I am a classroom teacher in a Scottish comprehensive Secondary School.

I feel very strongly that the reduction to 6 SQA qualifications in S4, mainly at Nat5 (down from up to 8 at Standard Grade) is a real step back. Students are unable to choose a proper range of subjects and areas much as Home Ec, CDT and Music are finding fewer students choosing their subjects. In terms of life skills, these subjects represent important skills and interests for the future. I understand that in areas and schools that are teaching Gaelic, this is also experiencing a drop in uptake. There is also corresponding opposite pressure on other subjects. Advanced Higher English has gone from a regular 6 - 12 students a year to about 24. This cannot simply be because twice as many want to choose English - it's more that they don't feel they have the breadth to choose from: it's much harder to fall back on BGE knowledge than on Standard Grade/ Nat5 for an S6 course choice. This then has a corresponding effect on the effectiveness of teaching and support as the class numbers double. The rationale for the SQA decision to drop to 6 wasn't clearly articulated and the corresponding effect on student choices/ life skills/ staffing haven't been properly examined. I hope your committee will have a chance to.