



VISUAL ARTS

General course

Year 11 syllabus for teaching from 2027

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

Important information

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) has revised the course rationale and aims, and updated the General Capabilities to create clearer connections with the syllabus content.

This syllabus is effective from 1 January 2027.

Users of this syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

Syllabuses are formally reviewed by the Authority on a cyclical basis, typically every five years.

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Rationale

The Visual Arts General course explores the diverse disciplines of art, craft and design, integrating both practical and theoretical components. It provides students with opportunities to express ideas, develop personal imagery and refine their artistic skills through creation and presentation of artwork. This course fosters an appreciation for visual culture, encouraging students to interpret visual information and engage critically with artworks.

Students engage in art-making and presentation, developing their ability to convey ideas and emotions through various art forms. They explore aesthetic principles, visual language and conceptual thinking, gaining insight into traditional and contemporary art practices. Through traditional art forms like painting, sculpture and ceramics, as well as contemporary practices such as video art, installations and multimedia, students experiment with various materials, techniques and emerging technologies, gaining hands-on experience in both classic and modern art forms to create artwork.

Through this course, students develop problem-solving skills, communication skills, creativity, analytical thinking and visual literacy. Students gain confidence in their creative abilities, experience with collaborative practice, motivation, self-esteem, discipline and resilience. They learn to analyse and evaluate artworks from cultural and historical perspectives, enhancing their ability to interpret and communicate meaning. The course fosters an awareness of the role of art in society and helps students to value their unique perspectives, environment, community and culture.

Students apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts by creating and presenting artworks that reflect, challenge and shape societal values. The course prepares students for creative thinking and problem-solving in daily life, fostering an appreciation for the environment and an awareness of ecological sustainability. Through the inquiry process and hands-on experimentation, students gain transferable skills applicable across various creative and professional fields.

The course lays a strong foundation for students aspiring to pursue further education, training or careers in creative industries, such as fine arts, design, education, art therapy, media and digital content creation. It enriches their lives by instilling a lifelong appreciation for art and culture. Students will be well-prepared to create and analyse artworks and understand the significant role art plays in reflecting and shaping societal values.

Aims

The Visual Arts General course aims to develop students’:

- ability to generate, develop and refine ideas using visual language to communicate artist intent
- application of art elements, principles, techniques and processes to produce artwork for specific purposes, audiences and contexts
- ability to reflect on the thinking and creative processes
- critical evaluation of their own and others' artworks using visual language and art terminology
- understanding of the role of visual arts across different times, places and cultural contexts.

Organisation

This course is organised into a Year 11 syllabus and a Year 12 syllabus. The cognitive complexity of the syllabus content increases from Year 11 to Year 12.

Structure of the syllabus

The Year 11 syllabus is divided into two units, each of one semester duration, which are typically delivered as a pair. The notional time for each unit is 55 class contact hours.

Unit 1 – Experiences

The focus for Unit 1 is experiences. Students base art making and interpretation on their lives and personal experiences, observations of the immediate environment, events and/or special occasions.

Unit 2 – Explorations

The focus for Unit 2 is explorations. Students explore ways to generate and develop ideas using a variety of stimulus materials and explorations from their local environment in their art making and interpretation.

Each unit includes:

- a unit description – a short description of the focus of the unit
- suggested contexts – a context in which the unit content could be taught
- unit content – the content to be taught and learned.

Organisation of content

The course content is the focus of the learning program.

The course content is divided into two content areas:

- Art making
- Art interpretation

Art making

Inquiry

Investigation, development, planning, documentation and refinement of artwork describe the inquiry process. The development of ideas includes a range of investigative approaches, including direct observation, exploration and expressive drawing. Researching and selecting information and inspiration provides a basis for portraying ideas, thoughts and feelings. Resource and time management are central to the creation of artworks and the development of ideas.

Visual language

Visual language involves using the elements and principles of art, signs, symbols, codes and conventions to arrive at visual solutions to communicate ideas. The use of visual language helps shape the creation and evaluation of artworks.

Visual influence

Viewing and exploring others' artworks and visual sources provides the challenge of considering a range of approaches to adopt, extend or reject in one's own work. Viewing and appraising others' artwork informs and influences the inquiry process.

Art forms, media and techniques

Students combine and manipulate media and techniques in selected art forms. This provides opportunities to work flexibly, discover innovative solutions and develop original approaches to art making through exploration and experimentation.

Art practice

This involves the use of skills and processes in order to produce and present artworks. Health and safety guidelines, together with the exercise of civic, social and environmental responsibility, must be adhered to in the learning environment. Art practice requires discernment and the ability to make informed and sensitive choices with an awareness of ethical, legal and economic issues, such as appropriation, copyright, censorship and marketing.

Presentation

Display of artworks provides opportunities to participate, promote and critique own and others' artworks. Presentation therefore involves arranging, organising and displaying ideas and artworks for audiences.

Reflection

Reflection involves revisiting and reconsidering options and alternatives when developing ideas and artworks. Describing, analysing and critically evaluating thinking and working processes enhances one's own artistic practice.

Art interpretation

Visual analysis

Visual analysis promotes critical thinking through strategies of formal analysis and the use of critical analysis frameworks. Analysis involves comparing, commenting on and making informed judgements about artworks which are representative of a range of art forms from various times and places. Visual analysis takes into account formal concerns as well as contextual factors relating to time, place, race, culture, gender identity, religion and politics in order to make informed judgements about how meanings are communicated.

Personal response

Personal response involves sharing, discussing and justifying opinions about artworks, both first-hand and in reproductions. The field of visual arts is subject to different interpretations and informed responses should take into account varying contexts from which a work is created and experienced. Responding to artworks can stimulate insights, encourage deeper understandings, challenge preconceived ideas and involve making connections between oneself and others.

Meaning and purpose

Each viewer constructs their own meaning based on their own experiences and the evidence provided in artworks. Commentaries on art by critics, historians, theorists and artists provide essential information and further access to the meanings and purposes of artworks.

Social, cultural and historical contexts

Knowledge about the relationships between artists, artworks, audiences and contextual factors is fundamental to interpreting and understanding visual artworks. Research into contexts includes consideration of the stylistic and technical aspects of artworks in order to locate them in particular times, places and cultures. Visual arts practice plays an important role in forming a significant part of the economy and providing career opportunities in Australia and internationally.

Progression from the Years 7–10 curriculum

This syllabus continues to develop student understanding and skills from Years 7–10. Through their study of the visual arts in Year 11, students are encouraged to challenge conventions and express concerns about wider issues. They explore and question their own immediate experience and their understanding of the world. Students make their own artwork and respond to the artwork of others, drawing on their developing knowledge, understanding and skills. Students use inquiry processes and critical and creative thinking to shape ideas. They develop an understanding of the role of the visual arts in social, cultural and historical contexts, applying skills of analysis, evaluation and aesthetic understanding.

Representation of the General Capabilities

The General Capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that will support students to live and work successfully now and into the future. They are not assessed unless identified within the specified unit content. Teachers should find opportunities to incorporate the following General Capabilities into the teaching and learning program for the Visual Arts General course.

Critical and creative thinking

The development of creative and critical thinking is integral to the course. In creating art, students draw on their curiosity, imagination and thinking skills to generate, refine and express ideas. They consider possibilities and processes and make choices, developing creative thinking strategies transferable to any problem-solving context. Students analyse visual language and compositional choices, evaluate artistic effectiveness and interpret meaning and purpose when interpreting artwork.

Digital literacy

Students develop digital literacy by incorporating digital tools and software throughout the creative process, from idea generation, research and design to production and presentation of artwork. This facilitates innovative approaches to traditional art forms and enables new modes of artistic expression, allowing students to represent their ideas and artwork. Students consider ethical and legal issues in digital creation, and select relevant digital tools to expand creative possibilities and enhance communication with audiences.

Ethical understanding

Students develop and apply ethical understanding when they encounter or create artwork that requires ethical consideration. This includes issues such as cultural representation, environmental responsibility, artistic freedom and social impact. Students actively engage in ethical decision-making when reflecting on their own and others' artwork.

Intercultural understanding

Students develop intercultural understanding in the course as they explore new ideas, media and practices from diverse local, national, regional and global cultural contexts. Students are encouraged to demonstrate open-mindedness to perspectives and visual languages that differ from their own and to appreciate the diversity of cultures and contexts of both artists and audiences.

Literacy

Students develop literacy through the study of visual arts by working in multiple meaning-making modes. When students document their creative process, analyse artworks or write artist statements, they integrate visual and written literacy. They develop visual literacy by interpreting symbols and narratives in artworks, strengthening their ability to decode meaning across contexts.

Numeracy

Students develop numerical and geometric understanding through spatial reasoning, measurement, proportion and pattern recognition. They apply scale calculations and understandings of ratio and measurement when creating and interpreting in the visual arts.

Personal and social capability

The course promotes self-discipline, initiative, confidence, empathy and adaptability as students work individually and collaboratively. Students develop and apply personal capabilities such as self-discipline and goal-setting.

Summary representation of the General Capabilities in the Visual Arts

General course

The unit content and assessment types for this course provide students with the opportunity to develop the General Capabilities summarised in the table below.

Year	Course	Course type	General Capabilities						
			CCT	DL	EU	IU	L	N	PSC
Year 11	Visual Arts (GEVAR)	General	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year 12	Visual Arts (GTVAR)	General	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key

CCT: Critical and creative thinking, DL: Digital literacy, EU: Ethical understanding, IU: Intercultural understanding, L: Literacy, N: Numeracy, PSC: Personal and social capability

Representation of the Cross-curriculum Priorities

The Cross-curriculum Priorities address contemporary issues that students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate them into the teaching and learning program for the Visual Arts General course. The Cross-curriculum Priorities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

The study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures enriches understanding of the diversity of art making practices in Australia and develops appreciation of the need to respond to artworks in ways that are culturally sensitive and responsible.

Many Australian Indigenous artists affirm connection with Country/Place, People and Culture through their visual arts making, with more traditional artworks representing cultural and clan knowledge that can only be used with permission. Study of the visual arts created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders exposes students to a view of the Australian landscape that is unique, expressive and personal.

Other Australian Indigenous artists offer a more contemporary view of Australian society. Many of these artists are part of the wider community of Australian artists and their artwork is as various and individual as other contemporary Australian artists.

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia provides rich, engaging and diverse contexts in which to investigate making and responding to visual artwork which has arisen from the rich and diverse cultures, belief systems and traditions of the peoples of the Asian region.

Sustainability

Sustainability provides engaging and thought-provoking contexts in which to explore the nature of art making and responding and enables the investigation of the interrelated nature of social, economic and ecological systems.

Students can use the exploratory and creative platform of the visual arts to develop world views that recognise the importance of social justice, healthy ecosystems and effective action for sustainability. Through their art work, they may persuade others to take action for sustainable futures.

Unit 1 – Experiences

Unit description

The focus for this unit is experiences. Students develop artworks based on their lives and personal experiences, observations of the immediate environment, events and/or special occasions. They participate in selected art experiences aimed at developing a sense of observation.

Students discover ways to compile and record their experiences through a range of art activities and projects that promote a fundamental understanding of visual language. They use experiences to develop appreciation of the visual arts in their everyday lives.

Students acquire various skills using processes of experimentation and discovery. Imaginative picture making is primarily concerned with experiences of the self and of the immediate environment, including aspects of family life, social activities, communal occasions and other shared activities. Ample scope for free, imaginative interpretation and experimentation with materials is provided.

Suggested contexts

Teachers and students may explore one or more of the suggested contexts in this unit (this list is not exhaustive):

- concepts: expression of feelings, memories, personal experiences, observations of the environment and aspects of everyday life
- styles and approaches: representational, expressionist, narrative, digital, installation
- materials: 2D and 3D, drawing, wet and dry media
- meanings and messages: personal stories and events
- purposes: self-expression.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

Art making

Inquiry

- explore drawing and different ways to represent ideas, objects and subject matter
- explore themes and develop artwork using a variety of stimulus materials and approaches
- follow steps, procedures and processes to produce artwork

Visual language

- explore visual language in directed tasks and activities
- develop artwork using specific visual art language – elements and principles of art

Visual influence

- examine specific artists and artwork with similar techniques, subject matter or approaches
- select sources of information and inspiration to develop own artwork

Art forms, media and techniques

- test and explore media when developing artwork
- use demonstrated techniques in selected art forms

Art practice

- make sound choices when developing artwork
- use safe and appropriate work practices, respecting and acknowledging the work of others

Presentation

- organise work in progress and display area
- display finished artwork with an audience in mind

Reflection

- identify and discuss ways to improve artwork
- evaluate the success of finished artwork

Art interpretation**Visual analysis**

- use guided questions and critical analysis frameworks to discuss artwork
- refer to visual language – elements and principles of art
- describe subject, mood, feelings, atmosphere and meaning in artwork
- discuss how artwork has been composed

Personal response

- provide and explain personal opinions about artwork
- share opinions about artwork and accept the views of others

Meaning and purpose

- discuss the meaning and purpose of art created in different times and places
- interpret artwork from a range of contexts

Social, cultural and historical contexts

- identify features of specific artwork or movements
- make connections between artwork according to when, where and why they were created

Unit 2 – Explorations

Unit description

The focus for this unit is explorations. Students explore ways to generate and develop ideas using a variety of stimulus materials and explorations from their local environment. They use a variety of inquiry approaches, techniques and processes when creating original artworks.

When exploring ideas and approaches to art making, students investigate the work of other artists. They learn to identify stylistic features of art forms from different times and places and explore ways to manipulate art elements and principles to generate, develop and produce their own artwork.

In developing subject matter for artworks, students explore ways to express personal beliefs, opinions and feelings. They manipulate a variety of media and materials in a range of art forms, recording and reflecting on their artistic achievements.

Suggested contexts

Teachers and students may explore one or more of the suggested contexts in this unit (this list is not exhaustive):

- concepts: metaphors, social issues, emotional, physical and/or spiritual issues
- styles and approaches: figurative, abstract, morphing, fantasy, collage
- materials: sculpture, mixed media, printmaking
- meanings and messages: signs and symbols, popular culture, urban art
- purposes: graphic forms, communal sculpture.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

Art making

Inquiry

- explore ways to create artwork using a range of stimulus materials, sources of information and drawing approaches
- develop artwork through experimentation and media manipulation
- annotate steps, procedures and processes used to create artwork

Visual language

- explore ways to use visual language in the development of artwork – elements and principles of art – in the development of artwork

Visual influence

- explore techniques used by different artists

Art forms, media and techniques

- test and explore with materials and techniques to achieve particular effects
- use demonstrated techniques when producing artwork

Art practice

- apply skills and processes sensitively in specific art forms
- follow correct processes to develop and produce artwork
- use safe and appropriate work practices, respecting and acknowledging the work of others

Presentation

- record processes in developing artwork
- display finished artwork with an audience in mind

Reflection

- appraise finished artwork and identify ways to improve
- ongoing self-evaluation

Art interpretation**Visual analysis**

- use guided questions and critical analysis frameworks to discuss artwork
- describe concepts, materials, forms, techniques and processes in artwork
- refer to visual language – elements and principles of art
- describe artwork using art terminology

Personal response

- explain and give reasons for personal opinions about artwork
- interpret the subject and explain ways artists have explored ideas in artwork

Meaning and purpose

- identify the purpose and interpret meaning communicated in artwork from a variety of times or places

Social, cultural and historical contexts

- identify features of artwork belonging to certain artists, movements, times or places
- discuss factors that have influenced the production of specific artwork

School-based assessment

The *Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Manual* contains essential information on principles, policies and procedures for school-based assessment that needs to be read in conjunction with this syllabus.

Teachers design school-based assessment tasks to meet the needs of students. The table below provides details of the assessment types for the Visual Arts General Year 11 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

Assessment table – Year 11

Type of assessment	Weighting
Production A body of work that incorporates resolved artwork(s) and documentation of thinking and working practices. This typically involves: • investigative approaches, including drawing to create artworks (inquiry) • using elements and principles of art (visual language) • using sources of information and research (visual influence) • transforming and developing artworks (art forms, media and techniques) • producing artworks (art practice) • displaying artworks (presentation) • evaluating and refining production processes (reflection).	70%
Analysis Response to, analysis and evaluation of artworks sourced from a variety of forms, periods, times and/or cultures. This typically involves: • interpretation of meanings • identifying the visual language (elements and principles of art) used by the artist • commenting on the relationship between the art form's structure, purpose, ideas, issues, beliefs, attitudes, emotions and/or values.	15%
Investigation Case studies involving research and visual analysis focused on Australian and/or international visual arts practice. Visual arts practice should be examined with consideration of historical, cultural and contextual factors influencing production and interpretation.	15%

Teachers are required to use the assessment table to develop an assessment outline for the pair of units (or for a single unit where only one is being studied).

The assessment outline must:

- include a set of assessment tasks
- include a general description of each task
- indicate the unit content to be assessed
- indicate a weighting for each task and each assessment type
- include the approximate timing of each task (for example, the week the task is conducted, or the issue and submission dates for an extended task).

In the assessment outline for the pair of units, each assessment type must be included at least once over the year/pair of units. In the assessment outline where a single unit is being studied, each assessment type must be included at least once.

The set of assessment tasks must provide a representative sampling of the content for Unit 1 and Unit 2.

Assessment tasks not administered under test/controlled conditions require appropriate validation/authentication processes. Visual Arts practical (production) tasks must be developed mainly in school time, and any work away from school must be regularly monitored.

Grading

Schools report student achievement in terms of the following grades:

Grade	Interpretation
A	Excellent achievement
B	High achievement
C	Satisfactory achievement
D	Limited achievement
E	Very low achievement

The teacher prepares a ranked list and assigns the student a grade for the pair of units (or for a unit where only one unit is being studied). The grade is based on the student's overall performance as judged by reference to a set of pre-determined standards. These standards are defined by grade descriptions and annotated work samples. The grade descriptions for the Visual Arts General Year 11 syllabus are provided in Appendix 1. They can also be accessed, together with annotated work samples, through the Guide to Grades link on the course page of the Authority website at www.scsa.wa.edu.au.

To be assigned a grade, a student must have had the opportunity to complete the education program, including the assessment program (unless the school accepts that there are exceptional and justifiable circumstances).

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information about the use of a ranked list in the process of assigning grades.

Appendix 1 – Grade descriptions Year 11

A	Art making (production) Produces artworks showing effective communication of coherent ideas. Shows effective application of media, techniques, skills and processes. Thoroughly explores, and purposefully manipulates, visual language in the production of artworks. Shows well-considered decision making in the development and presentation of resolved artworks.
	Art interpretation (analysis and investigation) Provides detailed analyses that discuss aesthetic organisation in artworks, and identifies layers of meaning when interpreting artworks. Provides clear arguments and personal responses that are well supported with reasons and specific evidence. Undertakes detailed research, based on multiple sources of information, to formulate thoughtful conclusions.
B	Art making (production) Produces artworks showing clear communication of considered ideas. Shows appropriate application of media, skills, techniques and processes. Broadly explores, and shows appropriate use of, visual language in the production of artworks. Shows considered decision making in the development and presentation of resolved artworks.
	Art interpretation (analysis and investigation) Provides clear analyses that broadly discuss formal organisation and interpret the meanings of artworks. Provides personal responses with logical evidence to support opinions. Undertakes purposeful research to formulate valid conclusions.
C	Art making (production) Produces artworks showing communication of simple ideas. Shows simple application of media, techniques, skills and processes. Displays straightforward exploration and uncomplicated use of visual language in the production of artworks. Shows straightforward decision making in the development and presentation of completed artworks.
	Art interpretation (analysis and investigation) Provides mainly descriptive analyses, focusing on key features and offering general interpretations of the meaning of artworks. Provides personal responses with straightforward reasons to support opinions. Undertakes research, describing mainly biographical details and/or key features and formulating simple conclusions.

D**Art making (production)**

Produces artworks communicating simple ideas that are underdeveloped, unresolved and/or directly appropriated from others.

Shows rudimentary, and sometimes inappropriate, use of media, techniques, skills and processes.

Displays insufficient and/or ineffective use of visual language in the production of artworks.

Shows minimal decision making in the development and presentation of artworks.

Art interpretation (analysis and investigation)

Provides brief, obvious interpretations of artworks with little discussion of formal organisation.

Provides personal responses with rudimentary reasons or offers no reasons to support opinions.

Undertakes minimal research, offering conclusions that are often cursory or irrelevant.

E

Does not meet the requirements of a D grade and/or has completed insufficient assessment tasks to be assigned a higher grade.

Appendix 2 – Glossary

This glossary is provided to enable a common understanding of the key terms in this syllabus.

Abstraction

A style of art that selects and emphasises one or a number of the elements and principles of art, in order to depict an object or idea without attention to depicting the object in a realistic manner.

Aesthetic

Relating to or characterised by a concern with beauty or good taste (adjective); a particular taste or approach to the visual qualities of an object (noun).

Analysis

Comparing, commenting on and making informed judgements about artworks.

Appropriation

The intentional borrowing, copying and alteration of pre-existing images and objects in a new context or for a new meaning.

Art terminology

Words and phrases which have meaning specific to the visual arts.

Censorship

The act of suppressing artwork deemed objectionable on moral, political, aesthetic or other grounds.

Composition

The placement or arrangement of elements or parts in artwork.

Conceptual

Emphasising ideas rather than objects (or skills).

Context (historical, social and cultural)

Historical, social and/or cultural context refers to the time and place in which an artwork was created and the influence on artwork of those contexts.

Conventions

Traditional or culturally accepted ways of doing things based on audience expectations.

Copyright

The exclusive right to make copies, license or otherwise exploit an artistic work.

Critical analysis frameworks

Critical analysis frameworks provide scaffolds for analysis of artworks. The four critical analysis frameworks, recommended for use by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), are STICI, Taylor, Feldman and Four Frames.

Elements of art

Line, colour, shape, texture, space, value (tone) and form.

Influences

The capacity or power of persons or events to be a compelling force on, or produce effects on, the creations, actions, behaviours and/or opinions of others.

Innovation

A new invention or idea.

Practice

Refers to the conceptual and physical processes of art making and how ideas, concepts and themes are developed.

Principles of art

Accepted conventions associated with organising the elements; can include unity, balance, hierarchy, scale, proportion, emphasis, similarity, repetition and contrast.

Resolved artwork

A resolved artwork is an artwork that would generally be considered display or exhibition ready.

Style

A distinctive or characteristic manner of expression; the influencing context of an artwork, such as Impressionism or Romanticism; or postmodern, twenty-first century or contemporary.

Visual devices

The elements and principles of art and symbols and conventions are visual devices that the artist uses to communicate his/her intent.

Visual language

Visual language is the use of the elements and principles of art, symbols and conventions to arrive at visual solutions to communicate ideas.

Visual literacy

The ability to perceive, understand, interpret and evaluate visual information.

Visual symbol systems

Non-verbal modes of communication, for example, signs, symbols, perspective, representation.

