

## Year 13 related Study Guide Component 1: Personal Investigation (60%)

Students are required to conduct a practical investigation, into an idea, issue, concept or theme, supported by written material. The focus of the investigation must be identified independently by the student and must lead to a finished outcome or a series of related finished outcomes.

The investigation should be a coherent, in-depth study that demonstrates the student's ability to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning from an initial starting point to a final realisation. The investigation must show clear development from initial intentions to the final outcome or outcomes. It must include evidence of the student's ability to research and develop ideas and relate their work in meaningful ways to relevant critical/contextual materials. The investigation must be informed by an aspect of contemporary or past practice of artists, photographers, designers or craftspeople.

The written material must confirm understanding of creative decisions, providing evidence of all four AOs, by:

- **clarifying the focus** of the investigation
- demonstrating **critical understanding of contextual** and other **sources**
- substantiating **decisions leading to the development and refinement of ideas**
- **recording ideas**, observations and insights relevant to intentions by **reflecting critically** on practical work
- **making meaningful connections** between, visual, written and other elements.
- be a **coherent and logically structured** extended response of between 1000 and 3000 words of continuous prose.
- include **specialist vocabulary** appropriate to the subject matter
- include a **bibliography** that, identifies contextual references from sources such as: books, journals, websites, through studies of others' work made during a residency, or on a site, museum or gallery visit
- be legible with **accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar** so that meaning is clear.

| Element               | Word #    | Notes   |
|-----------------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Introduction</b>   | 400 words | A brief introduction explaining your intentions when you started the project, your interest in the theme, and a short summary of what your essay explores.  |
| <b>'Big Idea' 1</b>   | 600 words | Describe a broad theme, technique or idea you have explored in your project. Include artist analysis and analysis of your own work.   |
| <b>'Big Idea' 2</b>   | 600 words | Describe a broad theme, technique or idea you have explored in your project. Include artist analysis and analysis of your own work.   |
| <b>'Big Idea' 3</b>   | 600 words | Describe a broad theme, technique or idea you have explored in your project. Include artist analysis and analysis of your own work.   |
| <b>Conclusion</b>     | 400 words | Summarise each of the conclusions of your 'big ideas', and overall what you have discovered from your investigation. There should be no new information or content added to the conclusion.   |
| <b>Reference List</b> |           | You need to include an alphabetical list of references you have quoted directly in your essay, including any images you have added which are not yours. Should follow Harvard Referencing.  |
| <b>Bibliography</b>   |           | A bibliography is an alphabetical list of any sources you have read which have informed your reading – even if you have not referenced them. This shows your wider understanding and acknowledges how your thoughts and arguments are informed by others. This is different to a reference list because everything in the reference list has been directly cited in the text. |

## Introduction – What to Include

This will be an ongoing draft and will change as your personal study develops. To start, write a brief introduction into your interest in the theme and which artists or art styles you are drawn to and *why*.

Your introduction might:

- Explain your interest in the subject and the connection that you have to this.
- Set out your intentions

Provoke a desire to read on (for example, by using intriguing yet-to-be-answered questions). Explain the personal connection and your interest in the subject and artists you will be writing about. Explain your intentions - what you hope to learn from the study. Mention where you are finding the information you need (i.e. where you have seen the art work). Introduce the three 'big ideas' or themes which you have explored in your project.

## 'Big Idea' subheadings – What to Include

Your essay should examine in depth the various themes or ideas you have explored in your work. For example, if you are looking at the broad theme of 'Environment', you may have explored subthemes such as 'Landscape', 'My local area', 'Climate change', 'Sustainable art practices'. Looking through your work, find a dominant thread which runs between your research, practice, and experimentation: a 'big idea' or theme which you have explored. Choose three different 'Big Ideas' and these will be the subheadings of your essay.

Under each 'Big Idea' subheading, you should aim to write around 600 words. These should be formatted almost like a short essay with an introduction, analysis of artist work, analysis of your responses and experimentation, and a short conclusion as to how you investigated the idea/theme.

**Introduction:** Explain how you arrived at the 'Big Idea' and how it's relevant to your investigation. Suggest any questions or curiosities you had before investigating this idea.

**Artist analysis:** Choose an artist or number of artists that led you to this idea, or helped you investigate this idea further. Make a close analysis and evaluation of their work. Your analysis should be structured around:

- **Your initial reaction** – *informed by instinct, intuition, emotional response, existing knowledge etc.*

This is appropriate when your initial reactions are justified e.g. *"I'm intrigued by this because..."*; *"when I first encountered the work I was taken by surprise because..."* But if what follows is a **basic and superficial understanding of wider contexts** then, well, that might just make your teacher cry. *"I'm interested in Cubism because I like how Picasso's artworks are made up of cube-like shapes"*; or *"Pop Art appeals because it uses bright colours and film stars"* – these are too basic and superficial.

- **A deeper understanding/complex grasp of wider contexts** – *demonstrating a confident stance; justified, informed opinions; an ability to make imaginative connections etc.* Compare these improved examples to the previous responses: *"I'm interested in Cubism, particularly how the concept of recording multiple viewpoints evolved through experimenting with - and challenging - traditional methods of depiction..."*; *"I'm interested in how Pop Art emerged as a response to Abstract Expressionism. It strikes me as a mischievous movement; an antidote to the excessive chin-holding culture which pervaded galleries at that time..."*

**It may help you to narrow your focus** – for example, if referencing a particular artwork, consider focusing on one of these 4 aspects: TECHNICAL, VISUAL, CONTEXTUAL and CONCEPTUAL. Do you want to provide technical insights (the type of materials used, the technical skills involved etc.), or perhaps a visual analysis is more fitting (of subject matter, composition etc.)? All essays should demonstrate contextual understanding, and reveal concepts and ideas, but this might not be necessary for every artwork referenced.

**Accompanying images/illustrations** – Your Personal Study should be accompanied with relevant images. Think carefully about the relevance, order, scale and placement of images, and reference them consistently within your text. You can do this in a couple of ways, e.g:

- ✓ “An example of this expressive technique can be seen in Figure 1.
- ✓ “This technique was very expressive (Figure 1) and...”
- ✓ The images should then be captioned accordingly. E.g. Figure 1 *Artist name, title, date*

**Your own work:** The purpose of your essay is to critically reflect on your investigation. This means analysing your own work, and placing it within the critical discussion of your topic. You should take high quality images of your own and put them within your essay. You do not need to analyse every piece of work, but pick key words which explore your ‘big idea’ and wide theme most successfully.

- Discuss your process and use of materials and why you did them
- How does your piece relate/respond to your question?
- How does it develop (refine and move away from) your artists?
- Did you come across any challenges when making your response?
- How did making this response deepen your knowledge and understanding of your theme?
- What questions or ideas did it raise for you? What went unanswered?

**It is important that students move beyond simple observations and add perceptive, personal insight.** Your writing should be **descriptive, personal and reflective**. It should provide insights in relation to your own work or your own experiences. Don't dismiss how an artwork makes you feel or impacts upon your senses. Be sensitive to your intuition and honest in accounting this. Consider the context of the work and find out how it connects to wider issues in art or society. Make sure you analyse visual and material qualities. E.g. if a student notices that colour has been used to create strong contrast in certain areas of an artwork, they might follow this with a detailed and thoughtful assumption about *why* this is the case: for example, perhaps the contrast was created deliberately to draw attention to a focal point in the artwork, helping the artist to help convey thematic ideas.

## Conclusion - What to Include

This should be a brief summary of your entire essay, summarising each of the small conclusions of your ‘big idea’ sections, and overall what you have discovered from your investigation. There should be no new information or content added to the conclusion, but instead a succinct summary of the journey of your project and essay. You should consider which areas of your investigation is the most important, and what the main ‘take away’ of your project has been. Someone should be able to read only your conclusion and gain a clear understanding of what you have explored in the entire text. It will be similar to your introduction, but more precise and conclusive.

## List of References and Bibliography - What to Include

**List of references:** Throughout your essay you should reference a variety of primary (e.g. galleries) and secondary sources (e.g. books, articles, essays, videos). At the end of your essay, you need to include an alphabetical list of references you have quoted directly in your essay, including any images you have added which are not yours. Should follow Harvard Referencing. (Refer to guide).

**Bibliography:** A bibliography is an alphabetical list of any sources you have read which have informed your reading – even if you have not referenced them. This shows your wider understanding and acknowledges how your thoughts and arguments are informed by others. This is different to a reference list because everything in the reference list has been directly cited in the text.

**Presentation:** Make sure the presentation of the illustrated dissertation is immaculate. Word-process all the text. All images must be high quality. Font should be appropriate. Text should be broken into subheadings and paragraphs. There should be no spelling or grammar mistakes.