



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

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2022 NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship End of Year Examination Round

Date:	19 October 2022	NZQA Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	Report No.	CR25413

	Action Sought	Deadline
Associate Minister of Education Minister of Education	It is recommended you: a. note the contents of the annual pre-examination round report b. agree/disagree that this report is proactively released after the release of examination results in 2023.	

Enclosure/Appendix: Yes/No

Round Robin: Yes/No

Contact for Telephone Discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone	Cellphone	1 st Contact
Andrea Gray	Deputy Chief Executive – Assessment Division			√

The following departments/agencies have seen this report:

Ministry of Education Tertiary Education Commission Other (specify)

Minister's Office to Complete:

Noted Seen Approved
 Needs change Withdrawn Overtaken by Events
 See Minister's comments Declined

Referred to:

Comments:

2022 NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship End of Year Examination Round

Executive Summary

1. The NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship End of Year examination round is scheduled to start on Monday 7 November and conclude on Friday 2 December 2022.
2. NZQA's preparations this year continue to include planning for the possibility of disruption to examinations nationally, regionally, or school-by-school, due to a resurgence of COVID-19.
3. The key statistics reflecting the scope of examinations planning include:
 - a. approximately 142,000 ākonga/students entered for NCEA and NZ Scholarship examinations.
 - b. 134 examination sessions for NCEA and NZ Scholarship.
 - c. around 1.7 million examination booklets printed.
 - d. 458 examination centres established, including 67 in kura, seven in the Cook Islands, one on Niue, two in prisons and three in Regional Health Schools.
 - e. Around 45,300 ākonga/students entered for NCEA Level 1 English, the largest session.
 - f. around 6,000 examination staff and 1,650 markers being contracted.

Recommended Action


It is recommended you:

- a. **note** the contents of the annual pre-examination round report.

Proactive Release Recommendation

- b. **agree** that this report is proactively released after the release of examination results in 2023.

Agree/ Disagree



Dr Grant Klinkum
Chief Executive
19 October 2022



Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education (Schooling)
..23./10../2022

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education
...../...../.....

2022 NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship End of Year Examination Round

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this briefing is to update you on the preparations for the upcoming 2022 End of Year examination round, scheduled to start on Monday 7 November and finish on Friday 2 December 2022.

Background

Planning for the 2022 Examination Round

2. NZQA's preparations this year continue to include planning in the event of disruption to examinations nationally, regionally, or school-by-school, due to the resurgence of COVID-19. NZQA's work with the Ministries of Health and Education ensures that planning is in place for a wide range of scenarios.
3. Appropriate health and safety measures agreed by the Ministry of Health will be in place at examination centres and applies for all ākonga/students. Currently these requirements include:
 - a. A gap of 1.5 metres between students in all directions.
 - b. All NZQA staff to comply with health and safety policies set out by their individual kura or school.
 - c. NZQA and school staff to ensure that, wherever possible, ākonga/students do not congregate indoors before or after an examination session.
4. Each year, schools are required to provide standard specific, quality assured evidence of an ākonga/student's learning for each externally assessed achievement standard entry. The derived grade sits as a robust alternative grade if the ākonga/student is prevented from sitting an examination or their performance is impaired. Our expectation is that ākonga/ students attend the examinations where possible and will then be awarded the best of either grade.
5. NZQA has reviewed the quality assurance process for derived grades. Schools have been reminded of NZQA's quality assurance requirements for derived grades and the derived grade audit process has been refreshed so that NZQA can be confident that evidence gathered by a school for these grades is valid and sufficient.

Key statistics for examinations planning

6. The key statistics reflecting the scope of examinations planning include:
 - a. approximately 142,000 ākonga/students entered for NCEA and NZ Scholarship examinations.
 - b. 134 examination sessions for NCEA and NZ Scholarship.
 - c. around 1.7 million examination booklets printed.
 - d. 458 examination centres established, including 67 in kura, seven in the Cook Islands, one on Niue, two in prisons and three in Regional Health Schools.
 - e. around 45,300 ākonga/students entered for NCEA Level 1 English, the largest session.
 - f. around 6,000 examination staff and 1,650 markers being contracted.

Stages of the examination round

7. Table One provides a timeline for the critical stages of the examination round, subject to any large-scale changes that may arise:

Table One: Timeline for 2022 Examination Round

Stage	Timing	Additional Information
1. Examination development	March 2021 – October 2022	This is an 18-month cycle whereby development is also underway for the following year's examinations
2. Printing and Personalisation of papers	August – October 2022/	Approximately 1.7 million examination booklets
3. Distribution to examination centres	From October 2022	Approximately 5,500 boxes of examination materials
4. Students sitting examinations	7 November 2 December 2022	
5. Marking	Completed before Christmas	
6. Results release	NCEA: 17 January 2023 New Zealand Scholarship: 8 February 2023	You will receive a further briefing in mid-January 2023 on arrangements for results release Results released online for approximately 165,000 year 11-13 ākonga/students ¹
7. Completed examinations returned to ākonga/students	NCEA: 24 January 2023 New Zealand Scholarship: 9 February 2023	Ākonga/students will be able to access their marked digital or scanned examinations online
8. Reviews and reconsiderations process ²	NCEA: from late January to mid-February NZ Scholarship: from early February to early March	

Progress update

8. Preparations for the examination round are well advanced.
9. There have been additional pressures on the development and production of some assessment materials during the year due to the impact of COVID 19 on NZQA staff and the contracted specialist teacher workforces combined with the additional requirements of the NCEA Change programme. NZQA has addressed these impacts through close monitoring and management of delivery.
10. NZQA has been in regular contact with schools informing them of how they can best organise their NCEA and NZ Scholarship examinations; and prepare to provide accurate and current results for derived grades at scale, should circumstances require.

¹ These are students who are working towards an NCEA in 2022, of whom approximately 142,000 are entered into one or more end of year examinations.

² Review – all sections of examination booklets are checked to ensure they are marked and results correctly recorded and transferred. Reconsideration involves re-marking the assessment.

Student progress to date

11. Table Two highlights student achievement to date. Once Learning Recognition Credits are factored in, ākonga/students in 2022 have earned a similar number of credits on average as ākonga/students had in September 2019 (the last year uninterrupted by COVID-19). This reflects how hard kaiako/teachers and ākonga/students have worked to make up for lost teaching, learning and assessment opportunities in the first two terms of the school year.

Table Two: Average credit count of Results (as at 20 September)

Year	Not Achieved	Achieved	Merit	Excellence	Total	Ākonga / Students
2019	4.8	18.2	9.0	9.2	41.2	157,370
2020	3.6	15.4	7.5	8.1	34.7	156,678
2021	3.8	15.9	7.7	8.0	35.4	158,412
2022	4.6	16.6	7.8	8.1	37.1	158,524

Common Assessment Tasks (CATs)

12. Many schools are involved in delivering Common Assessment Tasks (CATs). CATs are set by NZQA; and allow externally assessed achievement standards to be assessed before the November examination period.
13. Since 2011 there has been a Mathematics Common Assessment Task (MCAT) for a single Level 1 Mathematics achievement standard; 91027 *Apply algebraic procedures in solving problems*. This year, ākonga/students sat the MCAT in secondary schools on 13 and 15 September 2022.
14. CATs were introduced in 2018 for NCEA Level 1 Digital Technologies and extended to Levels 2 and 3 Digital Technologies in 2019.
15. The Mathematics CATs are marked by kaiako/teachers and their marker judgements are externally verified by NZQA verifiers. The Digital Technologies CATs are marked by NZQA markers.

Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)

16. To date, in 2022, we have received more than 18,000 applications for Special Assessment Conditions; almost 2000 more than for the whole of 2021. Within this increase is a rising number of applications made under the mental health category, more specifically for anxiety.
17. Schools report pressure on their physical resources, particularly as a result of the increase in numbers requiring separate accommodation, either for isolation from the main exam rooms or small group accommodation.

Digital examinations

18. NZQA has a rigorous go-live preparation and decision process in place to ensure all aspects of digital assessment readiness, including school, NZQA, technical and data readiness are accounted for. Any outstanding risks and issues at go-live will have robust mitigations in place to ensure potential disruption is minimised and impacts managed.

19. A paper backup option is available to students entered for the digital mode. Ākonga/students can choose at any time before or during the examination to revert to their personalised paper, if they change their mind or are unable to complete the examination digitally for other reasons, such as device failure.
20. In 2022, approximately two thirds of the NCEA subjects are being examined digitally. The subjects not available require use of diagrams, pictures, formulas, or symbols.
21. NZ Scholarship Media Studies will be delivered digitally.
22. Non-digital written responses will be scanned and digitally marked for most examinations, except for Accounting, Music and NZ Scholarship subjects. All marked responses for NCEA subjects, including Accounting and Music, and NZ Scholarship will be returned to ākonga students digitally.
23. As at this date, more than 65,000 ākonga/students from around 380 schools have entered to sit at least one of the 72 subjects being offered digitally across Levels 1, 2 and 3. The number of ākonga/students who will finish with a digital result is expected to reduce, just as it does for paper-based examinations every year, as not all schools and ākonga students who enter will participate.
24. NZQA has a comprehensive change management process in place and has been supporting ākonga/students and schools to get ready for digital examinations. Ākonga/students have had access to practice activities and to past examinations. Ākonga/students have also been advised through various channels to get and test their student logon before the digital examinations. This logon will also enable them to see their marked digital responses and their NZ Record of Achievement.
25. Support for schools has included training for staff in staging digital examinations, through both well-attended webinars and face-to-face training, and written guidance on preparing examination rooms. Staff have been trained in the use of the Online Marking Tool. Support also includes training for staff in checking their internet capability and devices (both school and ākonga student owned) to ensure these are compliant.
26. Network for Learning (N4L) has been engaged by NZQA to provide free network assurance checks to decile 1-3 schools and kura and those that have not yet participated in NCEA Online. The network assurance checks provide a report on schools and kura technical readiness, so they can consider any steps needed towards participation in external digital assessment. A total of 131 schools and kura have completed network assurance checks in 2022.
27. During the examination period, NZQA will have help desk facilities to support schools to manage the digital examinations process. This includes on-site support from Network for Learning, which will be monitoring the Managed Network Services for digital assessment schools; and supporting school IT people for in-school issues, as needed.

Quality assurance

28. NZQA has comprehensive quality assurance processes in place across all stages of examination development, marking, and results processing. These ensure fair, valid and reliable assessment of ākonga students and are designed to mitigate the risks of human error during the development of examinations.

Management of the examination round

29. NZQA's control environment is supported by established processes including the following:

- a. Daily management governance and oversight to monitor all elements of the examination cycle.
- b. An organisation-wide change freeze on all IT systems changes that could impact the examination cycle from late October until late January.
- c. Network for Learning working with network providers to request a pause or reduction to routine maintenance on the fibre infrastructure outside the school gate during the examination period, to limit the risk of outages that might impact a school's ability to undertake digital examinations.
- d. Strict procedures and training systems for the externally contracted workforce. NZQA manages this workforce to ensure a high level of experience and expertise is maintained each year.
- e. Monitoring of vendor performance at all stages.

Business continuity planning for external examinations

30. NZQA continues to review and strengthen business continuity planning for managing the examinations, including for NCEA Online.
31. In the event of a large-scale disruption, we will not reschedule NCEA examinations due to the far-reaching consequences that rescheduling would have across the system. NZQA's derived grade at scale process would be used to manage the impact on ākonga/students. In exceptional circumstances, NZQA may reschedule a NZ Scholarship examination. NZ Scholarship and the derived grade process cannot be used to provide a grade for NZ Scholarship students (as NZ Scholarship is a competitive process).
32. Key elements of business continuity planning include the following activities:

Initial Activation

- a. The activation process is designed to ensure that the Minister of Education receives immediate advice on NZQA's response, and that the Office of the Minister of Education, the Ministry of Education, and key stakeholders are kept informed following an emergency event.

Incident Management

- b. NZQA has a structured incident management process to manage an emergency response, and action plans with clear roles and responsibilities.

Communications systems

- c. Systems are in place for onsite and remotely activated communications for web, email and text communications to Principals, Principal's Nominees, and Examination Centres.

Information Technology

- d. NZQA has established procedures and plans in place for disaster recovery and business continuance. Regular scheduled failover³ and disaster recovery testing is undertaken throughout the year, and simulated business continuity planning events allow for an end-to-end test of processes and systems.

Confirmation of Vendor BCP Readiness

- e. NZQA requests confirmation from our print and distribution vendors that they can activate their business continuity plans, if required. NZQA works with vendors to check these plans through the year. NZQA is also confirming our digital assessment vendors' BCP arrangements for the 2022 examinations.

³ *Failover* is switching to a redundant or standby computer server, system, hardware component or network upon the failure or abnormal termination of the previously active application, server, system, hardware component, or network.

Risks

33. The situation with COVID-19 is still uncertain and whilst low, there are ongoing risks of further disruption. These have been mitigated via the means outlined above.

Communications plan/issues

34. The necessary information has been relayed to schools. NZQA is in close contact with schools and Exam Centre Managers to provide support where needed.