

Art Teacher interview questions

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What to expect

Art Teacher interviews in Australian schools usually combine a panel conversation with something practical. That might be a portfolio walkthrough, a short teaching demonstration with a real class, or a task where you talk through a unit you have designed. Panels are typically the head of faculty, a member of the leadership team and sometimes a current arts teacher, and they are listening for how you think about curriculum, safety and student engagement, not just what you can make.

- **Curriculum and planning:** How you sequence skills and content across a term or year, and how you connect practical work to the achievement standards and to art history and theory.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of managing a class, engaging a disengaged student or handling a difficult situation, usually answered with a clear situation, action and outcome.
- **Scenario and classroom management:** Hypothetical moments drawn from studio reality, such as a student who gives up on a piece, a materials dispute or a class that will not settle.
- **Assessment and moderation:** How you grade practical work fairly, use criteria and exemplars, and take part in faculty moderation and reporting.
- **Safety and compliance:** Your obligations under the child safe standards and your practical handling of studio hazards, from kilns and presses to solvents and cutting tools.
- **Portfolio and practical:** A walkthrough of your own artmaking and samples of student work, sometimes with a short demonstration or hands-on task.

Expect a first-round panel interview of around thirty to forty-five minutes, with a mix of curriculum, behavioural and scenario questions. Shortlisted candidates are often asked back for a teaching demonstration or a portfolio walkthrough, and sometimes a tour of the faculty with a chance to ask questions about the studio and budget. Reference checks, registration verification and a Working with Children Check follow before any offer. If a practical task is involved, you will usually be told in advance, so ask what to bring.

1. Walk us through how you would plan a term of visual arts for a Year 9 class.

Why they ask

This is the core of the job. The panel wants to see that you plan backwards from the achievement standards, not from a list of activities, and that art history and theory have a real place in the sequence.

How to structure your answer

Walk through it in stages: start with the standards and the assessment task, choose a theme or concept that can carry a whole term, then sequence the skills students need. Finish with how you build in checkpoints, differentiation and materials planning.

Example answer

"I start with the achievement standards and the assessment task, so I know what students have to demonstrate by the end. For Year 9 I usually build the term around a concept rather than a medium, say identity or place, because it holds the work together and gives art history a natural entry point. Then I sequence the skills: observational drawing first, then a printmaking or painting cycle, then a short digital component so students who respond to screens stay connected. I plan two formative checkpoints, one at the visual diary stage and one on the resolved work, so nobody arrives at the final assessment surprised. Art history sits inside each week rather than as a separate lecture, so when we look at a painter's use of colour, students apply it in their own work that lesson. I finish by checking the materials list against the budget and booking the kiln or press time if we need it."

2. Tell me about a time you turned around a student who had disengaged from art.

Why they ask

Engagement is one of the hardest parts of teaching a practical subject, and the panel wants evidence you notice withdrawal early and respond with something more thoughtful than a reminder about marks.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: the situation and the student's behaviour, the task you set yourself, the specific actions you took over several weeks, and the outcome, including what it told you about your practice.

Example answer

"I had a Year 10 student who had stopped submitting practical work entirely. She would sit at the back and say she was no good at drawing. The task for me was to find an entry point that did not start with the thing she had decided she could not do. I asked her what she looked at outside school, and it turned out she was photographing skate parks on her phone. I built a unit task around that, letting her work from her own images and starting with printmaking rather than pencil drawing, because the process is more forgiving. I checked in for two minutes at the end of each lesson, kept the feedback small and specific, and gave her one thing to fix rather than a list. By the end of the term she had a folio of prints and photographs, and she submitted it as her major piece. It changed how I open a unit now: I ask what students already look at before I decide what they will make."

3. A Year 10 student looks at their painting, says it is ruined, and refuses to keep working. What do you do?

Why they ask

This happens in every studio. The panel is testing whether you can hold the room, protect the student's confidence and keep the lesson moving, all at once.

How to structure your answer

Show your judgement under pressure: acknowledge the feeling, buy a little time, act, then follow up. Avoid jumping straight to a solution before the student has been heard.

Example answer

"First I would take the heat out of it. I would sit down next to them rather than stand over the work, and agree that it is not working the way they pictured, because arguing about that is a dead end. Then I would ask what they wanted it to do, which usually shifts the conversation from failure to intention. Nine times out of ten there is a way back in: cropping the composition, working over the area with a different medium, or pulling it into a new piece as a background. If they are too frustrated to touch it that lesson, I would give them a short, low-stakes task, like a few thumbnail sketches of the problem area, and come back to the canvas the following lesson when the emotion has settled. I would also check in privately after class to make sure something else is not going on, because that reaction often is not really about the painting."

4. How do you assess practical work fairly when students start from very different skill levels?

Why they ask

Art panels worry about two things: marking the neatest work highest, and giving everyone the same hollow praise. They want to see criteria, exemplars and moderation in your answer.

How to structure your answer

Explain your framework first, then how you apply it, then how you check yourself against other teachers. Use a concrete example of feedback you have given.

Example answer

"I assess against the criteria and the achievement standards, not against my own taste or against the most technically skilled student in the room. At the start of a unit students get the rubric and annotated

exemplars, including a mid-range example, so they can see what moving up a band actually looks like. I weight the visual diary and the process evidence, because a student who starts with weaker drawing but documents real experimentation and reflection can demonstrate the same standard as someone who arrived already able. When I give feedback I name the criteria in plain language: use of tone, resolution of the composition, control of the medium. The faculty moderates a sample of works each term, and if my marks sit outside the group I look at what I am rewarding. Last year that process made me realise I was under-crediting digital work, and I adjusted my rubric wording as a result.”

5. What are your obligations around child safety, and how do they show up in a practical studio?

Why they ask

This is a compliance question with a practical edge. Schools need to hear that you understand the child safe standards as daily practice, not a document you signed at induction.

How to structure your answer

Answer in two parts: the obligations in principle, then the concrete studio routines that carry them out. Be specific and calm, and do not overclaim.

Example answer

“I have an obligation to keep students safe, to report any concern through the school's process, and to maintain professional boundaries, including in how I communicate with students and where I am physically when supervision is required. In the studio that means never leaving a class unsupervised and never being alone out of sight with a single student, particularly in the storage areas at the back of the room. It also means risk assessments for every hazardous activity: kiln operation, the etching press, guillotines, solvents and hot glue. I run a safety induction at the start of each year and re-brief before any new equipment, and students do not use the kiln or press without me present. Photography and display of student work is a permission matter too, so I check what is on file before anything goes on a wall, a website or a social media post.”

6. Tell us about a time you organised a student exhibition or a major display.

Why they ask

Exhibitions are a core part of the role and they are a project management job disguised as an art event. The panel wants to know you can hit a deadline with dozens of students involved.

How to structure your answer

Structure it as a project: the brief and constraints, how you planned it, how you handled the people and logistics, and what you would do differently next time.

Example answer

“I coordinated our annual senior exhibition, which ran across the school hall and a corridor gallery. The brief was tight: one night, no extra budget, and work had to be collected, labelled and returned to students by the end of the following week. I started six weeks out with a submission sheet so each student listed their pieces, size and hanging requirements, which meant I knew the wall plan before anything arrived. I booked the space, organised the hanging hardware and drew up a roster so a group of students helped with installation and the front desk on the night. The main problem was framing: too many pieces needed it and we had no money for it, so I ran a workshop on alternative mounting and presentation, which turned into one of the best-attended sessions of the term. It ran to time and nothing went missing, but next time I would set the submission deadline a week earlier, because a handful of pieces came in on the day and the final layout suffered.”