



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Aide-Memoire: Online platform and NCEA examinations matters.

To:	Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education
From:	Jann Marshall, Deputy Chief Executive, Assessment
Date:	20 December 2023
Reference:	OC00579

Purpose

1. This aide memoire is to provide you with information about performance of our online assessment platform, any issues that occurred in the NCEA end of year examinations and about the 2024 Assessment (Examination) timetable.

Digital Assessment: NCEA Examinations

2. Extensive assurance and testing by our technology vendor prior to the 2023 NCEA examination round gave us the confidence that the digital examination platform could support more than 38,500 simultaneous users.
3. Following capacity issues experienced with literacy, numeracy and pāngarau assessments on 2 and 3 November, NZQA and its vendor put in place additional steps to increase the platform's capacity in preparation for the online examinations occurring in the morning of 10 November. A little more than 20,000 students were expected to login to those online exams, including for the largest ever exam session, NCEA Level 1 English.
4. The system began to slow after more than 18,000 students had logged in, and a decision was made to stop further logins to Level 1 English to guarantee the experience of these students. Students sitting other examinations could login to their devices through a URL provided by their Examination Centre Manager.
5. The next largest session, Level 2 English on 15 November, ran without issue, as did the other online examinations.
6. NZQA has well developed systems to manage issues where students have been disadvantaged.
7. In addition, NZQA has commissioned an external independent review of these issues.

Issues in the End of Year Examinations

NCEA examination paper errors

8. Examination papers were developed for 306 achievement standards for the 2023 NCEA end-of-year examination round.

9. The following table provides the list of errors found in the NCEA examination papers and outlines the actions taken to mitigate any impact on learners.

Error	Mitigation
<p>NZC Level 3 Te Reo Māori Standard 91653 translation error: six topics were offered in the paper for candidates to write about.</p> <p>The English translation of Topic 1 and Topic 2 were the same.</p>	<p>Candidates were advised of the error in the paper by the examination centre manager and told to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. attempt this option if they were confident in Te Reo and able to do so, or ii. disregard this option and choose from the other 5 topics. <p>Markers were made aware of this issue. No candidate was disadvantaged. Very few candidates chose the impacted topic.</p>
<p>NZC Level 1 Te Reo Māori Standard 91087: mistake in the glossary of the paper version of the examination</p>	<p>A correction was provided to Exam Centre Managers to bring to the attention of candidates.</p> <p>The digital version of the examination did not contain the error.</p>
<p>NZC Level 2 Business Studies 90843 question booklet: a table of values extracted from the variance analysis undertaken by a fictitious business contained a variance that was incorrect.</p>	<p>The error did not directly impact the ability of the candidates to complete the assessment. Candidates were required to demonstrate an understanding of variance analysis and could use the business in the examination or one they had studied. The analysis was not dependent on the provided values.</p> <p>The assessment schedule was amended to ensure candidates were not disadvantaged.</p>
<p>NZC Level 3 Statistics 91584 resource booklet: omission of a number down the right-hand side of an externally sourced graph.</p>	<p>The error did not directly impact the ability of the candidates to complete the assessment. Candidates were required to comment on the overall trends in the graph rather than the specific.</p> <p>The assessment schedule was amended to ensure candidates were not disadvantaged.</p>
<p>NZC Level 3 Accounting 91408 question booklet: a table with a set of supplied figures contained three incorrect values.</p>	<p>The error did not directly impact the ability of the candidates to complete the assessment. Candidates were required to view the table holistically and make a recommendation based on what they observed. The recommendation was not dependent on the provided values.</p> <p>The assessment schedule was amended to ensure candidates were not disadvantaged.</p>
<p>NZC Level 3 German 91551 resource booklet: a sentence in a piece of text contained two words in</p>	<p>The error did not directly impact the ability of the candidates to complete the assessment. The assessment is about understanding as opposed to direct translation. Candidates were required to explain the general tenet of the German text and the</p>

German that were not in the correct order. (Note: there was some debate by the German language community as to whether this was an error or not.)

order of two words would have not had any impact on the candidates' ability to understand the text.

The assessment schedule was amended to ensure candidates were not disadvantaged.

Chinese keyboard issue during the Chinese examination(s)

10. We were advised by Long Bay College that approximately 20 candidates sitting the Level 2 Chinese examination had problems writing Chinese script into one of the text boxes when using a 'Chinese keyboard'.
11. We have only had one other report of a similar issue - a Te Kura candidate who sat Level 3 Chinese at Albany Senior High School.
12. Along with our online vendor, we have tried to uncover the root cause and are currently still investigating.
13. We instigated a workaround for the Level 1 Chinese examination and the Level 1 pilot Mandarin examination. The issue only appears in text boxes that are set up for rich text input, i.e., ability to bold, italicise, underline, add bullet points etc. For these two examinations, the editors changed the text boxes from rich to simple text only. This change allowed input of Chinese script via a Chinese keyboard.
14. NZQA has the derived grade process for students where they believe that their performance has been significantly affected during an external examination session by factors beyond their control. To date, 37 applications for derived grades have been received relating to this issue. All these applications have been successful.

2024 Examination Timetable

15. Arising from NCEA Change Programme, external assessments now occur during the year as well as at the end of the year.
16. A final draft of the end-of-year examination timetable is attached as an appendix to this briefing.
17. The timetable is due to be released by 22 December 2023. It will be available on our website (<https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ncea-for-teachers-and-schools/te-aka/2023-assessment-timetable/>). The provisional timetable for during the year external assessments is available at the same link and will also be updated.



Jann Marshall

Deputy Chief Executive, Assessment
20 December 2023



Hon Erica Stanford

Minister of Education

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2024 EXAMINATION TIMETABLE

Examinations available digitally shown in blue.

Date	Session	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Scholarship
Tue 5 Nov	AM	Lea Faka-Tonga	Mathematics & Statistics	Dance	Classical Studies
	PM	Gagana Sāmoa Spanish	Biology	Japanese Making Music Spanish	Statistics
Wed 6 Nov	AM			English	
	PM	Geography	Spanish	Cook Islands Māori Social Studies	German
Thu 7 Nov	AM		English		Latin
	PM	Reo Māori Kūki Āirani	Accounting	History	French
Fri 8 Nov	AM	Mathematics & Statistics		Chemistry	Accounting
	PM		Music		History
WEEKEND					
Mon 11 Nov	AM	French	Lea Faka Tonga Te Reo Māori	Calculus	Samoan
	PM	Commerce	Korean	Agricultural & Horticultural Science Chinese German	Media Studies
Tue 12 Nov	AM	English			Physics
	PM	Korean	Drama	Samoan	
Wed 13 Nov	AM	Science	Chemistry	Drama	Geography
	PM	Gagana Tokelau Vagahau Niue	Geography	Biology	Art History
Thu 14 Nov	AM	Agricultural & Horticultural Science	Art History	Statistics	Drama
	PM	History	Chinese	Accounting	Agricultural & Horticultural Science
CANTERBURY ANNIVERSARY DAY (Fri 15 Nov)					
WEEKEND					
Mon 18 Nov	AM	Te Reo Māori	French	Latin Psychology Te Reo Rangatira	Chemistry
	PM	Japanese	Health	Economics	
Tue 19 Nov	AM	Chemistry & Biology	History	Physics	Te Reo Rangatira
	PM	Health Studies	Business Studies Cook Islands Māori	Health	
Wed 20 Nov	AM	Chinese (Mandarin)	Te Reo Rangatira	Lea Faka-Tonga	English
	PM	Social Studies	Classical Studies	Art History	Economics
Thu 21 Nov	AM	Physics Earth & Space Science	Latin	Te Reo Māori	Calculus
	PM	Dance	Economics	Korean	
Fri 22 Nov	AM	Religious Studies	Physics	Business Studies	
	PM	German	Media Studies		Biology
WEEKEND					
Mon 25 Nov	AM		Japanese	Geography	
	PM		Earth & Space Science		Religious Studies
Tue 26 Nov	AM		Home Economics	Classical Studies	Te Reo Māori
	PM		German	Home Economics	
Wed 27 Nov	AM		Social Studies	French	Japanese
	PM		Agricultural & Horticultural Science	Media Studies	
Thu 28 Nov	AM		Education for Sustainability Samoan	Earth & Space Science	Chinese
	PM			Music Studies	Spanish
Fri 29 Nov	AM		Dance		Earth & Space Science