

# **Improving Assessment in National Courses Research: National 5 Economics**

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# Proposal

The following proposal was shared with respondents who stated they had taught or studied N5 Economics:

- We are proposing making the exam for National 5 Economics shorter, reducing the time from 2 hours to 1 hour and 30 minutes.
- We will shorten Section 1 by removing 10 marks worth of questions (5 marks removed from each case study), questions would still relate to case study content.
- We will shorten Section 2 by removing 10 marks worth of questions.
- 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 National 5 Economics are:

Component	Current marks	Current duration	Current weighting
Section 1 + 2	40 + 50	2 hours	75%
Assignment	30		25%

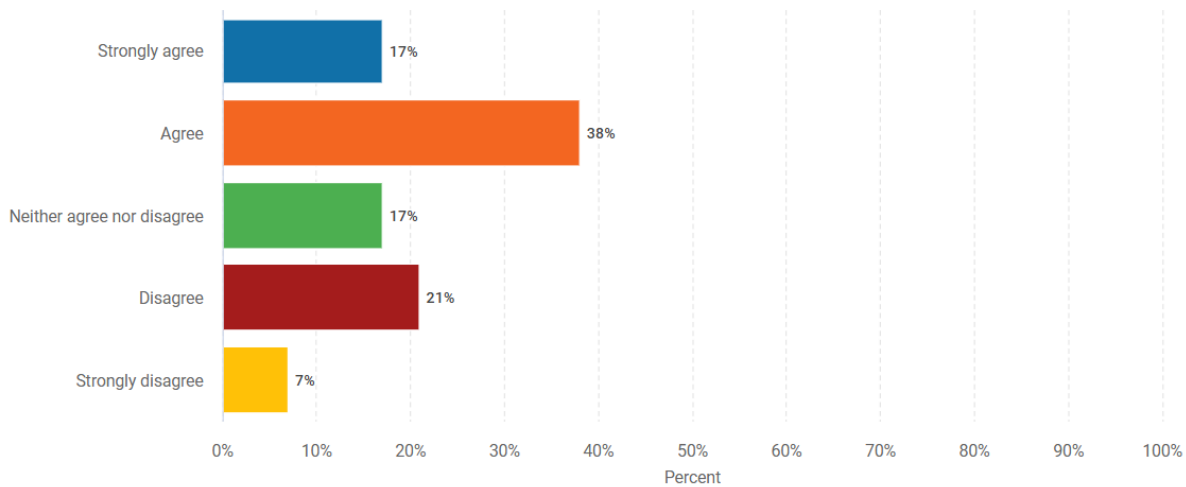
Component	Proposed marks	Proposed duration	Proposed weighting
Section 1 + 2	<b>30 + 40</b>	<b>1 hour 30 minutes</b>	75%
Assignment	30		25%

## Findings: learners

We received responses from 29 learners who had studied National 5 Economics. As shown in Figure 1, the majority (55%) of learner respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, while 28% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Figure 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for N5 Economics? Learner views.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for National 5 Economics?

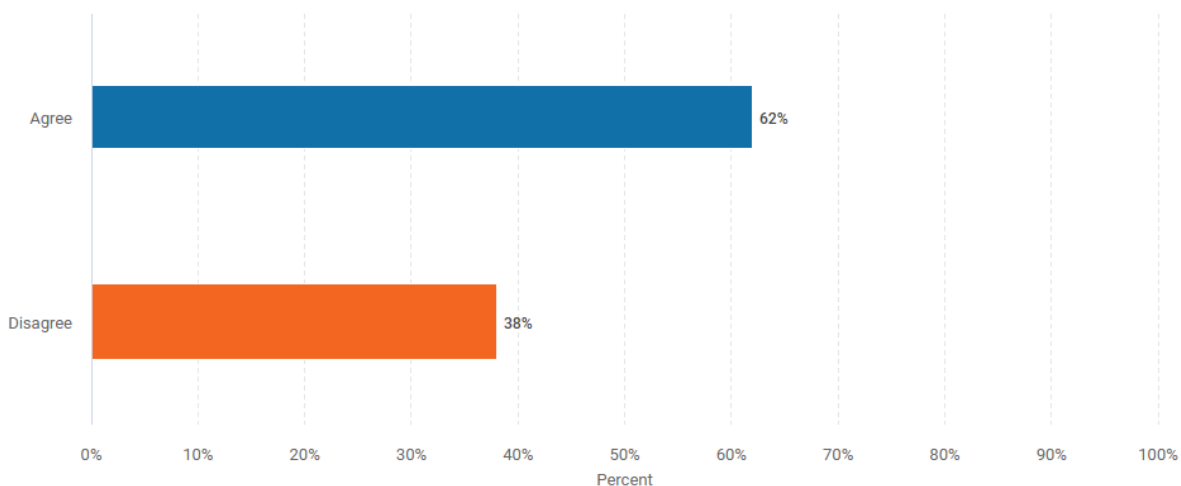


*Base: 29 learners who stated they had studied N5 Economics*

Respondents were also asked whether, if the proposed changes are made for National 5 Economics, they agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026–27. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of learner respondents (62%) agreed, while 38% disagreed.

**Figure 2: In the event that the proposed changes are made for National 5 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 National 5 Economics, do you agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026/27?



*Base: 29 learners who stated they had studied N5 Economics*

## Qualitative analysis

The respondents were asked if they had any further feedback that they would like to share about the proposed changes for National 5 Economics. Three learner respondents left a comment. One learner respondent expressed agreement with the proposal, but did not provide further explanation for their reasoning.

One learner respondent said that making the exam shorter would not allow for the content to be sufficiently sampled.

‘I think two hours is a reasonable time for an exam, where it is manageable but also assesses the course in a complete fashion. Reducing the length of the exam risks not having enough content for a meaningful examination’.

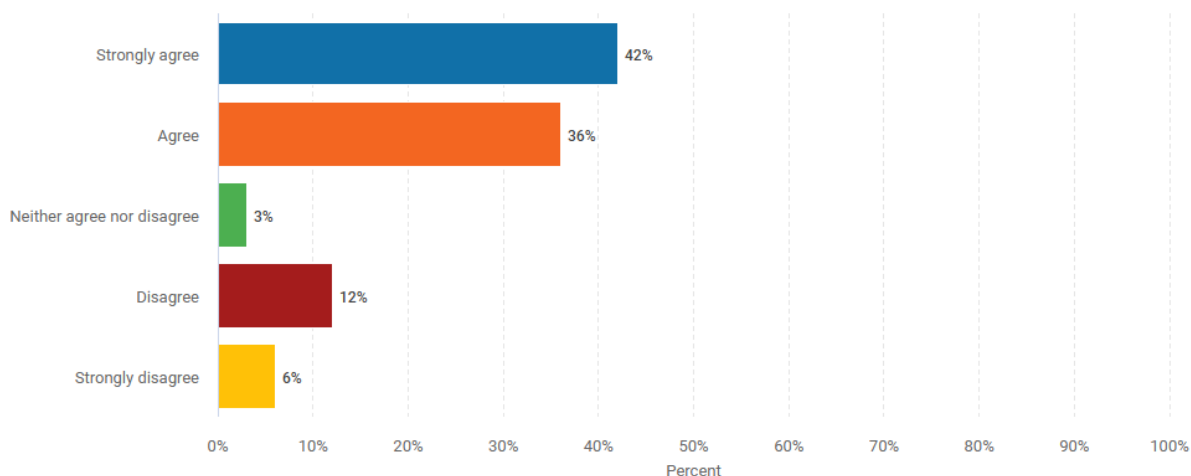
A third learner respondent said that they could not see how the changes would make a big difference.

## Findings: educators

We received responses from 33 educators who had delivered National 5 Economics. As shown in Figure 3, the vast majority (79%) of educator respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, while 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

### Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for N5 Economics? Educator views.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for National 5 Economics?

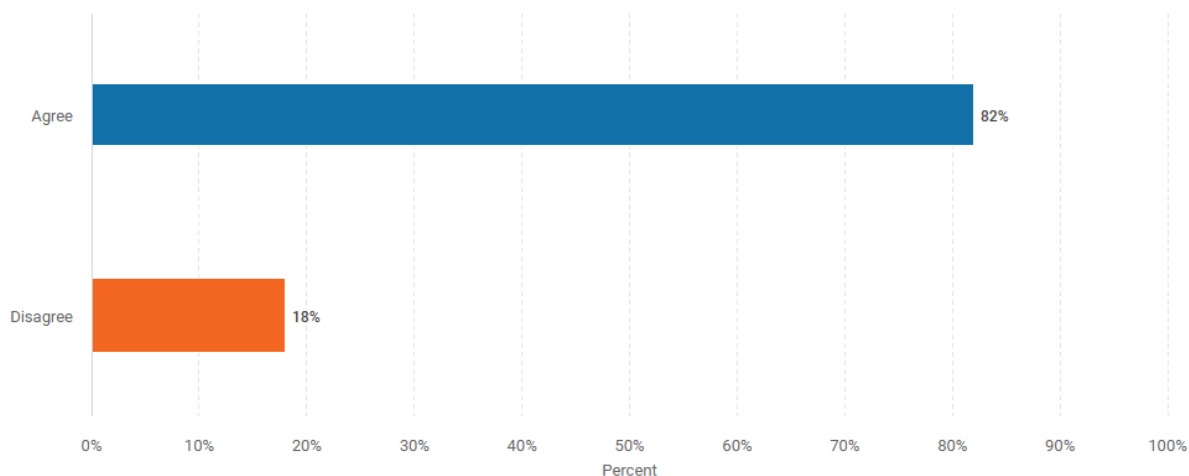


*Base: 33 educators who stated they had delivered National 5 Economics*

Respondents were also asked whether, if the proposed changes were made to National 5 Economics, they agreed or disagreed that this should happen from session 2026–27. As shown in Figure 4, majority of educator respondents (82%) agreed, while 18% disagreed.

**Figure 4: In the event that the proposed changes are made for National 5 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 National 5 Economics, do you agree or disagree that this should happen from session 2026/27?



*Base: 33 educators who stated they had delivered National 5 Economics*

## Qualitative analysis

Educator respondents were asked if they had any further comments that they would like to share about the proposed changes to National 5 Economics. Twelve respondents left a comment. Although the quantitative findings show 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. One felt that reverting the duration and number of marks of the question paper to what it was pre-Revised National Qualifications was much fairer.

‘It would be good to have it back to the length and marks of N5 before units were removed. The removal of units, and the increase in exam marks and length never really struck me as being "fair". I don't think it make the subject any more robust. This is a fantastic move from the new assessment body’.

Another respondent said they felt that reducing the size of the question paper would limit, what they perceived as a repetitiveness and predictability of questions, and therefore would improve the validity of the exam.

'I am supportive of any changes which would reduce the repetitive nature of the exam questions which are too predictable and are repeated too often — there needs to be more rigour and less ability for pupils to parrot pre-learned phrases from previous marking schemes. There are too many topics where there are only one or two options of which question is being asked and with which command word (eg calculating inflation) — we need more variation on what is asked, and less predictability if the system is to have credibility. We need to be requiring pupils to think harder and apply their knowledge more, not less'.

## **Challenges with the proposed changes**

Most educator respondents who criticised the proposal said that they felt that reducing the number of marks would disadvantage learners. Some said that this would give learners less opportunity to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. One respondent stated that it would leave learners less prepared to progress to Higher, and increase the gap between National 5 and GCSE.

'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'.

'Reducing available marks reduces students' chances of success and fails to allow for differences in knowledge levels to be measured'.

There were a few comments from educators regarding the course content as a result of reducing the number of marks. One respondent felt that reducing the number of marks would be unfair without also reducing the volume of content in the course itself. However, another educator, who agreed with the proposal to reduce the number of marks, said that it would be difficult to reduce the course content as they felt it was already small.

'I agree that a shorter exam would be preferable, however with just three units at present, the economics courses are actually not in need of having content reduced at all. Unlike, business where there is a vast amount of content, in economics the content is much lesser already'.

'Removing exam content without removing course content means it is harder to get the marks correct in the exam / less chance of what you have studied and know well coming up. Removal of exam content needs to be met with less course content or pupils are at a disadvantage'.

One educator respondent also felt that the exam, as it is now, was working fine, and should remain as it is.

## **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 National 5 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.