

Improving Assessment in National Courses Research: Higher Economics

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Proposal

The following proposal was shared with learners and educators who stated that they had studied or taught Higher Economics:

- We are proposing making the exam for Higher Economics shorter, reducing the time from 2 hours and 30 minutes to 2 hours.
- We would shorten Section 1 by removing 5 marks worth of questions (5 marks removed from one case study). Both questions would still relate to case study content.
- We would shorten Section 2 by removing 15 marks worth of questions (5 marks removed from each question). Each question would continue to focus on one of the three areas of study.
- We are proposing these changes to improve the exam experience for learners and schools, while maintaining appropriate sampling of subject content.

There are no proposed changes to the assignment at this stage. The weightings of the exam and the assignment would remain the same.

The proposed changes for Higher Economics are:

Component	Current marks	Current duration	Current weighting
Section 1 + 2	30 + 60	2 hours 30 minutes	75%
Assignment	30		25%

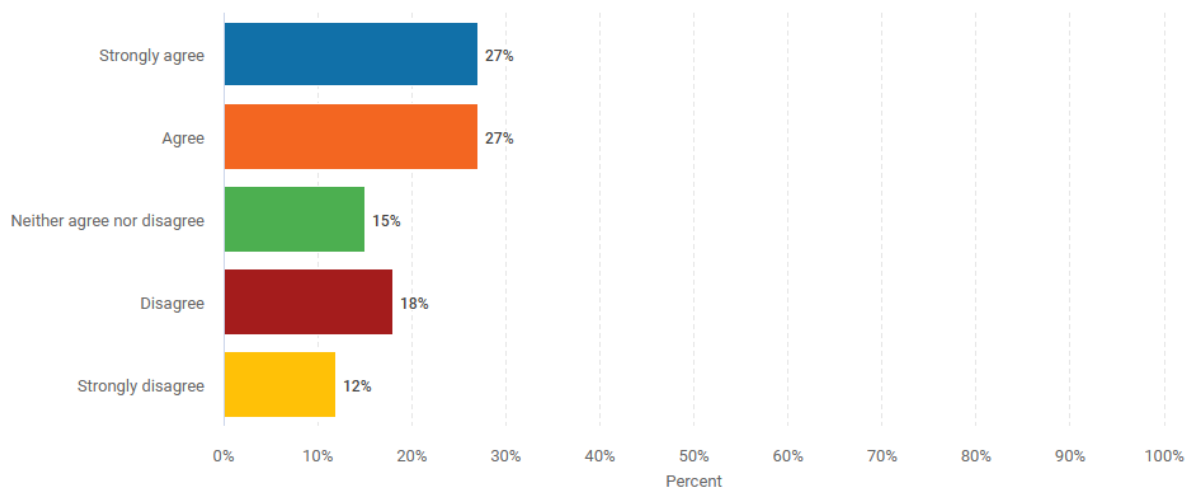
Component	Proposed marks	Proposed duration	Proposed weighting
Section 1 + 2	25 + 45	2 hours	75%
Assignment	30		25%

Findings: learners

We received responses from 33 learners who had studied Higher Economics. As shown in Figure 1, the majority (55%) of learner respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, while 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for Higher Economics? Learner views

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for Higher Economics?

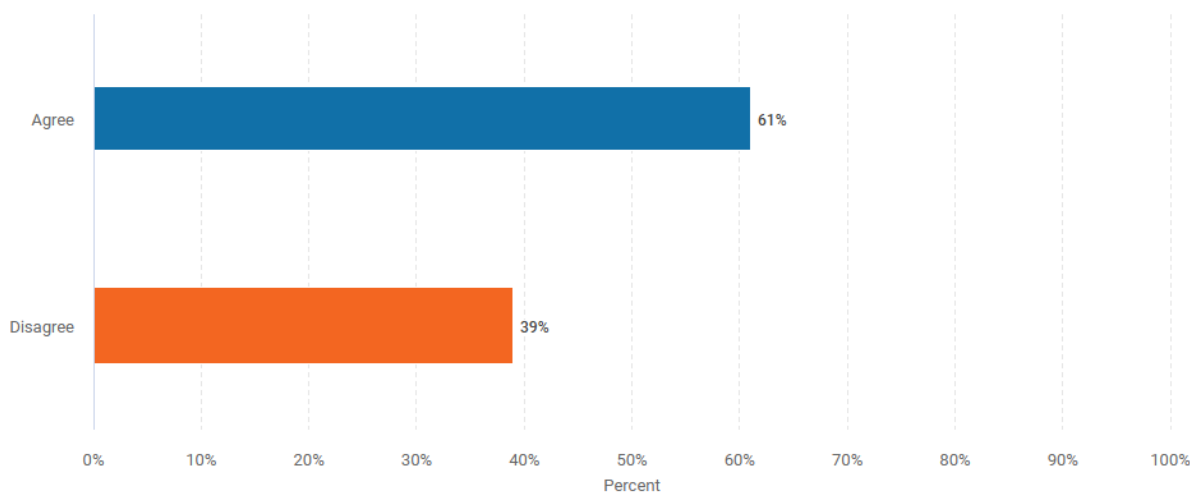


Base: 33 learners who stated that they had studied Higher Economics

Learner respondents were also asked whether, if the proposed changes were made for Higher Economics, they agreed or disagreed that this should happen from session 2026–27. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of learner respondents (61%) agreed, while 39% disagreed.

Figure 2: In the event that the proposed changes are made for Higher Economics, do you agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026–27? Learner views

In the event that the proposed changes are made for Higher Economics, do you agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026/27?



Base: 33 learners who stated that they had studied Higher Economics

Qualitative analysis

The respondents were asked if they had any further feedback that they would like to share about the proposed changes for Higher Economics. Only one respondent left a comment, saying that the proposed changes would potentially give the time to write answers in more detail.

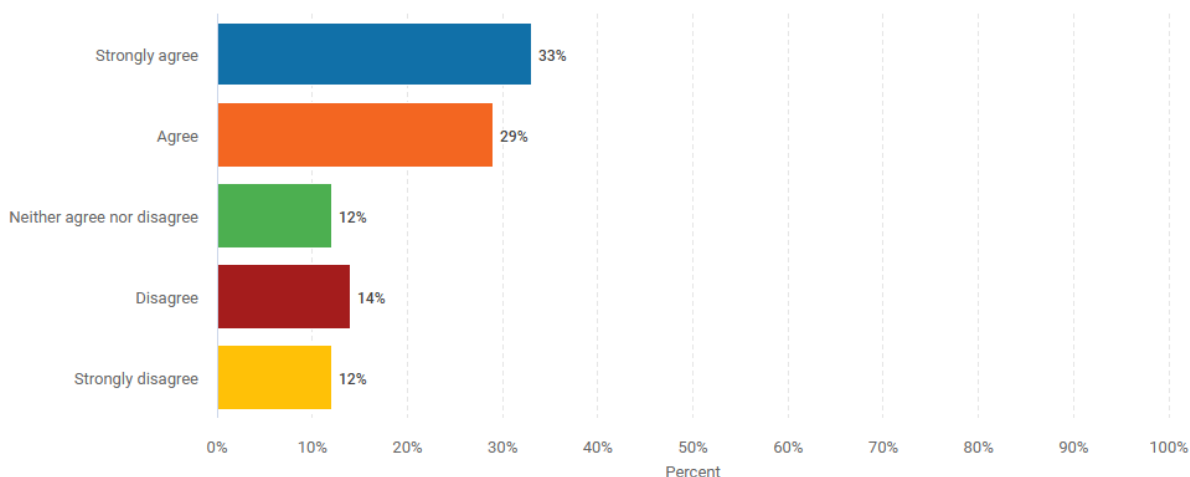
‘This allows more time for students to write more in-depth answers perchance, maybe’.

Findings: educators

We received responses from 42 educators who had delivered Higher Economics. As shown in Figure 3, the majority (62%) of educator respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, while 26% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for Higher Economics? Educator views.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for Higher Economics?

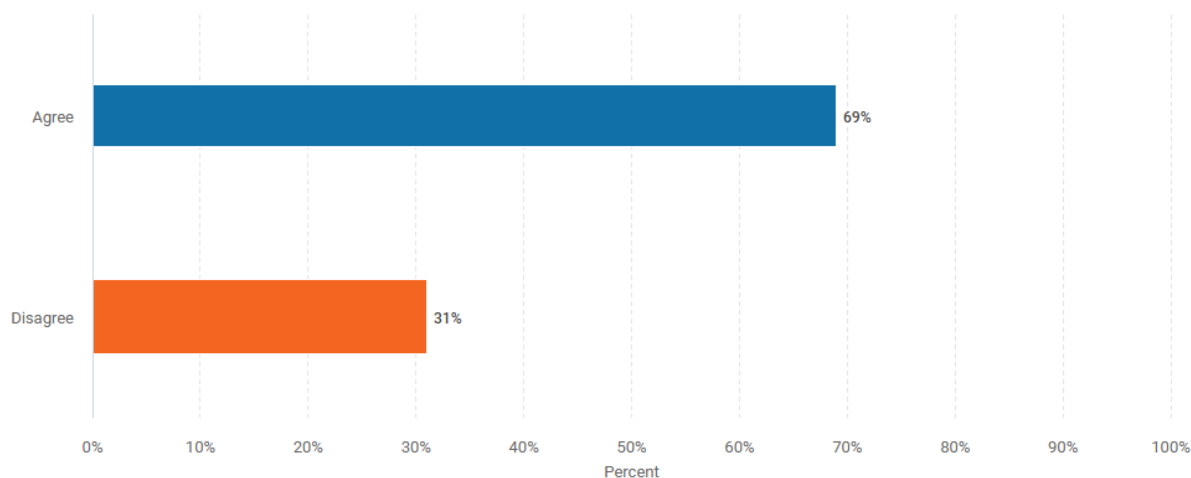


Base: 42 educators who stated that they had delivered Higher Economics

Respondents were also asked whether, if the proposed changes were made for Higher Economics, they agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026–27. As shown in Figure 4, majority of educator respondents (69%) agreed, while 31% disagreed.

Figure 4: In the event that the proposed changes are made for Higher Economics, do you agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026–27? Educator views.

In the event that the proposed changes are made for Higher Economics, do you agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026/27?



Base: 42 educators who stated that they had delivered Higher Economics

Qualitative analysis

Educator respondents were asked if they had any further comments that they would like to share about the proposed changes to Higher Economics. Eighteen respondents left a comment. Although the quantitative findings showed that the majority of educator respondents were in support of the proposal, most comments were critical of the proposal.

Benefits of the proposed changes

A few educator respondents left a comment agreeing with the proposal. For example, one respondent who supported the proposal felt that reducing the size of the Question Paper would reduce a repetitiveness and predictability of questions and, therefore, would improve the validity of the exam.

Challenges with the proposed changes

Some of the educator respondents who criticised the proposal said that they felt that reducing the number of marks would disadvantage learners. They felt that this would give learners less opportunity to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding, or would leave learners less prepared to progress to Advanced Higher.

‘The smaller sample means pupils are more harshly punished for areas they are unsure on, and they could have comprehensive knowledge of areas that are less likely to be

questioned. The only way to accurately sample pupil understanding is with a greater scope of questions.'

'Don't feel that this is necessary. Learners will be assessed on less content making them ill-prepared for Advanced Higher.'

Alternative suggestions

Some educator and learner respondents used the free text box to give varying suggestions for alternative changes that they felt should be made to Higher Economics. We haven't included these comments in the analysis, as they did not directly answer the research questions and were out of scope of this research. We passed the comments on to our Qualifications Development teams to make them aware of the themes that emerged on this topic. We'll consider alternative changes to National Courses as part of wider qualifications reform in the future, and learners and educators will have opportunities to share their views and input more directly to this work.