Anonymous Submission

I have worked as a classroom art teacher for a decade and there has been a constant uncertainty surrounding SQA marking in this subject, indeed even before my time. Every art practitioner understands that it is subjective and that there maybe some discussion as to what constitutes a particular grade but with the marking criteria that we are asked to follow there appears to be a substantial gap between the expectations the SQA have and what the majority of teachers do in practice. The SQA head markers have stated this but no marking CPD has ever been offered to explain the process fully. The gap was further exemplified in my experience marking when we were asked to mark a practice paper; the SQA head markers were expecting more depth to the responses at that level than we were and many staff who marked the practice paper had very similar marks. This is further supported by the number of staff who are 'locked out' of their marking due to perceived harsh/lenient marking.

It is understood that staff are locked out to maintain a high standard and consistency of marking, all staff are fully supportive of this. It also underlines the division in understanding- all practitioners should be taught the marking process to better teach the course components. I would expect to know it after a decade but we, as a group, face uncertainty year on year that can be passed on to the candidates. I would be confident that a borderline pass one year could pass/fail comfortabably the next and I would also be uncertain that staff with an art or design degree would achieve 100% due to unclear expectations.

There is also no opportunity for self evaluation of your years worth of work due to the SQA not releasing marks for the individual breakdown of units; as an example Advanced Higher Art is marked out of 100 with no clarity as to what were the weak/strong areas of the unit due to no breakdown or commentary being given. We are left to guess where we are to develop, ironic given that we are constantly asked to evaluate ourselves and HMie provide guidance but the exam body, even in a basic form, do not- they already have the breakdowns from the marking process so it should be easily available without special request. This is also an issue in N5/N6 as each area of the work is marked on a scale that would be useful to see so that we could understand what areas to develop in future.

Lastly, exemplars are issued midway through a teaching year rather than early on when we could analyse them and use them and the format of the question paper has been altered as we teach them. We simply look for the basics to be done correctly to allow us to teach the courses confidently.