

October 2013

Background: Principles for National Online Assessment

At the 30 July SCSEEC meeting, Ministers agreed to guiding principles for national online assessment. The principles provide strategic direction to ACARA for online delivery of NAPLAN, which is provisionally targeted to commence in 2016, pending careful examination of transition issues. This follows SCSEEC's previous commitment to trial an electronic onscreen delivery platform for National Assessment Program (NAP)-Civics and Citizenship in 2013.

The Principles are grouped under three broad headings that require online assessment to:

- support quality teaching and learning;
- deliver better national and assessment information; and
- broaden the curriculum coverage of assessments.

Improvements to the quality and nature of performance information at the national, state, and territory levels are anticipated. However, the main benefits in moving to national online assessment should be experienced by students, teachers and parents. A national online assessment capability will enhance the NAP and will provide the opportunity to deliver new, flexible, optional, high quality assessments that support learning.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR NATIONAL ONLINE ASSESSMENT

All Governments recognise the importance of quality assessment and timely feedback in improving student achievement. Quality assessments delivering valid and reliable data are critical accountability tools for education authorities in their efforts to improve performance.

Quality assessment tools are also important for teachers to support tailored student learning and reduce performance gaps associated with disadvantage.

Teachers and schools have a key role in administering assessments and in using assessment data to inform planning for teaching and learning as described in Standard 5 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (“to assess student learning, provide feedback to students on their learning, interpret student data and report on student achievement”).

In moving to the provision of national online assessment capability, Governments recognise the continuing importance of the National Assessment Program as the means by which governments, education authorities and schools can determine whether or not young Australians are meeting important educational outcomes. While improvements to the quality and nature of performance information at the national, state, and territory levels are anticipated, the main benefits in moving to national online assessment will be experienced by students and their teachers and parents. A national online assessment capability will enhance the National Assessment Program and will provide the opportunity to deliver new, flexible, optional, high quality assessments that support students’ learning.

These Principles have been designed to provide:

- *a clear statement of the agreed strategic directions for national online assessment capability*
- *direction to ACARA and ESA in their work to deliver national online assessment capability and a basis for assessing trade-offs between the principles*
- *a framework for the outcomes expected of online assessment.*

Support quality teaching and learning

- The primary purpose of online assessment is to improve student learning outcomes through the development of data-driven effective teaching strategies.
 - A further purpose is to inform policy and reassure governments and the community about the quality of education in Australian schools.
 - All teachers need to have the knowledge and skills to effectively plan, administer and evaluate assessments for different purposes, and to make the best use of current assessment data.
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- To best support teachers, online assessment will:
 - Assess a broad range of achievement levels that will enable formative, diagnostic testing and support targeting of individual student learning needs.
 - Deliver timely results, while acknowledging a number of curriculum areas will require additional time for assessment to occur.
 - Provide flexibility in the administration timeframes for schools and teachers.
 - Use technology innovatively to ensure the tools are engaging and high quality and make best use of the medium, delivering relevant, useful information to teachers, school and education authorities.
 - Enable better reporting about students' achievement, to students and parents.
- Online assessment will provide an aid to student learning without hindering or creating an undue burden or disruption for teachers and schools.
- Students will need to have access to, and familiarity with, relevant technology.

Deliver better national data and assessment information

- National online assessment will enhance the ability of jurisdictions to extract comparable, longitudinal, valid and reliable system level data about student performance that is linked to standards, quickly and in accessible forms.
- Jurisdictions, sectors and schools will be provided access to item level information from national online assessment that will support use of the assessment information and gauge progress in relation to the Australian Curriculum Standards.
- National online assessment will improve equity of access to assessment for students. It will better accommodate students with disabilities, English language proficiency difficulties, and those from other disadvantaged minority groups by providing appropriate adjustments, enabling their participation.
- National online assessment will provide flexibility for assessments to be designed, implemented and reported differently, according to the purpose of the assessment.
- National online assessment will be utilised for schools' and systems' accountability, policy and provide the broader community an understanding of the elements of quality education in Australian schools.

Broaden the curriculum coverage of assessments

- National online assessment will supply a broader suite of assessment tools that provide greater curriculum coverage, including the skills described within the general capabilities and cross-curriculum perspectives of the Australian Curriculum, to meet the requirements of the 21st century.
- National online assessment will enhance the feasibility of integrating international assessments as they too transition to online delivery, including the possibility of equating of local and international assessments.