To Whom it May Concern,

I am an Art & Design teacher. I am deeply concerned about the lack of certainty amongst my colleagues as to how we are best to guide pupils to prepare and present their work to ensure they get the marks they deserve. The SQA have been incredibly hazy in their guidance on this matter. Having attended numerous subject leaders meetings (despite not being a subject leader - my Faculty Head is not an Art specialist and chooses, instead, to send a nominee), it is clear that this is felt across the board. I am finding excellent, hardworking pupils are putting in more time to Art & Design than to any of their other subjects and they are still not getting the marks we are estimating for them. The Understanding Standards website provided examples of excellent folios and explains how the work was marked, but having gone through this with a fine-toothed comb and applied all this knowledge to my pupils' folios ensuring that everything is clear, well annotated and completed to a high artistic standard and inclusive of all the necessary elements mentioned in the US site - and yet they still lose a lot of marks and I am left with no explanation as to why. This, as I say, is widespread and is thus due to the marking standards either being poorly communicated to staff or being applied inconsistently. This has been very damaging to my confidence and to the confidence of every Art Teacher I know who are all suffering from the same problem.

With regard to the Higher written exam within our subject, I find the part b, 'combined' question is inappropriately worded. The wording of the question requires pupils to analyse an artwork in a way that is very unnatural, repetitive and obscure. It goes against the way any real art critic would think about a piece of art or design. As a professional, it is difficult to answer these questions and to expect 16 and 17 year olds to answer them (having had very few dedicated teaching sessions on this due to the time restraints of the practical work and having three levels in the one class) seems unrealistic.

Another issue that concerns me is the mindset of pupils who sit National 4 level. Pupils are de-motivated by the fact that their work is not 'good enough' or 'important enough' to send away for marking. I also think it is very demoralising for them to receive only a pass or fail at the end of their course thus pupils are often not keen to work to the best of their ability - only to meet the bare minimum requirements. Showing the bare minimum of National 4 will not set pupils up well to progress to National 5 and I think it is important this issue is addressed.

I truly do want the best for all of my pupils and I cannot communicate strongly enough how discouraging it is to see keen, talented, hardworking pupils walk away from my subject with a C when they deserved an A or decide not to continue with Art because they cannot deal with the physical workload (that in every case, eats into a huge amount of pupils' free time as it cannot possibly be completed in the allocated
periods) or are convinced (probably rightly so) that Art is very difficult to achieve an A when, with their work ethic, they can be more confident of an A in chemistry or computing.

More than anything, I hope there are meaningful changes to the Art & Design requirements and marking because the pupils deserve a fair chance at success and I am not convinced that is what they are getting.

Thank you for taking this into consideration.