



L-Università
ta' Malta

MATSEC
Examinations Board



Examiners' Report
AM Art
First Session 2025

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION**Registration for Examination**

Fifty-six (56) candidates registered for the examination.

Attendance for Examination

Fifty-five (55) candidates attended the examination.

B. OVERALL PERFORMANCE

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	Total
NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	6	12	21	3	6	2	6	56
% OF TOTAL	10.7	21.4	37.5	5.4	10.7	3.6	10.7	100

GRADE	NO. OF CANDIDATES	% OF CANDIDATES
A - C	39	69.6
A - E	48	85.7
FAIL	2	3.57

C. COMMENTS ON PAPERS**Introduction**

This was the first examination which followed the revised and updated syllabus. The new syllabus sought to simplify and streamline the previous syllabus. It aims to offer a more consolidated approach, focusing more on candidates' skills and abilities in their studies through documentation and development of the creative process and in the engagement with works of art and artists of reference. The statistics in the tables provided above clearly indicate that the newly-revised syllabus has been quite successful and candidates in general responded well with a marked overall improvement in the marks attained. In fact, only 2 candidates failed their exam (3.6%), compared to 16 last year (21.3%). The candidates who failed were largely those who did not complete all the components of the examination. Despite this improvement, few candidates scored very high marks, reflecting a strong performance across all the components, including coursework and controlled task.

Controlled Task**Personal Study***Project*

In this section candidates were required to take as their starting point the works of an artist from a list of five provided by Matsec at the start of the two-year course. Projects were of mixed quality, with only few reaching the desired standards at this level. The emphasis should be on a strong theme which emerges from a deep interaction with a facet or facets of the chosen artist's work. This should also be connected to works by other artists which can extend and strengthen the process of investigation and documentation. It is expected that the submitted work reflects extensive practice, ample experimentation and a clear development of ideas which result from a proper, coherent and articulate investigation which goes beyond

a mere interaction with the chosen artist's work. A number of projects showed a very superficial interaction and an investigation which was well below the standard expected at Advanced level. It has also been noted that several projects made extensive use of printed pictures which were pasted on the project sheets. This practice is strongly discouraged.

Essay

Most essays focused too much on the biographical aspects of the chosen artists, and went into a detailed narrative which was many times superfluous and sometimes also acquired from online sources. Sources were unfortunately not always of an academic nature, and we strongly encourage candidates to consult proper and serious publications and avoid relying on popular writings. Candidates who acquired better marks in this section engaged critically, analytically and contextually with the chosen artist's works and discussed clearly the connection between the starting point and the evolution of their project. It is strongly suggested that strictly biographical details are kept to a minimum and the essay emphasises the connection between the chosen artist's works and those of the candidate, highlighting especially the process of investigation, experimentation and realisation. In some cases the essay was of a better quality than the project itself.

Paper I – History of Art

In this section, the problem of poor handwriting has unfortunately persisted. This hinders proper evaluation and loses marks. Candidates are to take this advice seriously.

Section A - Critical-Comparative Essay

There was very little proper comparison between the two chosen works, and many candidates have unfortunately opted for an individual analysis which goes entirely against the spirit of this question. Some candidates even listed the specific number of the work, which is totally unnecessary. Many answers were largely descriptive and failed to engage in a critical argument which is expected in this question and at this level. This essay needs to be in continuous engagement with both works, ideally running on a parallel. Additionally, the contextual engagement was generally disappointing and discussion of other works by the artist and other contemporaries non-existent. Only few essays showed a proper critical and comparative approach which is reflective of good preparation and ample familiarity with artists and their contexts.

Section B - Synoptic Essay

This section is intended to test the candidate's ability to discuss art from a thematic perspective in an all-inclusive, synoptic manner. The most popular question with candidates was Question 1 on religious and political propaganda. Some essays were considerably good and showed a convincing grasp of the topic. However, many candidates failed to create a proper discussion and many times did not really engage with the subject. In several cases, answers reflected a superficial reading and a limited understanding of the mentioned works. Other candidates did not take note of the timeframe indicated in the question and discussed material which was totally unrelated, such as the Renaissance and the Baroque.

Fewer candidates opted for Question 2 (no candidate attempted Q.3) which focused on the continued representation of the human form in the 20th century. This unfortunately reflected an acute lack of knowledge and familiarity with twentieth-century works and many candidates talked largely on 19th century works instead.

It is clear that many candidates are dedicating enough time to familiarise themselves with key works of art which define the milestones of art history. This is indispensable both for the theoretical and practical aspects of this examination. Candidates are strongly encouraged to increase their art historical reading. More practice of writing skills is also recommended.

Paper II – Work from Observation

Generally speaking, an improvement was noticed on last year's performance in this section. This might have been a consequence of the removal of some sections from the syllabus, which possibly resulted in more time to practice from life. It is encouraging to note that a few works were brilliantly executed with impressive sensitivity at this level. Additionally, a significant percentage of works showed a satisfactory understanding of space, composition, proportion, tactile qualities, value, etc. Others, however, reflected lack of observation and interpretation skills, whether in pencil or in colour, and showed marked deficiencies in both skill and technique. One can never insist enough on the importance of practice from life.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In summary, despite the improvement noticed on the previous year, there are areas which need to be tackled for better grades, including (i) a more sustained effort in a strong and structured engagement with the chosen artist in the Project and the accompanying essay; (ii) an improvement in the two art history essays: a better comparative argument and a more in-depth synoptic discussion; (iii) more work from observation to be better equipped to the tackling of either the human form or the group of objects in Paper II. The expectations at this level are considerably high and one expects a serious and sustained dedication in the submission of material which is adequately strong.

Chairperson
Examination Panel 2025