

Improving Assessment in National Courses Research: National 5 Media

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Proposal

The following proposal was shared with learners and educators who stated that they had studied or taught National 5 Media:

- We would shorten Section 1 by removing 12 marks. We would keep the same number and type of questions, but the questions would be worth fewer marks. Most questions are currently worth 10 marks. If this change is made, questions would be worth a maximum of 8 marks and therefore learners would need to provide fewer points or a shorter response.

We are suggesting these changes to improve the exam experience for learners and for schools and colleges, while making sure that the course content is appropriately sampled in the exam.

The table below shows a comparison between the current course assessment and our proposed changes. The weightings of the exam and assignment (the percentage they contribute to a final grade) would stay the same.

Current:

| Component | Current marks | Current duration | Current weighting |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| QP Section 1 + 2 | 50 + 10 | 2 hours | 50% |
| Assignment | 48 | N/A | 50% |

Proposed:

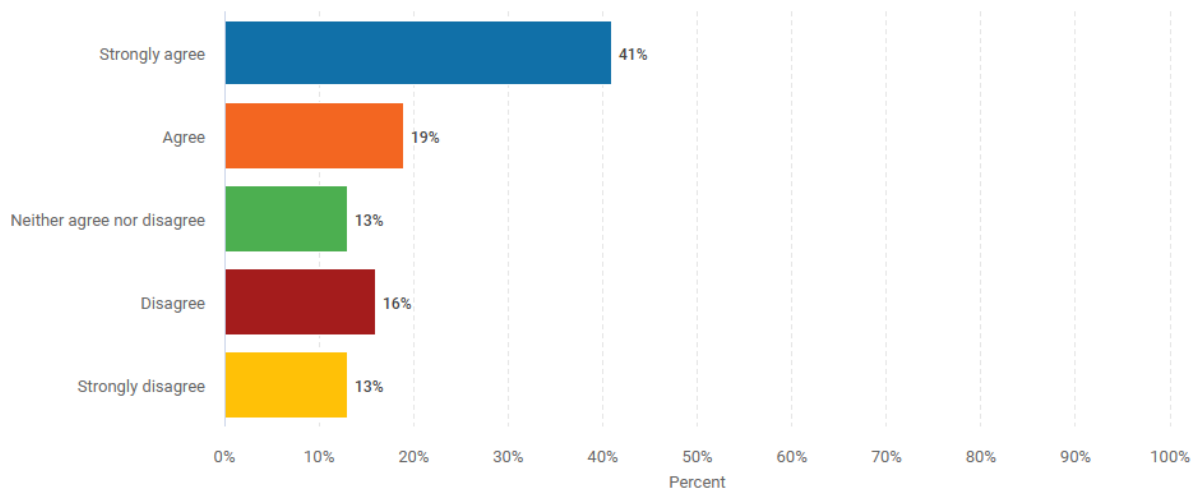
| Component | Proposed marks | Proposed duration | Proposed weighting |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| QP Section 1 + 2 | 38 + 10 | 1 hr 40 mins | 50% |
| Assignment | 48 | N/A | 50% |

Findings: learners

We received responses from 32 learners who had said that they had studied National 5 Media. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of learner respondents (59%) 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 National 5 Media? Learner views

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



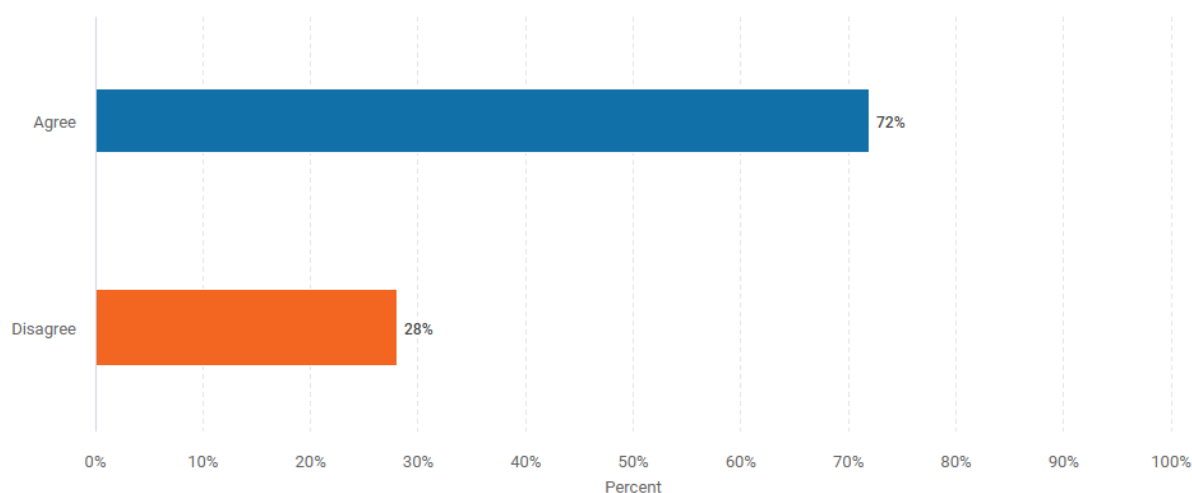
Base: 32 learners who said that they had studied National 5 Media

The vast majority (60%) of learner respondents agreed that this proposal should be made, while 29% said they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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 (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that the change should be made from the 2026–27 session, while 28% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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



Base: 32 learners who said that they had studied National 5 Media

Qualitative analysis

Learner respondents were asked if they had any further comments that they would like to share about the proposed changes to National 5 Media. Two left a comment.

One agreed with the proposed changes and stated that the 10-mark questions in the Media exam were stress-inducing. They said that by increasing the weighting of each mark, learners would be encouraged to develop more in-depth answers.

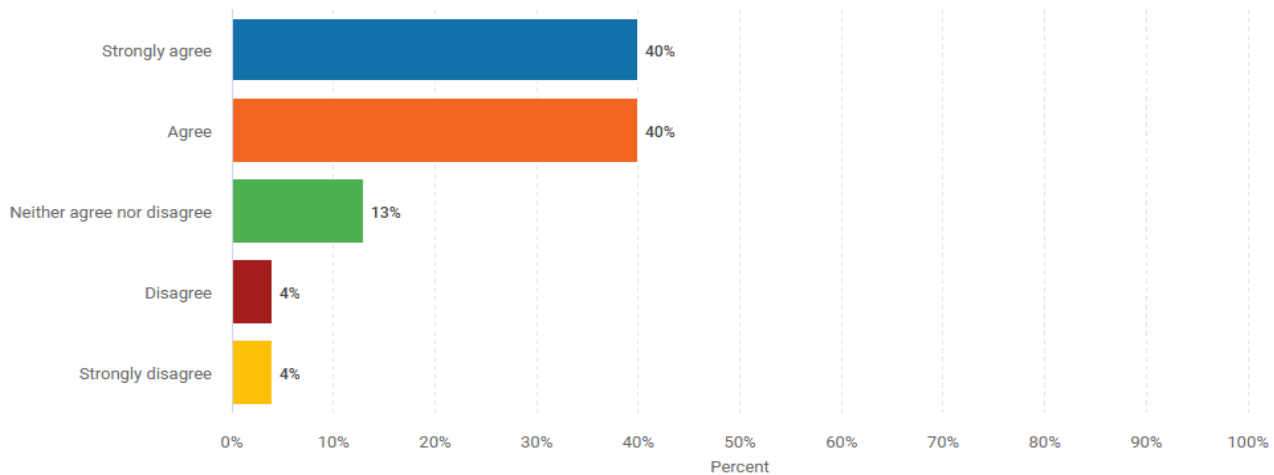
By contrast, another learner respondent did not agree with the proposed changes as they felt that there was a lot of writing in the Media exam and having less time to complete the question paper would not be beneficial.

Findings: educators

We received responses from 78 educators who said that they had taught National 5 Media. As shown in Figure 3, the majority of educator respondents (79%) agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, while 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes for National 5 Media? Educator views

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

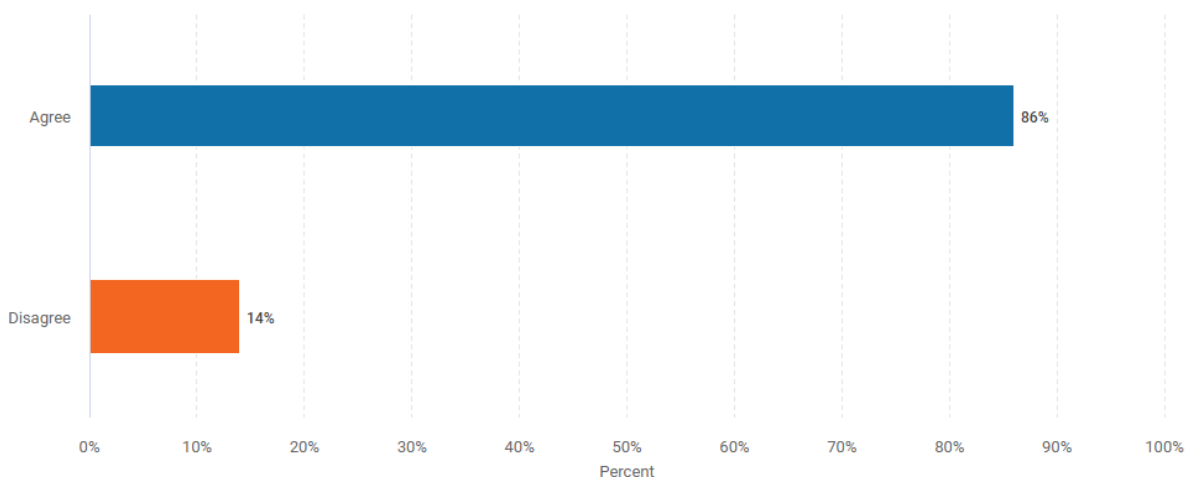


Base: 78 educators who said that they had taught National 5 Media

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 educators (86%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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



Base: 78 educators who stated they had taught National 5 Media

Qualitative analysis

Educator respondents were asked if they had any further questions they would like to share with us, and 21 respondents left a comment. The most common response from educator respondents was to agree with the proposals and welcome the change.

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 themes that emerged from the data were that reducing the duration of the exam and the number of marks available in the question paper would benefit learners by reducing the burden of writing while still allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge. It was common for participants who agreed with the proposals to say that reducing the duration of the exam would benefit pupils as some felt that the exam was currently very long. Others explained that shortening the exam alongside reducing the number of marks would enable learners to take more time to show their knowledge.

‘Two hours is a long exam particularly for N5 pupils. I believe the reduction in time will benefit the pupils and create a fairer assessment’

‘Pleased with the proposals. Pupils can demonstrate knowledge without having to sprint through the paper.’

Another key theme related to the changes in the question paper was that the reduction of marks would benefit the learners, as educator respondents perceived the current media assessment to require a lot of writing. One respondent explained that learners tended to write more than was required, and that reducing the number of marks would still allow them to demonstrate the same depth of understanding.

‘The volume of writing currently involved is a marathon for pupils and markers.’

‘The volume of writing is absurd across the Media course, and this would support success going forward.’

‘Candidates are often overwriting in fear of not getting to the 10 marks, and there is very little logic in the idea that giving ten examples shows any greater level of understanding than eight.’

One respondent thought that the changes to the question paper were beneficial as it would make the course more in line with other National 5 courses and allow better use of class time for practice papers.

‘This feels much more in line with other N5 courses and will make it easier to use class time for practice papers.’

Challenges with the proposals

A few educator respondents expressed concerns about the time being reduced, explaining that learners would still need to answer the same number of questions. One educator respondent felt that this would cause more stress to learners and that this was unfair.

‘I think reducing the amount of time but requiring pupils to answer the same number of questions is even more stressful and unfair.’

‘I don't think reducing questions by two marks and then only giving them 1 hr and 40 minutes will be enough time.’

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 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.