



**WESTMINSTER
SCHOOL**

**The Challenge
Specialism Paper**

ART

Syllabus and Guidance

First Examination 2027

Overview – Practical Workshop 20 marks

Overview – Optional Portfolio no mark

Appendix: Materials List

PRACTICAL WORKSHOP (20 marks)

The practical workshop in art is designed to challenge candidates' creative and practical abilities as an artist. The examination aims to reward candidates familiar with independent art making and allows candidates flexibility to work in ways matched to their prior strengths as an artist.

The paper will offer between 5 and 10 questions, each in the form of a prompt. Candidates will choose one of these as the brief for a single work of art that must be devised and completed within the hour of the workshop.

The briefs are intentionally novel, seeking to encourage creative and spontaneous rather than pre-rehearsed responses. Some questions might suggest a direct visual response, others may invite an outcome that prioritises material exploration, whilst others may prioritise critical engagement with provided source material. There is no hierarchy between the different types of question; the intention is to allow each candidate to find a brief that allows them to show themselves at their best as an artist.

Candidates should not bring anything to the workshop. A range of typical art materials will be provided, enabling both 2d and 3d responses. Photography will not be possible within this component, and candidates who identify themselves as photographers or filmmakers should instead use the optional portfolio component to demonstrate their abilities in these disciplines.

The candidates who do best will likely be those who approach their chosen brief with a clear sense of purpose and who elect to work in a material (or materials) with which they are familiar and confident.

The Practical Workshop assesses:

- spontaneity and responsiveness to a brief;
- technical proficiency in a medium of the candidate's choosing;
- visual fluency working with the formal elements, such as line, colour, tone, form, space, texture, pattern and shape;
- compositional and design intelligence;
- ability to analyse, interpret and respond to the work of others.

Candidates are encouraged to:

- select their chosen brief thoughtfully;
- devise a clear interpretation to their chosen brief, and a strategy for their practical response;
- be selective in their choice of media and to work with materials they are familiar with;
- demonstrate fluency and craft with their chosen media/materials;
- demonstrate visual, material or conceptual imagination and refinement;
- account for the time allocated to the practical task, for example, by identifying an appropriate scale for their work;
- seek technical support where necessary;

OPTIONAL PORTFOLIO (no mark)

The optional portfolio is included in recognition of the limitations of a single practical workshop. Whilst the workshop allows candidates to demonstrate their thinking and making skills, it is by necessity limited in materials, scale and time. The optional portfolio is an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate the breadth of their work as an artist, or a deep and sustained involvement with a particular discipline, subject matter or way of working.

The optional portfolio may include up to eight works, pages or slides and is brought to the workshop for review whilst candidates sit the paper. Details of the format and submission process of the optional portfolio will be shared with candidates once they have submitted their intention to sit art as a specialist paper.

Where images rather than the original work are included, larger images will ensure the artwork can be well seen and understood; regular A4 print outs are perfectly acceptable. It is normal that a portfolio will include work made in school, however, it is intended particularly as an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their commitment and endeavours in the subject *beyond* school. Works made independently of school can be identified as such with a small and succinct annotation.

We recognise that the varying circumstances of each candidate will influence the scope of what they may have made beyond school, and therefore there is no requirement nor mark for this component. Where the portfolio demonstrates a candidate's individuality, commitment and skill beyond that which they have shown in the practical workshop, the portfolio may provide supporting context for the work created in the workshop, and will also contribute towards the selection of the Headmaster's Award.

The Optional Portfolio assesses:

- sustained commitment to art making;
- curiosity and initiative;
- individuality, originality and endeavour as an artist;
- technical proficiency beyond what would be possible in the practical workshop, for example photography, glazed ceramics, or an extended painting;
- visual fluency working with the formal elements, such as line, colour, tone, form, space, texture, pattern and shape.

Candidates are encouraged to:

- select their works and the order of those works thoughtfully;
- avoid 'filling' portfolio pages; larger works or images, with space, are usually better than several small images squeezed into or overlapping on a page or slide;
- demonstrate care in the visual design of their portfolio, prioritising the images of the artwork with a clear, simple layout and sequence, and avoiding distracting graphics, text, or superfluous design elements.

APPENDIX: MATERIALS LIST

The materials available in the workshop will include

- Paper and cardboard of different types
- Graphite pencils, graphite sticks, charcoal and conte
- Ink, nib pens, black fine liner pens, black biro pens
- Coloured marker pens and coloured pencils
- Chalk pastels
- Oil pastels and medium
- Acrylic paint *but not oils*
- Assorted brushes and palette knives
- Wire and soft wire mesh, tin snips, gloves and goggles
- Fabric, fabric scissors, needles and thread
- Foam board, pins, cutting knives
- Glue guns and tape
- Air drying clay