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Towards a Fair, Rigorous and Transparent Fine Art Curriculum and Assessment Framework

Angela Clarke ^{*}, Shane Hulbert and Fleur Summers

College of Design and Social Context, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476, Melbourne, VIC 3001, Australia; shane.hulbert@rmit.edu.au (S.H.); fleur.summers@rmit.edu.au (F.S.)

* Correspondence: angela.clarke@rmit.edu.au

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Abstract: Assessing creative work is a complex issue in fine art education, particularly with the academy's push toward the standardisation of assessment practices. This creates particular challenges for art educators such as defining creativity; balancing assessment of the person, the process and the outcome; identifying suitable assessment criteria; moderating subjective responses of assessors; providing feedback that does not inhibit future risk-taking, experimentation and creativity; and considering assessment for, as and of learning. This paper reports on a five-year curriculum and assessment project in the fine art undergraduate degree within an Australian university. The project was designed to provide greater clarity and transparency in the assessment of all aspects of creative and written works within the degree. Using case study and action learning methodologies, we found that assessing in fine art requires artistry and engaged dialogue. This dialogue must allow the language of the discipline to emerge and take into account the pedagogical purpose of assessment. When this process is systemically enacted across the curriculum of a program, assessment can move towards a fairer, more rigorous and transparent approach. We present a fine art curriculum and assessment framework that embeds the values of art educators and simultaneously acts within institutional requirements for assessment.

Keywords: creativity; assessment; fine art; rubrics; levels of achievement; curriculum domain; knowledge framework

1. Introduction

In this section, we provide an overview of the role of assessment in higher education, and the tensions created by institutional requirements for assessment within a fine art educational context. In particular, we focus on the assessment of creativity because this presents the most challenging and nuanced aspects of assessment practices in fine art education.

Assessment matters. In higher education, there are three core functions of assessment: supporting learning, judging achievement and maintaining the standards of a profession (Joughin 2009). However, good forms of assessment go beyond simply providing learners with the opportunity to demonstrate their achievements. Assessment strategies should encourage engagement, facilitate meaningful feedback and be flexible enough to accommodate a range of relevant situations including any access and disability issues. According to Suskie (2004), good assessment practices should be guided by principles that provide useful, reasonably accurate and truthful information that is, valid and reliable; be fair so that students are given equitable opportunities to demonstrate what they know using methods that may vary depending on prior knowledge, cultural experience and learning requirements; be ethical and systematic; protect the privacy and dignity of those involved; and yield value that directly justifies the time, effort and expense that is put into the process (paraphrased pp. 18–30).

Furthermore, educators are now encouraged to consider assessment from the perspective of purpose as well as method. Purpose includes “assessment for learning; assessment as learning; and assessment of learning” (Manitoba Education et al. 2006, p. 27, italics in original). This nuance helps educators to utilize formative tasks for/as assessment which support learning and summative tasks which make valid and reliable judgments of learning and assess achievement and competence.

Whenever learning or performance is judged and assessed, it is important to be confident that the processes that govern this activity are fair, rigorous (valid and reliable) and transparent. This is important because assessment affects people’s confidence and ability to persist with their work as well as future directions, careers and indeed their lives (Boud and Falchikov 2007). In a fine art context, formative assessment is highly valued because of the iterative nature of artistic practice. This often gives rise to dialogical ipsative assessment that reflects upon personal development rather than making comparisons with peers or external standards of achievement. Ipsative assessment is the practice of assessing present performance against prior performance. This is particularly useful when making judgements about technical and/or crafting skills that develop over time through practice and repetition. It gives rise to a greater sense of personal achievement and development of an individual artistic practice.

Summative assessment is valued for different reasons. It creates a sense of achievement and progression which is useful for future career prospects or study. In a fine art context, this helps students to pit themselves against arts industry standards of production, craft, output and occupational health and safety measures. The latter is particularly important in relation to the use of materials and techniques for art making processes.

Art schools are now firmly embedded in university systems that are under increasing pressure to engage in processes of cost benefit analysis and increased financial productivity. Art educators are therefore attempting, in various ways, to maintain studio integrity, resist being diluted and amalgamated with ‘design’ and sustain their unique and independent cultural activity. Art schools are places where future working environments are modelled within the studio-learning environment (Lynas et al. 2013). They cultivate creative knowledge and skills by fostering inquiry, curiosity, critical thinking, self-reflection, technical development, rigorous engagement with historical and contemporary art, literature and philosophy and the public manifestation of works (PARADOX 2007). The tensions between the different purposes and forms of assessment have become palpable and in need of explicit articulation and communication amongst teams of educators, students and the wider academic community. Critical to the validation and authentication of assessment is the role that the ‘artist-teacher’ plays in the judgement of creative works (PARADOX 2007).

Contemporary art schools face the challenge of integrating the substantial strengths of their historical practices with new ideas and models of art and education. Changes in contemporary art and educational paradigms are calling for change in approaches to teaching practice (Marshall 2006) which adds further complexity to debates about assessment. The location of art practice and education is expanding from the traditional ‘real estate’ of the student studio space to increasingly combine more off-site, exploratory and experiential ‘sites’, including those that exist as mobility devices—laptop screens, phones and tablets. Being in transience can now be a valid studio space.

Flexibility of ideas and flexible engagement with materials, collaboration and inter-disciplinary, art-world connected learning have always been highly valued amongst art educators. Traditionally, this could be achieved in the context of an art school by scheduling long eight-hour studio days where small numbers of students could languidly interact with art educators and their peers. However, increasing demands on time and money within the tertiary sector mean that hours scheduled in the studio have been halved and the numbers of students has increased (Clarke and Budge 2010). The impact of student employment habits is also affecting this traditional approach. The number of part-time students is increasing (Glogowska et al. 2007) and their study-time has been reduced (Gibbs and Simpson 2004).

This material, social and cultural complexity poses some challenges and new opportunities for viewing and experiencing student artistic outcomes, and has significant implications for thinking about and assessing creativity. Defining creativity, however, is particularly complex because of its heterogeneity and its highly singular manifestations across multiple domains. As a result, creativity is viewed differently according to its context: education values innovation, business values the entrepreneur, problem solving is prized in mathematics, and performance or composition is highly regarded in music (Reid and Petocz 2004). The reason creativity is so difficult to test and measure is because real-world creativity requires complex multidimensional knowledge that takes many years of study to acquire (Sternberg et al. 2005). To date, researchers have only managed to devise fairly simple problems to measure creativity, and as a result, their findings are based on acts of creativity that are “using only highly impoverished knowledge bases, which is not typical of the way creativity occurs in the real world” (Sternberg et al. 2005, p. 351).

The difficulties associated with understanding creativity has given rise to a vast array of material about the topic (academic examples include Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Ghiselin 1952; Kaufman and Baer 2005; Kaufman and Sternberg 2010; Runco 2012; and non-academic examples include Any-Idea? Collective 2006; Cameron 1995; Gilbert 2009; Harding 1967; McNiff 1998; Popova 2013; Tharp 2003; Webb Young 2013). Amongst academic researchers, the term ‘creativity’ is still contested and there seems to be no universally accepted definition. Many, however, tend toward the idea that creativity involves producing novel or useful products (Mayer 1999; Mumford 2003).

Cropley (1992) suggests that creativity is to be daring in one’s thinking. Sternberg (1997), Craft (2006) and Joubert (2001), concur that a central component of creativity is ‘risk-taking’. Reid and Petocz (2004) emphasise the need for the element of surprise, problem solving, making connections, absorption, and reacting to new ideas. Runco (2012) argues that creativity is not just about art and invention, it is an everyday human activity that is both proactive and reactive. Many of these elements of creativity articulate the things art educators understand and focus on in their educational practice.

Contemporary universities, through their policies and practice, highly value creativity amongst other graduate attributes (Budge 2013). If universities are serious about fostering creativity, then it is important to support and develop systems and processes that provide the conditions that will allow creativity to flourish and thrive. A domain-specific investigation of how creativity is understood and fostered might therefore be instructive. Artistic disciplines are perhaps uniquely placed to lead and influence this agenda because creativity manifests in a range of ways throughout their curriculums. In our experience, however, art educators rely on tacit knowledge that is often difficult to articulate. Even though their artistic knowledge and experience may be substantial, this experience does not always translate into transparent learning and assessment processes and practices.

In formative assessments, art educators will typically discuss with students; previous works, consider volume of work, attention to detail, degree of experimentation and risk taking, evidence of observations from life, level of engagement and persistence with ideas, development of concepts, use and choice of materials, compositional relationships, problem solving and problem finding amongst a range of other things particular to individual students. Art educators bring to bear all their tacit knowledge about what it takes to bring an artwork into the world and realise conceptual ideas. In summative assessments, these things are also taken into account but there is a judgement being made about quality and levels of achievement that is tacitly linked to their experience as professional artists themselves.

In staff–student consultative committee meetings, our students consistently reported that these processes are often experienced as opaque. Sessional art educators also anecdotally reported feeling isolated and unsure of expectations and parameters around assessing creativity in relation to students’ creative works.

So, as art educators, what are we actually assessing when we make judgements about a student’s creativity and their creative works? To help demystify assessment, for both ourselves and our students,

we undertook a longitudinal assessment project that aimed to articulate the tacit knowledge that we use in the act of making judgements about and assessments of our students' artistic work. In this paper, we share our findings about the assessment of creativity in fine art as well as some of the curriculum and assessment tools we have developed over the past five years. In doing so, we hope to firstly make educational practices more explicit within our own domain and secondly to influence creativity education more broadly.

1.1. When Assessing Creativity in Fine Art, What Are We Actually Assessing?

Effective assessment should stimulate learning that is intrinsically motivated and personally transformative. There should be an alignment between the learning objectives, the learning experiences and the assessment tasks (Biggs and Tang 2007). Good forms of assessment go beyond simply providing a student with the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes of a course. According to Boud and Falchikov (2007), students need to "develop their own repertoire of assessment related practices that they will be able to use when confronted with learning challenges throughout their working lives" (p. 5).

While creativity is considered both a generic and a domain specific capacity (Kaufman and Baer 2005), assessing creativity in fine art is quite different to assessing it in other academic disciplines. Assessing creativity in fine art is complex because what is always at issue is having clarity about what is actually being assessed: the person, the process or the artistic outcome? The work of Rhodes (1961) has had a significant impact on western conceptions and research into creativity by attempting to unravel such complexities. In his quest to understand creativity and how it should be assessed, Rhodes collected 40 definitions of the concept. What he noticed about these definitions was that they were not mutually exclusive and that the content of the definitions could be viewed as if through a prism of four uniquely identifiable but mutually intertwined strands. Rhodes refers to these strands as "the four P's of creativity, i.e., (1) person, (2) process, (3) press, (4) products" (p. 307).

Rhodes uses the term *person* to refer to information about personality including mental/physical attributes, values and behaviour. He draws on the work of a number of fellow researchers who noticed that intelligence tests did not assess creative factors such as "sensitivity to problems, fluency of ideas, mental flexibility, divergent thinking, and ability to redefine familiar objects and concepts . . . quick humour . . . and complex temperaments" (p. 307) all of which tend to relate more to creative individuals. As a result, Rhodes calls for more complex and nuanced ways to assess creative ability.

The *process* strand refers to the approaches a person might take to learning, thinking, communicating, perceiving and motivating themselves. Rhodes refers to the relationship between human beings and their environment as *press*. He believes that a person forms their ideas about the world in response to the *press* of "tissue needs, sensations, perceptions and imagination" (p. 308) and that stimuli from these inputs are both internal and external. Drawing on the work of his contemporaries, Rhodes claims that inventive and creative activity is rarely the result of any one mind; that creativity emerges in response to *the press* of advancing social and technological needs.

The final P in Rhodes' taxonomy of creativity is *products*. Products refer to the outcomes of an idea that has been communicated in an ephemeral, embodied and/or tangible form. Rhodes classifies creative products into theories, inventions or innovations to inventions. According to Rhodes, categorising ideas in terms of degree of newness places "emphasis on higher mental processes rather than on dazzling objects" (p. 309).

Over the past 25 years, researchers have extended Rhodes' framework to include *persuasion* (Simonton 1990) and *potential* (Runco 2003). According to Simonton, creative people have the ability to change the way others think, can influence the direction of a particular domain, and therefore must be persuasive. This is aligned with theoretical perspectives that focus on the social aspect of creativity. Runco (2003) focuses on creative potential, which can be expressed in everyday activities and builds on the premise that creativity can be found in every child not just in the gifted or highly intelligent.

In more recent times, contemporary notions of creativity have been further problematized by writers such as Jagodzinski (2012) and Mould (2018). Jagodzinski suggests that art education has been ‘hijacked’ by the creativity agenda so that it might be “perceived as being ‘useful’ to the economic cause” (Jagodzinski 2012, p. 24). Mould too suggests that the current creativity discourse only recognizes creativity in a job, place or person that is profitable and/or able to be co-opted by advertising. Our work on articulating the assessment of creativity in fine art attempts to create a counter narrative to the notion of art education being ‘hijacked’ by the creativity agenda. We aim to provide a substantial investigation into art educational practice that strongly resists economic rationalist justifications for creativity. We remain committed to a broad focus on how creativity in fine art can challenge, reflect, comment upon and enact change in personal, social and political contexts without there being an economic imperative.

We have drawn upon a wide range of literature to help us better understand our own practice. Although the Rhodes framework is over half a century old, and is built upon assumptions that rate mental processes higher than making processes, it, together with more contemporary thinking about creativity, provided a useful starting point to consider the complexities of assessing creativity and creative process in the domain of fine art. Like all disciplines, the context of fine art has been central to the particular milieu that surrounds its assessment. The role of the art educator who is also an artist is highly valued in the validation and authentication of assessment grades. It is often assumed that the assessor needs to be a practicing artist to make valid and authentic judgements about creative works. However, even if art educators are practicing artists, some of the challenges that relate to assessment still remain. These challenges include clarifying the meaning of creativity for students; regulating feedback as students move from novice to expert; striking a balance between assessing the dispositional traits, the creative process and the artefacts and/or outcomes of artistic practice; identifying suitable assessment criteria (which some argue may inhibit creativity); moderating the subjective responses of assessors; and providing feedback that does not dampen risk-taking, experimentation and future creative endeavour.

Within this complex mix of considerations, we set out to find ways to move towards fairer, more rigorous and transparent assessment practices in our particular context. We report on a curriculum and assessment project that was designed to provide greater clarity and transparency for art educators and students in the assessment of all aspects of creative and written works within our bachelor degree.

1.2. Our Context and Aim

This project was undertaken in a large undergraduate fine art degree in Australia. It took a period of two years to develop guiding principles and curriculum domains and then a further three years to refine and develop assessment tools that could be shared and used collectively and consistently amongst the group of art educators teaching in the BAFA program. The program has 540 students and approximately 100 art educators (30 continuing, 70 sessional) who regularly engage in assessment practices across nine specializations: ceramics, drawing, gold and silversmithing, painting, photography, print-making, sculpture, sound, video. Like all art schools, we value diverse educational approaches. How a student performs within this wide range of individual art specializations and the need for specialist academic judgement on how these things connect, has meant that art educators have previously designed their own learning objectives, learning activities, assessment tasks, and methods of assessment. The processes of learning gold and silversmithing for example, are very different to the processes of learning painting. However, although the conceptual and technical aspects of these practices might be different, we recognise that there are overarching capabilities that all art educators are working towards instilling in their students.

The problem in our context was how to align these high-level domains of knowledge and processes of assessment so that everyone was working toward a shared goal and within a shared set of guiding principles. Like many art schools, all of our art educators are also practicing artists. This is a point

of pride within the sector, and is widely promoted and celebrated within our marketing strategies. Assessment is considered to be fair and rigorous (valid and reliable) because it is performed by disciplinary experts. But how do we know this is true? Many of the practices are carried out behind closed 'studio' doors and the assessment practices are difficult to articulate beyond the specificities of the specialisation.

Tertiary learning environments are increasingly more accountable and student complaints are becoming more prevalent. It is therefore more important for art educators to make their assessment practices transparent. This involves a process of uncovering and articulating the tacit knowledge that art educators use when they are providing formative feedback on work and when they are making summative judgements about the quality of students' work. Students are increasingly interested in understanding how their grades are determined so that they can actively pursue their 'next steps' in developing their artistic practice. As more students are choosing to undertake further study in either honours or postgraduate contexts, they are openly concerned about their Grade Point Average (GPA) because it is an important index used to determine their future academic prospects when applying for further study and employment. By bringing to light the values art educators have and assumptions they make when assessing the quality and standards of processes and outcomes in fine art, we open the door to deeper understandings of creativity and creative processes for students, art educators and indeed the wider tertiary sector.

The overall aim of this project was to work towards fairer, more rigorous (valid and reliable) and transparent practices for art educators and students in all aspects of the Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) (BAFA) curriculum and assessment. The first aim of this project was to engage our art educators in an iterative discussion about assessment in the BAFA. As we found it impossible to discuss assessment in isolation from the curriculum, the second aim was to use these discussions as a springboard for the development of a curriculum and assessment framework that could be trialed by and shared with all the art educators within our program. Assessment, however, remained our key focus. We were guided by the following research question:

How can we make assessment in fine art fair, rigorous and transparent using the tacit knowledge of art educators and the language of artistic practice?

2. Methodology

Case study and action learning methodologies were used for this study. A case study is defined as "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (Merriam 1998, p. 27). In our project, the case is the BAFA in a particular art school in Australia. The catalyst for action was the desire to build fairer, more valid and reliable assessment practices for all. A case study approach allows for an exploration of the human influence and the impact that art educators have upon this particular program. Therefore, we were also looking for an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon" (p. xiii).

We used group, workshop-based action learning methods to help art educators "step out of the frame of the prevailing ideology" (Rank 1989, p. 70) and reframe their choices as they reflected on their assumptions and beliefs. Action learning was an appropriate approach because it is "intended to encourage critical reflection" and the focus is on a "collective and contextually specific process" (Reynolds 2011, p. 12). It is a particularly useful methodology in the context of creative disciplines because it is analogous to the ways in which artists use iterative processes to refine their creative works.

Procedure

The project was carried out within the normal structures of our everyday learning and teaching activities over a period of five years. In the initial stages (two years), there was a leadership group, which consisted of the program manager and four studio coordinators who met fortnightly. The studio coordinators then met with their studio staff monthly. The leadership group was introduced to contemporary thinking about learning and assessment in the arts through engagement with

scholarly papers. They in turn introduced these considerations to their studio teams as part of an ongoing dialogue.

In total, there were 30 continuing teaching staff involved in this iterative process. Where possible, sessional staff were included in studio team meetings to contribute their expertise and to garner their support. External validation was established through the School of Art Learning and Teaching Committee through which all curriculum and assessment resources were tabled for discussion, feedback and final approval.

3. Findings and Discussion

This section reports on the process of the three major stages of the project and the decisions made by the team of art educators through teacher learning workshops relating to (i) identifying guiding principles for fine art curriculum and assessment design, (ii) mapping the five common elements or 'domains' across the curriculum of nine studio specialisations, and (iii) developing sample criteria to assess each domain by describing levels of achievement in fine art.

3.1. Identifying Guiding Principles for Fine Art Curriculum and Assessment Design

The first phase involved us considering existing educational frameworks in the arts. For example, we reviewed [Cowdroy and Williams \(2012\)](#) paper, *Assessment of creativity in the creative arts*. Their model outlines definitions of creative ability and while aspects of their work resonated with this project, the model as a whole did not provide a fully usable framework for our particular context. Art schools have a history and legacy that makes them unique, and this uniqueness translates through all aspects of curriculum. It became clear that any articulation of our assessment culture needed to acknowledge and build upon the particularities of the history in our context. The wide ranging specialisations (nine in total) in our context have been built upon and augmented over time. Our university is one of Australia's original educational institutions and has had a long history of art education. In particular, photography and drawing were amongst the first subjects on offer in our institution in 1887. Considering the range of art education approaches amongst our nine specialisations has been a complex but necessary part of the process.

What resonated for us in Cowdroy and Williams' work was the need to consider the different domains of knowing within the discipline and the complexity of developing creativity and creative expertise as a higher-order intelligence. These ideas were reinforced when considered more broadly in the light of Bloom's revised taxonomy ([Anderson and Krathwohl 2001](#)) that identifies 'creating' as the most complex level of intelligence within the schema. We also considered [Lobato \(2006\)](#) work on how knowledge is transferred through both near and far activities, specifically within the context of fine art education and the application of both types of activities. The work of [Shreeve et al. \(2010\)](#) had an influence on our ability to position the work within a broader philosophical context. Their focus on the "dialogic nature of teaching" (p. 125) in fine art and a pedagogy that was more ontological than epistemological resonated strongly with our art educators.

Taking these models, frameworks and philosophies into account, we created opportunities for dialogue with our teaching staff to identify their core principles and values. This dialogue revealed that our students learn through making, through the development of an idea, and through "evolving an idea through the push-and-pull of a medium" ([Jacob and Grabner 2010](#), p. ix). Based on our discussions of Bloom's revised taxonomy ([Anderson and Krathwohl 2001](#), pp. 67–68), staff affirmed that creativity is higher-order thinking and is not a sequential process but embedded in every aspect of the creative process. It was widely accepted that pedagogy in fine art is a "kind of exchange" that reflects the "uncertainty and open-ended nature of creative production" ([Shreeve et al. 2010](#), p. 125). This exchange is ontological in nature because the focus is on processes of 'becoming' as much as on developing particular knowledge and skills. In response, we developed the following guiding principles for developing assessment materials:

1. Studio practice is iterative, non-prescriptive, and central
2. Higher-order thinking is done through making and is integral to all stages of the creative process
3. Learning is experiential and perceptual
4. Assessment is of a person's creative capacity and their creative works
5. Writing and researching are creative processes

Using these guiding principles, we were able to explore the required knowledge, skills, and application of knowledge and skills across the whole BAFA curriculum. The following sections report on the curriculum domains and levels of achievement for the BAFA that emerged from this dialogue. The framework developed draws on some of the creativity strands identified by Rhodes and others.

3.2. Mapping Common Elements or 'Domains' across the Curriculum of Nine Studio Specialisations

The second focus was on mapping common elements across the curriculum in our nine studio specialisations (ceramics, drawing, photography, gold and silversmithing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, sound, video). Each studio area within the program had a range of views on how to assess variations in artistic practice and one of the major tasks for the project was to synthesise these views into a broad-based model for assessment that could be utilised across all studio specialisations. It was important to hear the views of art educators across the program so that a working model could be agreed upon and owned by those who were going to be using it.

We included all aspects of the curriculum in our discussions, including art history and theory. We considered how fine art students' perceptions towards academic writing tended to create feelings of alienation from the creative process (Apps and Mamchur 2009). We therefore decided that student engagement might be better served if writing an essay were presented as another type of creative act within their program. In doing so, we decided to present *writing* as a practice that draws on all domains of learning in the same way that *studio* practice does. This dialogical exchange resulted in the development of five curriculum domains in fine art. These five domains cover all aspects of studio, history and theory learning and comprise: creating, processing, researching, analysing and engaging (see Table 1).

Table 1. Fine Art Curriculum Domains.

Fine Art Curriculum Domains				
Creating	Processing	Researching	Analysing	Engaging
Create, generate produce, make, respond, present, communicate, write	develop, test, experiment, trial, take risks, observe, explore methods, intuit, direct attention	access, collect, collate, order, map, inform, reference, identify, contextualise, archive	reflect, think critically, connect, compare, contrast, evaluate, problem solve, synthesise	network, critique, persist, collaborate, connect to industry, negotiate, persuade

The following table outlines the five fine art curriculum domains we developed for our program. Like the Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) revised version of Bloom's taxonomy, we present the domains as verbs to denote the active nature of each curriculum focus. We also include a set of verbs within each domain to help articulate the kinds of learning activities and the foci for assessment that might occur within each one. The verbs included in the table below are indicative and should not be considered definitive. They act as a guide and will be built upon over time as we develop more sophisticated curriculum artefacts and the work becomes more comprehensive.

The following sections describe how we have conceptualised each domain. For each domain, we outline the learning outcomes and what students are required to demonstrate in formative and summative assessment points.

3.2.1. The Creating Domain

Learning outcomes in this domain are focused on the resolved creative outcomes, often used for summative assessment of final folio work at the end of semester or cohesive written texts produced at the culmination of a period of study. What is assessed is how effectively a student transforms materials, or applies technologies, and communicates their ideas through artwork(s) and/or written commentaries.

Students demonstrate their learning by producing a body of resolved artworks or writings that respond to either teacher-directed or self-devised projects or proposals. The degree of self-directed autonomy expected gradually increases over the three years of study. The focus is on how well the interplay between the formal, conceptual and technical qualities of work has been resolved over a specified period of time. Students are then assessed on how effective and/or appropriate their choices are and how these are applied and executed to realise their concept or idea.

Creative outcomes are things that are created, generated, performed, produced, made, presented, written and communicated in any medium. They include but are not limited to 2D and 3D objects, installations, artefacts, temporal and ephemeral works, performances, presentations, writing and the like. Rhodes might consider this the 'product' of creativity whilst [Simonton \(1990\)](#) might call it the artist's use of 'persuasion' and their ability to communicate through artistic production.

3.2.2. The Processing Domain

Learning outcomes in this domain are focused on the processes students use to make artworks, and are often applied to preliminary works that have been developed in response to formative feedback throughout the semester. At summative assessment points, we assess how effectively students are able to demonstrate their experiments and material/conceptual explorations. We consider the level of risk-taking and testing of ideas and concepts through persistent trial and error. Summative assessment artefacts include research folios, journals, workflow diagrams, concept maps, documentation of experiments with different hardware and software and material discovery. In the first year, learning is directed by teacher provocations, interventions, invitations and experimental projects. In later years, there are opportunities to extend the scope of projects through divergent or convergent thinking or through following self-directed processes. Summative assessment in this domain is often weighted equally with summative assessments in the *Creating* domain to indicate the importance of generating personal processes in the development of a fine art practice.

Students demonstrate their learning in a range of ways that include, preliminary works, hard-copy or online journals/sketch books/visual diaries, gathering collections of materials, designing information/image/sound systems, capturing and recording/transcribing and reflecting upon feedback sessions about their work, study/discussion groups, presentations, professional documentation of exhibitions and the like. The focus in summative assessment is on preliminary works, documentation and material/creative/practice creative research processes.

3.2.3. The Researching Domain

In the *Researching* domain, the learning outcomes focus on the scope of research done by the student. In formative assessment processes, we assess how comprehensively students can document and evidence their research. Learning focuses on processes of gathering, organising and applying information that is of value to their studies and practices. This information can take many forms and the process of undertaking research can range from emergent, intuitive or instinctive approaches to more systematic methodologies. Students can use these approaches to discover properties of a material, generate ideas, produce written works or oral presentations and to contextualise their artwork using images, facts and ideas from many different disciplines.

Students may demonstrate their capability for research at summative assessment points through the production of concept maps, records of material sources and tests, citing essays on artists, discussing

the history of art and theoretical and philosophical ideas, group discussions and group research projects that build knowledge through libraries, wikis, archives, blogs and in journals. They may develop strategies to initiate ideas, investigate materials in applied ways and experiment with presentation strategies for installation of work. Additionally, students can produce research through their artworks (practice-based research) and through examinations of practice (practice-led research).

3.2.4. The Analysing Domain

In the Analysing domain, the learning outcomes focus on how effectively students synthesise, analyse and make meaning of the information and experiences they have gathered during their research processes. Through dialogical exchange, we assess the student's capability for problem solving and critical, synthetic and reflexive thinking. Learning in the *Analysing* domain is about connecting, comparing, contrasting, evaluating and reflecting critically. The focus for formative assessment is on how effectively students are able to analyse and articulate in ways that form coherent and cohesive arguments, propositions, and trajectories of practice.

Students may demonstrate their learning for summative assessment purposes in a range of ways through the production of synthesised mind maps, reflective writing, literature reviews, group discussions, evaluations of materials/philosophical ideas, discussing, comparing and contrasting cultural movements/artworks/theoretical frameworks. The outcomes may result in students taking either convergent or divergent theoretical/cultural/political positions and producing written arguments, literature reviews, position papers, artwork proposals, and artist statements.

3.2.5. The Engaging Domain

In the *Engaging* domain, the learning outcomes focus on how effectively students engage with developing a fine art practice. We assess the student's capability for persisting, connecting, networking, negotiating, presenting, speaking, listening and persuading. Learning in the *Engaging* domain focuses on the application of dispositional traits and the lived experience of the student. Through engagement, a student is able to position themselves and their artwork(s) into a known community of practice. The *Engaging* domain is therefore about how a student is able to understand and demonstrate an awareness of their community, and use this to further their own practice or engagement external to their study. At the same time, we recognize that the extent to which students can optimize their place within this community is often dependent upon and influenced by social class, race, gender and many other factors that can have an impact upon a person's ability to engage within a professional field of practice. Through dialogue, we encourage students in a formative and reflective way to consider the complexity and unevenness of social structures and how these factors might have an impact on an individual's ability to negotiate the professional field.

At summative assessment points, students are able to demonstrate learning in this domain through critically reflective writing and through a range of professional practice activities, including work integrated learning, building websites, grant writing, artists statements, writing case studies of other artists, curatorial statements, exhibition analysis through gallery journals and presenting their work in the public domain. We assess this through criteria that are designed to enable students to reflect on the value of these activities and how they might develop a career through these activities. The value in the *engaging* domain lies in the student being able to *position* themselves within their community and to recognise the dispositional capabilities they possess, such as taking initiative, persisting and resilience, and the extent to which they are limited or able to achieve their artistic and career goals.

3.3. Developing Sample Criteria to Assess Each Domain by Describing Levels of Achievement in Fine Art

The third phase sought to strengthen the work on the curriculum domains. We took each domain and created a bank of sample assessment criteria (See Supplementary Materials 1). This is a preliminary list intended to support teaching teams but is not to be considered exhaustive, conclusive or complete.

It is a resource for our art educators to draw upon as they devise learning activities and develop assessment tasks.

Once the curriculum domains were in place and assessment criteria were being used more widely and consistently amongst the program team, it became clear that a third body of work was required if we were to make levels of achievement for every criterion more valid, reliable and consistent across the program. As a result, we embarked on a process to articulate expectations at each level. Once again, we looked at the scholarship in this area as a catalyst for discussion and action.

To begin the work of articulating levels of achievement in fine art assessment, we engaged with the work of [Crowdroy and Williams \(2007\)](#). They propose a hierarchy of three levels that acknowledges an order and structure to creativity; (1), conceptualisation, (2) iteration through schematization, (3) actualisation and crafting. They suggest that a high level of ability is achieved when a combination of all three levels (beginning with conceptualisation) are present, while a low level of ability is evident when only actualisation and crafting is evident.

While these levels propose a well-considered way of thinking about creative practice, there is an absence of idea recognition that a concept can emerge through the creative act, and that time served in a studio making an art work can lead to the development of complex concepts and high-order thinking. Concept development is a critical component of art making, but it does not always have to come first.

We took a slightly different approach and focused on fluid, transient and iterative cycles of creativity. We wanted the descriptors to more accurately reflect the intentions of art educators when providing students with formative and summative feedback on their art works. We therefore developed a suite of terms that could be used as an alternative to the usual levels of achievement in higher education. The levels include exemplary for high distinction; advancing for distinction; developing for credit; commencing for pass; and under-developed for fail (see [Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Fine Art Levels of Achievement.

Fine Art Assessment Descriptors for Levels of Achievement				
Exemplary	Advancing	Developing	Commencing	Under-developed
Standard University Descriptors for Levels of Achievement				
High Distinction 80–100	Distinction 70–79	Credit 60–69	Pass 50–59	Fail 0–49

These descriptors for levels of achievement were subsequently implemented in every unit across the degree. The words ‘exemplary’ and ‘under-developed’ are intentionally expressed as static levels of achievement whereas ‘advancing, developing and commencing’ are designed to express the fluid and transient nature of these levels of achievement; they align with the values of art educators who privilege process oriented learning and emphasize ipsative assessment. These terms are particularly helpful when working with art works that develop over time but have iterative moments of summative assessment. The words draw upon the day-to-day language of art educators when critiquing, discussing and giving feedback on students’ work.

Although studio leaders and their teaching teams found working with the curriculum domains and levels of achievement difficult to use at first, they now see the usefulness of a framework and continue to progress its implementation. Having a framework in place has helped them clarify the objectives of their units of study and develop good professional conversations amongst their teaching teams. The introduction of scholarship in this area also helped to garner support and create a sense of deeper engagement. Those that tested the assessment tools in the early stages of the project tended to have deeper levels of buy-in which in turn helped to ensure support from other leaders and their teaching teams.

The leadership group felt that the most successful aspect of this work was that all staff are now developing assessment materials from a single source of truth. They noted that, from a curriculum development perspective, this fosters productive professional discussions about content and delivery. They observed that staff are now asking important questions such as ‘what are the learning outcomes’ and ‘what philosophical ideas underpin this unit?’ It was also noted that using the Fine Art Curriculum and Assessment Framework has helped our art educators to find common ground and has started to make them more excited about what could be and what is more meaningful for them and their students.

4. Two Case Studies—Applying the Framework to Photography and Sculpture

In this section, we present two case studies with materials from specialist photography and sculpture units of study to demonstrate the ways in which this Fine Art Curriculum and Assessment Framework can be applied in different contexts. Here, we share a small sample of how our framework might be applied in practice to the creating domain within two quite different units. To contextualise these offerings, it is important to note that the BAFA program consists of studios, workshops, history and theory classes as well as university-wide electives. Students complete a total of 288 credit points (cp) over a period of three years. Studios attract 24 cp per semester (144 cp in total over 3 years), workshops attract 12 cp per semester (72 cp in total over 3 years), art history and theory attract 12 cp per offering (48 cp in total over 3 years) and the final 24 cp is made up of university-wide electives. We will focus on a single Photography workshop (12 cp) and a single Sculpture Studio (24 cp) to demonstrate how this framework has been applied to a creative outcome assessment task in each unit of study.

4.1. *Photography: The Photographic Fine Print*

The photography unit is a workshop class. Students attend a three-hour class for 12 weeks. They explore ways in which the traditions of fine art photographic printing can be considered and applied to contemporary digital technologies and processes. The objective of the class is to support students, through workshops, in mastering skills and technologies to fulfil their creative aspirations in making fine photographic prints. The learning objectives are as follows:

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- apply skills to produce photographic fine prints that address conceptual, perceptual, formal and aesthetic concerns of the photographic fine print
- work independently to control and manage the digital print workflow to industry standards
- incorporate the hardware and software methods of colour management in the process of making fine photographic prints
- critically evaluate the quality of photographic fine prints to a professional standard

The learning outcomes are assessed through empirical and creative assessment tasks. Empirical assessment tasks assess the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to specific theories and principles, where there is a clear right or wrong answer. This helps to ensure students are able to master specific techniques to fulfil their creative aspirations. These assessment tasks are straight forward and presented as multiple choice.

Creative assessment tasks evaluate more complex applications of knowledge and skill through creative productions and processes. Students are not provided with ‘projects’ or ‘instructions’, but are expected to conceptualise their own projects and consider the ways in which printing technologies and techniques can inform their photographic practice. The creative assessment tasks are open and tailored to each student’s project.

Students produce a series of final works following their chosen theme or investigation. They are expected to clearly identify with the theme and demonstrate experimentation and visual research of other artists. They are encouraged to use camera capturing techniques to create images effectively, and use knowledge and skill related to core concepts such as exposure, optics and image drawing, framing and composition. Their work should make effective use of digital editing, specifically Camera

RAW processing, as well as detail (sharpness) and local adjustments to match creative intentions. Creative works should also demonstrate reflective discoveries in process, including ways in which test prints have helped solve visual problems, as well as skills in identifying and finding solutions to creative problems.

Assessment in the creating domain takes the form of a 'photographic review'. A review includes two academic staff to ensure 'live' moderation and a greater breadth of feedback. During the review, both academic staff and students comment on the work presented to generate a meaningful discussion about the context, content and reading of the image(s). During this time, each art educator individually makes judgements using a rubric to formalise the assessment (See Sample Rubric Supplementary Materials 2). Assessment criteria for works in the creating domain are as follows:

You will be assessed on your ability to:

1. Explore ideas and technologies to effectively create photographic prints. (Creating Domain)
2. Reflect on discoveries in process, including ways in which test prints have helped solve visual problems, as well as skills in analysis (identification) and critique (finding solutions). (Processing Domain)

The sample rubric assesses outcomes in the creating and processing domains to demonstrate how our framework has been applied to assessment tools. The descriptors used for the creating domain are typically in the third person where 'the work' is the focus of attention. The descriptors used for the processing domain are typically written in the second person where dispositional attributes such as persistence, breadth of research, effort and time on task are the focus of attention. The same assessment criteria and rubric are used for all creative assessments. This helps to position assessment as something that students learn from iteratively over time. This process is aligned with professional practice and industry, where iterative stages of artmaking are consistently assessed and reviewed through the same lens of practice. The emphasis in art school education is on developing methodologies that will service individuals well beyond art school. This is part of developing a dispositional work ethic for practice and is explicitly assessed through the process domain of knowledge.

4.2. *Sculpture: Thinking through Making*

The sculpture unit is a studio class, typically undertaken by second- or third-year students. Students attend a six-hour class each week for 12 weeks. The aim of this class is to experiment and test ideas, concepts and methods of production. Students produce a range of tests, trials, experiments and studies that inform, extend and lead to resolved works. They explore and realise the potential for chance/accidents and unforeseen possibilities by working and thinking laterally with ideas, materials and technologies. The learning objectives are as follows:

Upon successful completion of this task, you will be able to:

- Realise the potential for chance/accidents and unforeseen possibilities by working and thinking laterally with ideas, materials and technologies
- Discuss the nature and significance of practice-led research
- Identify and reflect upon critical moments of learning and how you responded through your practice

In this class, students are asked to engage in a series of set topics as a starting point over the first six weeks of study. In response, a work is produced each week with a corresponding reflective text. Students begin work by creating and documenting a series of works without predetermined outcomes. A series of themes are introduced for students to respond to by making sculptural objects and thinking about the context of their work. While students respond to the same set of topics (identity, place, body, materiality, time and memory and culture), a wide range of sculptural materials and processes are used in response to each topic.

Students are encouraged to be productive in an intuitive and creative way and to build a deeper understanding of their own interests in 3D practice. In response to this work, they research and document a series of artists, works and themes or ideas and begin to build an archive of research material to draw on in the future.

In the remaining six weeks, students use these early works, research materials and ideas to develop and present a major work or series of works. The objective is to provide students with the tools to consolidate their work to date and to assist in developing future directions that they can potentially expand upon as a professional artist or in further study. Students are asked to select six key works from their experiments over the semester and present them as a 'Folio of Resolved Works'. Art educators work in teams to review and assess students' work at the end of semester using a marking rubric (See Supplementary Materials 3). The assessment criteria for work in the creating domain are as follows:

You will be assessed on your ability to:

1. Work independently to instigate, develop and resolve artworks to effectively communicate at a professional level. (Creating Domain)
2. Use and refine the craft, techniques and processes of your discipline, applying industry standard safe working practices to the making of artworks. (Creating Domain)
3. Document tests, experiments and/or material/technical processes to examine relations between preliminary and resolved bodies of work and suggest new possibilities for development. (Processing Domain)
4. Identify artistic and cultural influences in your work, enabling you to discuss the relevant field of practice. (Processing Domain)

The sample rubric (Supplementary Materials 3) describes the levels of achievement for criteria one and two only. The descriptors are in the third person and are synthesised into three levels of achievement rather than five to show how the framework can be made adaptable for a range of contexts. Dividing the levels of achievement into three rather than five acknowledges the inherent difficulty with nuancing language to distinguish differences at each level and avoids unnecessary repetitive turns of phrase. It also allows for a much broader set of descriptors which is particularly important in a studio such as sculpture where the practice is expanded and students often stretch, explore and find new, different and unique ways of using materials. Differentiation within each level is achieved through the numerical mark.

5. Concluding Comments

To address the need for fairer, more rigorous, and transparent assessment practices in undergraduate fine art education, we have developed a Fine Art Curriculum and Assessment Framework. We found that harnessing the language of the discipline to articulate the artistry of assessing in fine art allowed for a continuous evolution of the assessment process and a more transparent framework for students and art educators alike. This artistry began with a highly engaged dialogue amongst art educators and then subsequently with students. The aim was to articulate a shared understanding of curriculum domains, assessment criteria and levels of achievement. We discovered that when assessment tools allowed the language of the discipline to emerge, it helped to make expectations explicit and consistent amongst art educators and students. Assessment became more explicitly fair, rigorous and transparent, aligned well within institutional frameworks for assessment and still managed to maintain the artistic and educational values of art educators.

This work has been underway for over five years now. The framework continues to evolve as we use it in our day-to-day educational practices. We are still developing bespoke tools that are useful within our particular context. We have attempted to create "an alternative interpretive framework" (Lobato 2006, p. 442) for our educational practice whilst still maintaining institutional requirements for assessment.

The experience of leading this project amongst a group of highly engaged art educators has been both challenging and rewarding. Based on the work we have done thus far, we argue that assessing in fine art requires artistry and engaged dialogue amongst all those involved in the process. The aim of this dialogue is to articulate a shared understanding of curriculum domains and levels of achievement. In our experience, allowing the language of the discipline to emerge has helped to bring forth and articulate the tacit knowledge about creativity and the creative process that is latent in art educators. As this process becomes more systemically enacted across the BAFA program, we have found that assessment is moving towards fairer, more rigorous and transparent approaches that are relevant, effective, meaningful and generative.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at <http://www.mdpi.com/2076-0752/7/4/81/s1>, Supplementary Material 1: Sample Assessment Criteria; Supplementary Material 2: Photography Rubric; Supplementary Material 3: Sculpture Rubric.

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