

Improving Assessment in National Courses Research: Higher Media

Published: June 2026

Proposal

The following proposal was shared with respondents who said they had studied or taught Higher Media:

- For question paper one, we propose removing the key aspects list from the question three task to ensure learners focus on the specific requirements for the question. The key aspect list includes: language, representation, categories, narrative, audience, institutions, and society. This change is being proposed to prevent approaches that rely on the key aspect list to structure a response.
- For the assignment task, we propose:
 - Reducing the requirement from at least **four** developed points of evaluation to at least **three** developed points of evaluation for 2a.
 - Reducing the requirement from at least **five** developed points of evaluation to at least **four** developed points of evaluation for 2b.

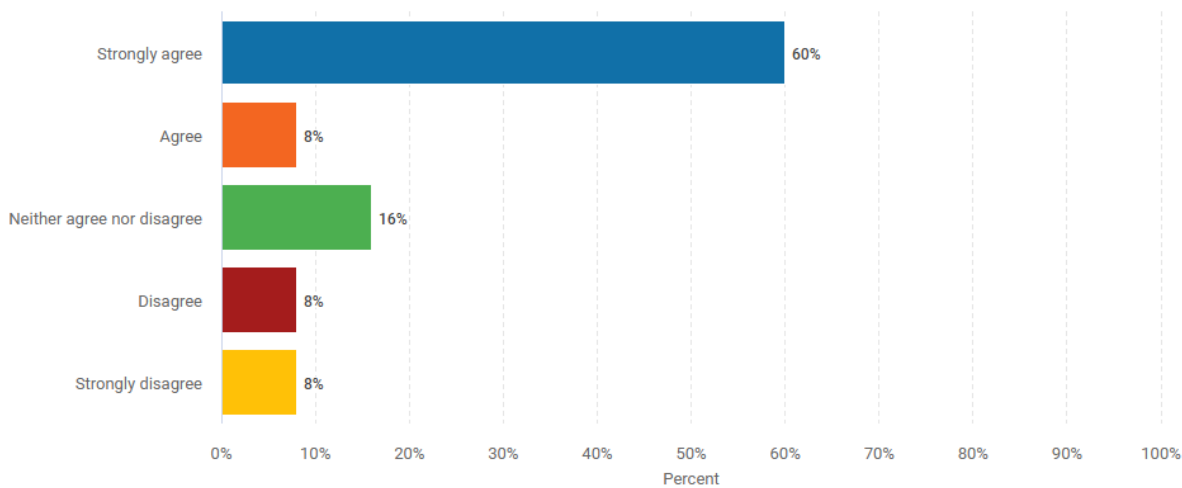
There are no proposed changes to the current assessment structure, weightings, or mark allocations.

Findings: learners

We received responses from 25 learners who stated that they had studied Higher Media. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of learner respondents (68%) agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, while 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

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

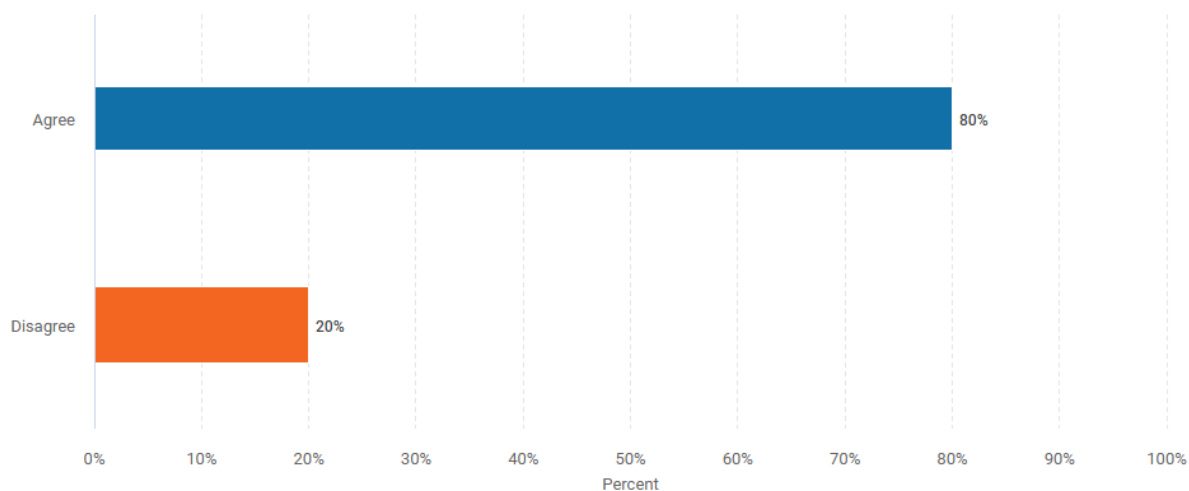


Base: 25 learners who stated they had studied Higher Media

Respondents were also asked to what extent they agreed with the decision to begin the proposed change in 2026–27, should the change be made. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of learners (80%) agreed or strongly agreed that the change should be made from the 2026–27 session, while 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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



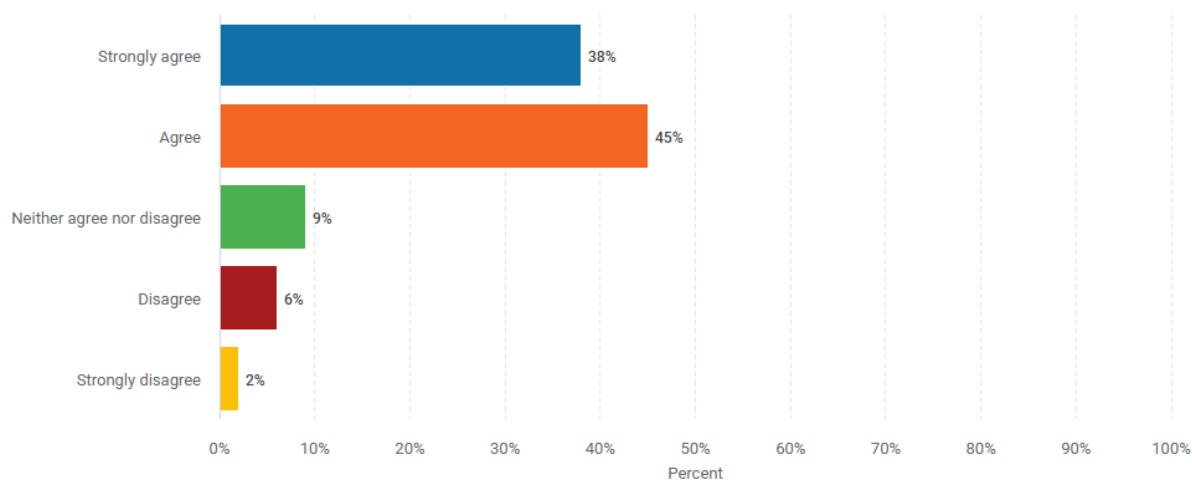
Base: 25 learners who said they had studied Higher Media

Findings: educators

We received responses from 65 educators who had taught Higher Media. As shown in Figure 3, (83%) of educator respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed changes for Higher media, while 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

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

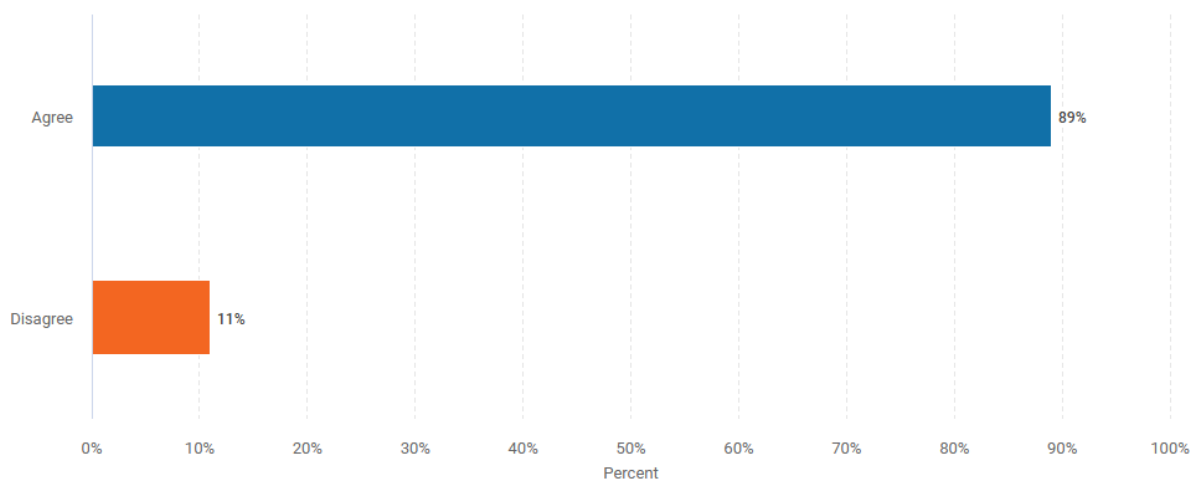


Base: 65 educators who stated they had taught Higher Media

As shown in Figure 4, when asked, in the event that the proposed changes went ahead, whether they should be implemented from the 2026–27 session, 89% of educator respondents agreed and 11% disagreed.

Figure 4: In the event that the proposed changes are made for Higher Media, 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 Media, do you agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026/27?



Base: 65 educators who stated they had taught Higher Media

Qualitative analysis

Respondents were asked if they had any further comments that they would like to share about the proposed changes to Higher Media. There were no comments from learner respondents, but 16 educator respondents chose to comment.

Most comments expanded on why educator respondents agreed with the proposed changes, however, some questioned the extent to which the proposed changes would benefit learners. A few educator respondents suggested alternative changes.

Benefits of the proposed changes

There were a number of comments from educator respondents related to the benefits of implementing the proposed changes. The key theme that emerged was that reducing the required number of developed points of evaluation for the assignment would benefit learners by reducing the burden of writing while still allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge. It was also commonly felt that this would curb repetitiveness. Others commented that it would recognise the creative merits of the individual.

‘Higher Media should be about demonstrating depth of knowledge and analysis, not writing a certain number of paragraphs to reach a threshold.’

‘The nature of the task in Section 2 means that pupils can become repetitive and thus struggle to gain any new marks from further points.’

‘Welcome the changes to assignment in particular as many pupils are writing too much and seems disproportionate to other subjects.’

Challenges with the proposed changes

There were a number of comments from educator respondents that questioned whether removing the key aspects list would be in the best interests of learners. A few respondents explained further that educators tended to use the key aspects list to structure the course.

‘I think some pupils like having a set approach and they will be required to discuss Key Aspects anyway’

‘Think the key aspects should be there as a prompt for Q3’

‘Whilst I understand the reduction in developed points of analysis, it seems redundant to remove the key aspects since this is how most Higher Media teachers structure the course, therefore it makes sense to keep this on the paper.’

There was one educator respondent who suggested that removing the key aspects list would have a large impact on learners and educators, while another who expressed doubt whether the removal would have any impact.

‘I believe taking the list of key aspects out will make every difference for teachers and students.’

‘I’m unsure if removing the list will have any impact ‘

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 Media. 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.