



An Introduction to Visual Arts Stage 6 in the New HSC

The new Visual Arts Stage 6 Syllabus replaces the current *Visual Arts Years 11–12 Syllabus* (1987). It builds on and links to the content of *Years 7–10 Visual Arts Syllabus* (1997) and takes into account the 2 and 3 unit courses described in the *Draft Visual Arts Years 11–12 Syllabus*, which had been developed in 1996. The new syllabus is to be implemented with Year 11 in 2000 and will be first examined in 2001.

The syllabus provides information that was formerly available in the KLA handbook such as descriptions of course requirements, course prescriptions, assessment weightings for internal and external examination and examination specifications.

What is similar?

The new *Visual Arts Stage 6 Syllabus* is similar to the current syllabus as it is organised and examined in terms of the practical and written components in Visual Arts. The indicative hours, assessment weightings and the requirement for a Visual Arts Process Diary remain unchanged.

What are the overall improvements?

The new syllabus is enhanced in a number of ways. These include:

- a focus on students becoming increasingly more autonomous in their knowledge, understanding and skills in Visual Arts
- specified content that clearly identifies what is to be taught but which also allows flexibility
- the requirements for a body of work and case studies in the HSC course
- changed assessment and examination requirements for the written and practical components of the course.

The following changes have been made to particular sections of the syllabus

Rationale, Aim and Objectives (pp 6–7, 10)

The rationale sets out how the subject meets the criteria of the Stage 6 curriculum. The aim focuses on the importance of students' development of increasingly more autonomous ways of understanding what is learned through the study of Visual Arts. This focus is continued in the objectives, which are organised in terms of the practical and written components of the course: artmaking, and art criticism and art history.

Outcomes (pp 12–13)

In order to identify student achievement in the Preliminary and HSC courses, the outcomes are clearly linked to the content of the courses. HSC course outcomes build upon those in the Preliminary course. The outcomes identify the knowledge, understanding, skills and values that students will achieve through their engagement with the content of practice, conceptual framework and frames. In artmaking, the outcomes also indicate how the development of concepts and meaning occurs as well as ways in which the resolution of artworks is understood.

Content (pp 17–27)

The major change in this section has been to develop common content that underpins both the practical and written components in the subject and establishes links between the Preliminary and HSC courses.

The new *Visual Arts Stage 6 Syllabus* offers content that teachers can use in flexible ways to cater for the needs, interests and abilities of individual students. The explanation of content is designed to cater for the diverse ways teachers and students engage in the subject. The content provides the basis for planning learning opportunities for students in artmaking, and art criticism and art history.

The content is identified as practice, conceptual framework and frames. Students will learn that there are key concepts within each of these aspects of content to be known, understood and applied in their study of Visual Arts. Within practice there are the concepts of artmaking, art criticism and art history. Within the conceptual framework there are the concepts of artist, artwork, world and audience, and with the frames there are the concepts of subjective, cultural, structural and postmodern.

The content in Visual Arts Stage 6 builds on the content of the *Visual Arts Years 7–10 Syllabus* (1997) in terms of practice and frames. The introduction of the conceptual framework in Stage 6 provides opportunities for students to investigate the role and function of artists, audiences, artworks and the world and how these can be related.

In the Preliminary course the individual parts of content are identified and initially dealt with discretely. These are explained through broad investigations of the visual arts. As students gain greater confidence in their understanding and knowledge of content, teaching and learning opportunities should focus on developing more complex explanations of concepts. In the HSC course, students consider these concepts in conjunction with one another, and investigate them in increasingly deeper ways to explain the complex relationships between practice, differing interpretations of the frames and functions of the agencies of the art world.

Preliminary Course Requirements (p 28)

The requirement for a broadly based study of content is consistent with current expectations for the Preliminary course. This requirement both builds on the achievements students may have had in Stage 5 and also serves as an introduction to practice in artmaking and art criticism and art history for students who may be new to the study of Visual Arts.

In artmaking the concepts within each aspect of content are engaged with through the making of artworks in at least two of the expressive forms.

In art criticism and art history, students focus on the key concepts within each aspect of content through broad investigations of ideas in the visual arts from Australia and other regions at different times.

HSC Course Requirements (p 28)

Artmaking - The Body of Work

In the HSC course, the development of a Body of Work provides students of all abilities with opportunities to develop their own artmaking practice, understanding their role as artists and explaining their approaches to artmaking.

This approach builds on current practice in artmaking:

- many works currently submitted for the HSC are diptychs or triptychs, editions, multiples and works in series as well as single works within which a sustained investigation is evident
- a body of work also accommodates other types of works students may now produce throughout their coursework.

The development of a body of work takes into account the emergent trend for students to work over a number of forms or diverse aspects of practice before deciding on a particular direction and selecting work for submission at the conclusion of the course.

At the end of the HSC course students will review their course work and make judgements about a work or series of works that, as a body of work, best indicates their knowledge, understanding and skills in conceptual and material practice. Students will be working within the conditions set out in the Course Prescriptions in the HSC External Examination Specifications section of the syllabus.

Art Criticism and Art History: Case Studies

The requirement for five case studies to be studied in the HSC course in art criticism and art history is designed to offer all students opportunities to investigate specific instances of content in greater depth. These may be programmed as discrete learning opportunities or may relate to other art critical and art historical investigations in the HSC course. Case studies are designed to be between 4 and 10 hours in duration.

Assessment (pp 38–51)

New specifications for internal and external assessment indicate the criteria to be used to assess student achievement in artmaking and art criticism and art history through engagement in the content of practice, conceptual framework and frames. New advice provides information about the forms of work that can be considered in the internal assessment and the criteria used to make these assessments.

In artmaking, the internal assessment links to the development of a body of work and how students demonstrate understanding of content through the making of artworks and use of a process diary. In art criticism and art history, students are assessed on their understanding of content through the building of critical and historical narratives and arguments.

In the external examination of the body of work, two criteria (conceptual strength and meaning, and resolution) will be used to make judgements about students' knowledge, understanding and skills in artmaking. The judgements have been developed in line with the features of the current marking guides used in the HSC Examination.

In the external written examination paper in art criticism and art history, students are examined using a range of question types. Section 1 includes a series of short answer questions and related source material. In Section 2, students answer using a free-response question similar to question types in the current HSC.

What will be needed to teach this subject?

- *The Visual Arts Stage 6 Syllabus.*
- Visual Arts Higher School Certificate Specimen examination paper, sample marking guidelines and draft performance scale.

Current resources are appropriate for use with the new syllabuses although there may need to be some adjustment in the way teachers use them.

A further subject-specific document is being developed by the Board of Studies for distribution later in the year. This will assist teachers with the implementation of the revised syllabuses.

A list of a number of resources will be placed on the Board's website, <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>.

The Board of Studies will also provide assessment support materials, which will be generic across subjects.

Cross-sectoral professional development workshops (Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Commission and members of the Association of Independent Schools) for Visual Arts Stage 6 will be held. Venues and dates for these workshops have been published on the *New HSC* website — <http://www.newhsc.schools.nsw.edu.au> — distributed to schools. The materials from the workshops will be available on this website.

CURRICULUM SUPPORT for Teaching in Creative Arts 7–12 — a publication distributed each term by the Department of Education and Training — will carry an HSC supplement.

Assessment and Reporting Bulletin — published each term as a joint venture of the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools published each term — will build on principles outlined in Board of Studies' newsletters and assessment support materials.