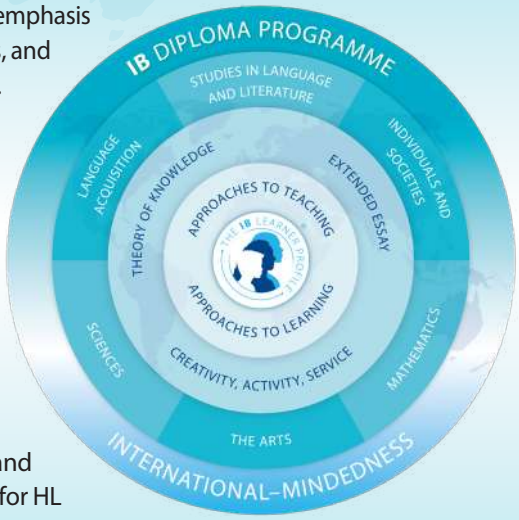
International Baccalaureate
Diploma Programme Subject Brief

The arts: Visual arts

First assessment 2027

The Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous pre-university course of study designed for students in the 16 to 19 age range. It is a broad-based two-year course that aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable and inquiring, but also caring and compassionate. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness, and the attitudes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view.



The course is presented as six academic areas enclosing a central core. Students study two modern languages (or a modern language and a classical language), a humanities or social science subject, an experimental science, mathematics and one of the creative arts. Instead of an arts subject, students can choose two subjects from another area. It is this comprehensive range of subjects that makes the Diploma Programme a demanding course of study designed to prepare students effectively for university entrance. In each of the academic areas students have flexibility in making their choices, which means they can choose subjects that particularly interest them and that they may wish to study further at university.

Normally, three subjects (and not more than four) are taken at higher level (HL), and the others are taken at standard level (SL). The IB recommends 240 teaching hours for HL subjects and 150 hours for SL. Subjects at HL are studied in greater depth and breadth than at SL. In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, activity, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.

I. Course description and aims

Visual arts are an integral part of our daily lives. They have social, political, ritual, spiritual, decorative and functional values. The theories and practices of visual arts are dynamic and ever-changing, connecting different areas of knowledge and human experience. Visual arts enable us to make sense of the world, to explore our place within it, and to transform our individual and collective ways of being in and with the world.

In this visual arts course students learn how to **create**, **communicate** and **connect** as artists.

Students engage in creative practices and processes working with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies, and learn art-making as inquiry. Teachers and students can adapt the curriculum to their unique contexts, interests and passions. Together, they are invited to transform the classroom into a contemporary visual arts studio. This becomes a collaborative, inclusive, creative and conceptually rich space where students develop their art through personal lines of inquiry guided by artistic intentions.

The course encourages students to engage with the world through individual and shared experiences, imagination and action, and it fosters creativity, communication, critical thinking and collaboration—skills essential in a variety of rapidly evolving fields and professions. The syllabus supports learning through authentic art-making experiences and student choice, encouraging teachers to support their students in becoming progressively more independent art practitioners.

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Teaching and learning of conceptual and material skills and methods allow students to think and work like artists. During the course they develop a personal visual language and learn to communicate artistic intentions to different audiences, connecting with the work of other artists and considering the significance of context(s). Students learn that by making art they are empowered to engage, transform and emerge, both as individuals and as members of a community. These positive and creative approaches will stay with students after they complete the course, enriching any of their future pursuits.

The aims of the arts subjects are to enable students to:

1. explore the diversity of the arts across time, cultures and contexts
2. develop as imaginative and skilled creators and collaborators
3. express ideas creatively and with competence
4. critically reflect on the process of creating and experiencing the arts
5. develop as informed, perceptive and analytical practitioners
6. enjoy lifelong engagement with the arts.

The visual arts course aims to enable students to:

7. appreciate that art-making enhances knowledge, develops understanding and transforms ways of being
8. employ curiosity, creativity and dialogue to more openly engage with self, the world and others
9. draw on artmaking and artworks for their own, and their communities', well-being and flourishing.

II. Curriculum model overview

The visual arts course is a creative, practice-based course.

Students work in the classroom as they would in an art studio. Art-making as inquiry is at the centre of the syllabus and students learn through three core areas—create, connect and communicate. These are introduced as discrete elements of the course; however, in practice, this division will only occasionally predominate.

Learning art-making as inquiry will mostly integrate create, connect and communicate. This is to allow students to embrace the holistic nature of visual arts practice. However, teachers will at times need to make explicit the division of content and focus on just one of the core areas, to ensure that students have sufficient understanding, skills and methods to develop their artistic intentions and their artwork.

Students gain a deeper understanding of the visual arts through working with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies, and develop a personal visual language as well as critical and curatorial skills and methods.

During the two years of the course, students are supported and guided by their teachers to become increasingly more independent visual artists. Seven assessment objectives, clearly defined and embedded in the creative process, guide teachers and students from the beginning to the end of the course.

Students learn to nurture their artistic practice and to develop their ideas, work and reflections through observation, experimentation and investigation. The course is designed to deepen students' understanding of the interactive and generative nature of the work of visual artists, and to promote flexible and iterative creative processes.

Visual arts journals—which might take a variety of formats—are used by students to generate, progress and develop their art-making as inquiry and their learning across the three core areas. Students realize and resolve artworks to communicate with audiences through synthesis of concept and form. Understanding of context(s) and cultural significance are also part of the curriculum, and students learn to consider the complex and dynamic relationships between artist, artwork, audience and context. Not only do students

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connect with the work of other artists, but they also learn to situate the artworks they study as well as their own.

As part of the visual arts course students learn to employ curiosity, creativity and dialogue to openly engage with the self, the world and others. They develop the skills to work independently, persist and repurpose, reflect critically and communicate effectively and with coherence as visual artists.

Syllabus area	Teaching hours	
	SL	HL
Create Teachers introduce a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies. Students learn how to generate ideas from investigation and observation, and engage with experimentation or in resolving artworks. They learn how to follow lines of inquiry from conception to realization and to develop a visual language.	**20**	**30**
Connect Teachers introduce ways to investigate artworks from different times and contexts. Students consider the relationships between artwork, artist and audience. They learn how to situate their art-making in relation to context and to consider cultural significance.	**20**	**30**
Communicate Teachers introduce methods of visual and written presentation, and create opportunities for dialogue and critique. Students learn how to curate, share and situate their artwork. Teachers introduce methods to digitally document and curate artwork.	**20**	**30**
Integration of create, connect, communicate The majority of teaching hours in visual arts are devoted to making art as inquiry. Students integrate the core areas of create, connect and communicate, through the pursuit of personal lines of inquiry and while developing a coherent body of resolved artworks. They learn to: • develop their artistic intentions and creative processes • connect their art-making with the work of others • create their artworks in context • communicate with audiences. Teachers plan time and set reasonable deadlines for students to prepare the three summative assessment tasks.	**90**	**150**
Total teaching hours	**150**	**240**

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III. Assessment model

At the end of the course, students select and organize visual and written materials to submit to the IB for online assessment—both SL and HL students curate and digitally submit three assessment tasks to evidence their learning.

All assessment tasks are non-examination based. Two tasks are externally assessed, and one is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB. The assessment model clearly differentiates the requirements between SL and HL, reflecting the teaching hours allocated at each level and the greater depth and breadth of work required in the HL course.

Task 1 is common to SL and HL. All students complete the **art-making inquiries portfolio**.

Task 2 is designed differently for SL and HL, to fully reflect the different allocation of teaching time at each level. SL students complete the **connections study** and HL students complete the **artist project**.

Task 3 is the internal assessment (IA), differentiated between SL and HL. The IA is focused on the student's ability to create a **coherent body of work**. Both SL and HL students submit **five resolved artworks**, but some of the requirements of the task are different for each level.

Student work is assessed through assessment criteria and marks are allocated by applying level descriptors.

For their summative end-of-course assessment, students are expected to provide evidence of how they learned to create, connect and communicate as visual arts practitioners. There are seven assessment objectives common to SL and HL that provide measurable indicators of success and help to shape learning and teaching. The visual arts objectives are embedded in the creative process to support authentic learning and the design of valid, reliable and manageable assessment tasks.

Visual arts students are expected to evidence how, as part of their art-making, they:

- **curate** visual and written materials, including both developing and resolved artworks, to communicate artistic intentions and inquiry
- **investigate** art forms and creative strategies, as well as meaning and cultural significance of artworks within and across contexts
- **generate** intentions and artworks through inquiry and the application of creative strategies
- **refine** artistic intentions and their own art-making through investigation, dialogue and critical reflection as part of inquiry
- **resolve** artworks to fulfil intentions and convey meaning
- **situate** their own artworks and art-making, as well as those of other artists, in relation to context(s), audience(s) and communities of artistic practice
- **synthesize** concept and form through creative and curatorial practices to create artworks, communicate artistic intentions and connect with audience(s).

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Assessment at a glance

Assessment outline—SL	Weighting
External assessment	**60%**
Art-making inquiries portfolio (32 marks) This is an SL and HL task focused on the student's art-making as inquiry. The student selects and organizes visual evidence of their personal investigations, discoveries and creations, supported by critical reflections, all in a portfolio. They provide curated evidence of their art-making as inquiry in a **variety** of art-making forms and creative strategies. The portfolio demonstrates how the student developed and refined their visual language through one or more **lines of inquiry** and must explicitly include the **inquiry questions or generative statements** they worked with. SL students submit **two** mandatory files. • **One** PDF file of **up to 15 screens** including visual evidence accompanied by written materials. The total word count must not exceed **3,000 words**. • **One** separate text file listing the sources.	40%
Connections study (24 marks) This is an SL-only task focused on the student situating in context one of their resolved artworks, chosen from the five they submit for IA. The study presents curated visual and written evidence to demonstrate the connections between the student's chosen resolved artwork and their own context(s), and between the chosen artwork and **at least two artworks by different artists**. The connections must be informed by research, and the study must demonstrate understanding of the cultural significance of the two artworks by different artists. SL students submit **two** mandatory files. • **One** PDF file of **up to 10 screens** including visual evidence and supporting written materials. The total word count must not exceed **2,500 words**. • **One** separate text file listing the sources.	20%
Internal assessment	**40%**
This component is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB at the end of the course. **Resolved artworks (32 marks)** This is an SL-only task focused on the student's ability to create a **coherent body of work**. Each student submits **five resolved artworks** to demonstrate their best achievements in communicating their artistic intentions coherently. The student provides evidence of synthesis of concept and form, and of their competence in resolving artworks. They also write a **rationale** to articulate their artistic intentions and the choices that informed the making of their **coherent** body of artworks. SL students submit **six** mandatory files. • **Five** image or video files (**each up to three minutes long**) of artworks—each accompanied by a title and details on medium and size. Two optional supporting image files per artwork can be submitted to show details or additional views. • **One** PDF file of **up to two screens** for the rationale (which must not exceed **700 words**).	40%

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Assessment outline—HL	Weighting
External assessment	**60%**
Art-making inquiries portfolio (32 marks) This is an SL and HL task focused on the student's art-making as inquiry. The student selects and organizes visual evidence of their personal investigations, discoveries and creations, supported by critical reflections, all in a portfolio. They provide curated evidence of their art-making as inquiry in a **variety** of art-making forms and creative strategies. The portfolio demonstrates how the student developed and refined their visual language through one or more **lines of inquiry** and must explicitly include the **inquiry questions or generative statements** they worked with. HL students submit **two** mandatory files. • **One** PDF file of **up to 15 screens** including visual evidence accompanied by written materials. The total word count must not exceed **3,000 words**. • **One** separate text file listing the sources.	30%
Artist project (40 marks) This is a **stand-alone**, HL-only task focused on the student creating and situating in context an artwork that they ideate and realize as part of a project of their choice. The artist project demonstrates through curated evidence how the student work was informed by investigations of context, by connections with **at least two artworks by different artists, and by dialogues**. A **short video** curated by the student shows where and how the project artwork was realized to communicate with the audience in the chosen context. HL students submit **three** mandatory files. • **One** PDF file of **up to 12 screens** including visual evidence and supporting written materials. The total word count must not exceed **2,500 words** and the student must comply with the exact word counts set for each section. • **One** video file **up to three minutes long** presenting the project artwork realized in the chosen context. The video is submitted accompanied by the artwork details and a short text with the finalized artistic intentions (**100 words maximum**). • **One** separate text file listing the sources.	30%

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Internal assessment	**40%**
This component is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB at the end of the course. **Selected resolved artworks (40 marks)** This is an HL-only task focused on the student's ability to create a **coherent body of work selected from their wider production**. Each student submits **five selected resolved artworks** to demonstrate their best achievements in communicating their artistic intentions coherently. The student provides evidence of synthesis of concept and form, and of their competence in resolving artworks. They also write a **rationale** to articulate how they realized their artistic intentions through a selection process for the **five resolved artworks**, **from at least eight** of their works. **Five artwork texts** situate through critical analysis each of the selected resolved artworks in a wider artistic context and in relation to the student's practice. HL students submit **six** mandatory files. • **Five** image or video files (**each up to three minutes long**) of artworks—each accompanied by a title and details on medium and size. Two optional supporting image files per artwork can be submitted to show details or additional views. • One PDF file of **up to eight screens** including the rationale (which must not exceed **700 words**) and **five** artwork texts (with a total word count not exceeding **1,000 words**).	40%

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