full marks for personal creative response.
- The quality of observational drawing as well as the quality of the use of media evident in the Still Life and Life Sketching components at both Ordinary Level and Higher Level has improved somewhat in recent years.
- Even within the constraints of the examination, there are greater opportunities than are manifested in the work of many candidates. Examiners of all the practical examinations report that interpretation can be limited, that the candidates are reluctant to take even sensible risks and do not experiment sufficiently with ideas or media, often to the detriment of the work. The most successful work was a combination of excellent conceptual and interpretation skills with the technical ability to communicate ideas and carryout the work.
- 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.
- Some candidates at both levels appear to rely on answering questions with accompanying illustrations without any knowledge of the work in question. This is an ill-advised strategy.
- Generally, candidates who were able to draw on firsthand experience of a chosen topic – whether it was a visit to a gallery, a monument or personal experience of developing a piece of graphics or film – presented effective, personal and highly informed answers.
- In some cases, candidates did not display consistency in standard across all their components.

5. Recommendations

- Superintendents, teachers, principals and candidates should ensure that the examination requirements and regulations are adhered to and that all of the protocols (such as signing labels, labelling questions and explaining rationales) are carried out correctly.
- All candidates are reminded of the practical imperative of managing their time during the examinations carefully and of the need to complete all of the requisite elements of the examination papers.
- Translating the stimulus material to visual imagery should be included as a vital step in the learning process for both Design and Craftwork. Students should consider using various methods of interpreting a stimulus, (for example, mind maps,) as well as using drawing and personalised studies in various media to clarify ideas. In this way candidates will be facilitated in developing and exploring their personal ideas and have a better understanding of the use of the preparatory and preliminary sheets.
- Candidates should ensure that they are fully conversant with the technical, aesthetic and expressive qualities of the materials that they use.
- Candidates should avoid the use of schematic or stock answers in the written examination in favour of developing good understanding and a personal response supported by evidence.
- So as to better express their ideas and observations, candidates should ensure that they are fully in command of the relevant terminology.
- 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.