



The following report gives feedback to assist assessors with general issues and trends that have been identified during external moderation of the internally assessed standards in 2025. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for Visual Arts. Please note this report does not introduce new criteria, change the requirements of the standard, or change what we expect from assessment.

Insights

91912: Use practice-based visual inquiry to explore an Aotearoa New Zealand Māori context and another cultural context

Inquiry using visual arts processes, materials, and techniques (Explanatory Note 4)

Performance overview:

Submissions utilised wide-ranging media and techniques in the process of seeking and recording visual information, spanning the range of art fields. The most successful outcomes paired the visual art method with the information being recorded. For example:

- Cyanotypes or frottage for external contours of found leaves and site textures.
- Graph paper/coloured pencils/LEGO/pegs/string for patterns and tukutuku.
- Dry media (pencil, charcoal, etc.) to show the shape and forms of objects and places.
- Colour media (paint, pencils, etc.) for colours and patterns.
- 3D card models and digital drawing to investigate structures and patternmaking.
- Photography to capture close-up details, textures, light, and document site visits.
- Printmaking to record size, shapes, and textures through direct printing.

Achievement was supported when students had prior learning in the media that developed skills appropriate to the curriculum level. Some agency in the selection of drawing methods also enabled ākonga to work to their strengths.

Practice-based inquiry methods help document development for production standards at Levels 1-3.

Practices that need strengthening:

Care needs to be taken to ensure assessment activities prioritise the practical visual arts inquiry purpose of this standard. Some submissions included extensive amounts of text and/or found images, instead of practice-based visual inquiry strategies.

Emphasis should be placed on the requirement for visual arts practice-based inquiry modes, rather than text-based or cut-and-paste approaches. For example, the symbolism of the mangōpare kōwhaiwhai design can easily be written about. However, an accurate rendering of the pattern, accompanied by a shark image and sketches, would show the similarity of shapes. This, along with concise notes explaining the symbolic significance, can visually demonstrate understanding of contextual imagery and information.

91912: Aligning selected contexts (Explanatory Notes 2 and 3)

Performance overview:

Overall, selected Māori contexts incorporated authentic and meaningful learning that engaged ākonga. These contexts included:

- Studying significant cultural taonga, sometimes including museum visits.
- Investigating significant places and iwi narratives.
- Learning about the local environment in terms of flora/fauna and mahinga kai.
- Overarching values and concepts such as kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga.

Individual students' ahurea tuakiri featured prominently as the 'other' context. This supported meaningful engagement by students with their personal history, contemporary culture, or country of origin. The variety of other contexts selected often reflected the unique character, resources, and aspects of the local community/school.

Practices that need strengthening:

Aligning both contexts by studying objects or places with similar form, function, or cultural value is recommended. This comparative approach enables ākonga to make meaningful connections between cultural imagery, narratives, and values.

Focusing on fewer 'categories' or 'types' of items can enhance opportunity for detailed examination and reflection at higher grades. Broad-ranging inquiries, looking at a wider variety of cultural aspects, can reduce the depth of examination needed for higher levels of achievement.

Uniquely Māori terms should be used with respect for their specific cultural meanings. For example, *tūrangawaewae* refers to a place where one belongs or has whakapapa connections, carrying reciprocal responsibilities. It should not be used loosely without sufficient cultural understanding. Other terms such as *kāinga waewae*, *kāinga tupu* (the place where I grew up), or *kāinga tūturu* (original homeland) may be more appropriate depending on the context.

91912: Key Criteria step-ups – Explore, Examine, Reflect (Explanatory Note 1)

Performance overview:

Exploration of both contexts typically utilised a range of media and two clearly defined phases of inquiry. For example, a study of the Māori context followed by an inquiry into a related aspect of the student's ahurea tuakiri. Other approaches involved studying aspects of both contexts at each stage of a progressive investigation. Both approaches provided opportunities for achievement.

Multi-modal pages presenting both found and created evidence related to the topic were often highly successful in relation to the practice-based inquiry intention of the standard.

Samples at higher levels of achievement examined contexts in more detail by recording specific visual elements such as shapes, colours, forms, particular patterns, and symbols, using visual arts media. Annotations next to this imagery provided additional cultural insights to complement the visual evidence.

Practices that need strengthening:

Multimodal pages can show rich inquiry, but often contain evidence that needs to be clearly acknowledged by distinguishing found imagery from student-generated drawings and photographs. Attribution of all images and text not generated by the student is best practice in this standard, providing assurance for both authenticity and moderation.

Some evidence showed writing about links and relationships, rather than primarily using visual strategies to demonstrate reflective thinking. Excellence reflection can involve visual strategies for processing and arranging information such as collaging, juxtaposing, combining, overlaying, and blending imagery. Visual responses can illustrate complex ideas with accompanying labels, notes, or a brief statement, showing the underlying symbolism, thinking, and insights.

91912: 2026 changes to Achieved, Merit, and Excellence requirements in Explanatory Note 1.

The revised Achievement Standard 91912 for 2026 removes the terms 'links' (Merit) and 'relationships' (Excellence) from Explanatory Note 1.

From 2026, the focus is on personal examination and reflection – there is no longer an explicit requirement to link or explain relationships although doing so is still a valid way to show a depth of understanding. This reduces the academic comparative requirement of the standard and prioritises personal visual arts responses to cultural content.

91913: Produce a significant resolved artwork appropriate to established art making conventions

Appropriate scale, depth, duration, and technical finish (Explanatory Note 2)

Performance overview:

The most successful outcomes were substantial in terms of their conceptual scope and production values. This typically involved between four and six weeks of production time for the resolved artwork, supported by two to four weeks of research and development.

Excellence outcomes were characterised by an ambitious creative scope and consistent technical facility. These artworks were often larger and more complex than conventional field-specific works (paint, print, photo, design, sculpture) more suited for the external production standard (91915). They can also include production complexities involving materials and techniques across more than one field (assemblage, multimedia installation, artist's books).

Practices that need strengthening:

Departments should note that 91913 is a production standard with the same credit weighting as the external production standard (91915). This means an equivalent measure of scope and skill is expected for each level of achievement. For example, painting outcomes should be substantial in terms of scale, materials, and techniques. This often means A2 or larger works on canvas or board that show developed painting skills, such as accurate drawing, blending, tonal modelling, glazing, dry brushing, and layering to build surface quality.

While collective murals or installations may be cumulatively substantial, each individual contribution needs to be significant in relation to the credit weighting and curriculum level of the standard.

To ensure that a resolved artwork approach is sufficiently 'significant' to provide opportunity for all levels of achievement, assessment materials should include:

- A sizeable production scope (scale and/or complexity).
- Substantial materials and techniques (to show higher levels of facility and skill).
- A complete set of technical and conceptual parameters (production methods) appropriate to the art-making context.
- Sufficient time to show sustained control and fluency (4-6 weeks production time).

91913: Effectively communicating an idea or narrative (Explanatory Note 2)

Performance overview:

Successful outcomes have a clear sense of conceptual or narrative purpose. Purposeful propositions move beyond simple themes (portrait) to pursue specific communicative intentions (a portrait where the style and selected imagery show the subject's cultural identity).

In some cases, students have been allowed to choose their own thematic proposition and art-making context. Examples of student chosen projects include animation, modelling, CGI, and wearable arts. While this approach typically enhances student engagement, care should be taken to ensure that students are fully aware of the related set of design and production conventions appropriate to their chosen approach.

Practices that need strengthening:

It is useful to structure assessment activities to ensure that conceptual ideation is a clearly indicated requirement. For example, ceramic approaches should include consideration of the iconographic significance of form, structure, and decoration from cultural or functional perspectives.

Including an 'artist's statement' as part of the initial development process helps to ensure students move beyond an exclusive focus on technical properties to include communicative intentions. Artist statements can include (but are not limited to) explanations of:

- Symbolic elements and relationships (iconography).
- Political, environmental, social, or cultural intentions (advocacy).
- Personal, historical, or cultural stories of events (narrative).
- Who the artwork is for, and where and how the artwork will be viewed (purpose).

91913: Zines and Artist's Books

Performance overview:

Zines and Artist's Books continued to be popular contexts for the development of significant resolved artworks in 2025.

These contexts provided opportunity for students to explore personal thematic propositions with media techniques, imagery, and stylistic approaches specifically tailored to their own strengths and interests. The most successful outcomes were supported by sustained research and development (often 6-8 pages) and have:

- A clear sense of conceptual scope and/or narrative purpose.
- High production values informed by knowledge of design and construction conventions.
- Consistent and personal stylistic coherency.

Practices that need strengthening:

Care should be taken to ensure that unique conventions specific to the type of outcome (Zine or Artist's Book) are well understood by students.

For Zine outcomes, this means a specific layout and folding structure such as A3, eight-panel with a single cut. Zines typically involve the management of pagination (cover/back placement, page inversion, double page spreads), typographic principles (font selection, size, placement, hierarchy), and text/image relationships to support a specific theme or narrative intention.

Artist's Book outcomes include a range of structural options such as concertina, Coptic binding, or a boxed portfolio. In each case, the conceptual scope and fabrication strategies need to be clearly defined and fully resolved with an 'appropriate technical finish' (Explanatory Note 2). Artist's Books need to have a clear sense of thematic purpose and stylistic unity, rather than being a collection of unrelated components. To meet the standard, all individual elements and the overall outcomes need to be fully finished and coherently related in terms of theme and style.

91913: The role of supporting evidence

Performance overview:

The Conditions of Assessment state that "Submissions must include evidence to show the research and development (decision-making) involved in supporting the artwork".

Complete bodies of research and development (typically between 6-8 pages) provided invaluable insight into the communicative intentions and decision making to inform understanding of the resolved artworks.

Practices that need strengthening:

While assessment decisions are based on the resolved artwork, the understanding of the resolved art is informed by supporting evidence.

Supporting evidence should be directly related to the final artwork in terms of content and include:

- Research into the art making context (methods, ideas, practices, protocols).
- Communicative intentions (topic, proposition, messages, concepts, ideas, narratives).
- Technical exploration (tests, media trials, prototypes, maquettes).
- Documentation of the production phases (stages of fabrication).
- Evaluative annotations (notes about intentions and decision making).

All standards: Digital moderation submissions

Performance overview:

Most submissions facilitated the moderation process by providing scans or correctly exposed and focused photographs or videos of evidence. These were provided as a single file per sample in a universal file format, with file names consistent with online grade entries. The resolution of images and/or subsequent tonal adjustments prior to submission ensured that text, and pencil drawings especially, were legible and able to be moderated.

Digital Submissions

Use these best practices for long-term digital submission storage for Visual Arts.



Universal file format:
use a PDF



Check orientation and
dimensions are correct



Document each page
individually



Maintain correct resolution
when exporting

Practices that need strengthening:

Recurring issues arise from:

- Low resolution or poorly exposed images that reduce tonal nuance or text legibility.
- Native file formats such as HEIC that cannot be read on NZQA equipment.
- Inaccessible links to sites such as SharePoint and Google where permission settings need to be made public or a username and password provided.

An emerging trend is to document multiple workbook pages as a single photograph. This adversely affects the resolution and legibility of the work (especially when handwriting/text is included). In some cases, this has prevented moderation feedback from being provided. Wherever possible, each page or object should be documented individually at an appropriate resolution.

Best practices for documenting and submitting digital work for moderation include:

- Well focused and exposed images with legible text and clear surface detail.
- Correctly oriented images throughout each sample (not sideways or upside down).
- Images that show the entire page/work.
- Pages arranged in the correct chronological and developmental sequence.
- File titles match the Learner A, B, C of the External Moderation Application (EMA).
- Images bundled into a single folder or universal file format for each learner (e.g. PDF).

A free online Bite-sized Module, available on Pūtake, provides more detailed guidance about preparing Visual Arts samples for external moderation.

All standards: Final outcomes that are not support by developmental evidence

Performance overview:

Some submissions for 3.3 standards have been provided as images of isolated resolved artworks (wearable arts, Artist's Books, etc.) or completed external folio panels assessed for 3.4. Folio panels are often an edited selection of final outcomes that omit the personal origin of images and the conceptual thinking underpinning the artworks.

Showing depth of critical thinking is a key requirement for higher levels of achievement with 3.3 standards. This is often demonstrated through supporting workbook evidence such as research, annotations, false starts, risk taking, experiments, trials, planning, etc.

Practices that need strengthening:

Where folio work generated for 3.3 has been mounted on folio panels, it is recommended that the associated developmental work is also included with submissions for external moderation. This informs understanding of the outcomes and ensures that the critical decision making and original genesis of key imagery can be authenticated for assessment purposes.

Supporting documentation includes:

- Research into established practice.
- Conceptual intentions, developmental and experimental phases.
- Moving image formats to show functionality, three dimensional views, and time-based outcomes.
- Progress images of underlying construction.
- Various viewpoints and close-up details.

Curated scholarship pages may not include sufficient supporting evidence. The constraints of the eight-page scholarship format means that evidence of authentic explorative discovery (mistakes, accidents, surprises) are typically omitted. This evidence can often provide the most meaningful insights into the decision-making process for the assessment of internal standards.

To give feedback on this report click on [this link](#).

Assessor Support

NZQA offers free online support for teachers as assessors of NZC achievement standards. These include:

- Exemplars of student work for most standards.
- National Moderator Reports.
- Online learning modules (generic and subject-specific).
- Clarifications for some standards.
- Assessor Practice Tool for many standards.
- Webcasts.

Exemplars, National Moderator Reports, clarifications, and webcasts are hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

[Subject Pages](#)

Online learning modules and the Assessor Practice Tool are hosted on Pūtake, NZQA's learning management system. You can access these through the Education Sector Logon.

[Log in to Pūtake](#)

We also may provide a speaker to present at national conferences on requests from national subject associations. At the regional or local level, we may be able to provide online support.

Please contact assessorsupport@nzqa.govt.nz for more information or to lodge a request for support.