

Aide-Memoire: Shortened timeframes for NCEA co-requisite results release May 2025 update

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| To: | Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education |
| From: | Dr Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive |
| Date: | 21 March 2025 |
| Reference: | OC01598 |

Purpose

1. This aide memoire provides you with an update on NZQA's plans for the marking and results release processes for the May 2025 NCEA co-requisite assessment event, including significantly shortening the time between the conclusion of the assessments and the release of results.
2. NZQA proposes not to proactively release this briefing as part of the next publication of documents and instead release once results release dates for the May 2025 NCEA co-requisite event are announced.

Background

3. We are planning for 60,000-70,000 entries for each of the Reading, Writing and Numeracy co-requisite assessments in May 2025, and around 600 entries for each standard for the Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite assessments.
4. We provided you with a briefing on 3 September 2024 about shortening the timeframes for releasing results following the first co-requisite assessment in May 2025 [OC01148 refers]. Shortening result release timeframes will allow for more time for teachers to support students who did not achieve by extending the period between the release of the results of the first assessment event and the start of the second assessment event.
5. In our September 2024 briefing, we indicated that we expected to be able to shorten the timeframe for the 19-30 May 2025 assessment event results release from 7 to 3.5 weeks for Reading, which would be prior to the Term 2 school holidays, and from 9 to 5 weeks for Writing, Numeracy and Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau, which would fall in the school holidays.
6. The Term 2 school holidays run from 28 June to 13 July, which impacts timing for releasing results. Results are not released in the school holidays, because if a student does not pass an assessment, it is important that they can get support from their school about their next steps. This means the timeframe for the release of the Writing, Numeracy and Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau assessments will in effect be 6.5 weeks.
7. Work to reduce the timeframes of results release for the May assessment event has included using Auto-Text Scoring (ATS) for the Writing co-requisite assessment, changes to the design

of the Numeracy assessment to allow for more machine marking, and process and system improvements to enable a quicker release of the Reading assessments.

Discussion

Outcomes of the auto-text scoring pilot

8. The pilot of the ATS solution for the marking of the September 2024 Writing co-requisite assessment was completed in February 2025.
9. The results from the pilot give us confidence that the solution is suitable for implementation for marking the Writing assessment for the May assessment round.
10. With circa 35,000 responses, the at-scale pilot show approximately an 80% achievement agreement rate between ATS marking and human marking.
11. To put this machine to human variation in context, human-to-human marking agreement rates also vary. Three key human-to-human data points we have used to inform our decision making to proceed are: supervisor sampling and check marking of end of year external assessments (87% agreement); results of student reconsideration requests of external exams (83% agreement); and NZQA external moderation of school-based assessment (75% agreement).
12. To ensure confidence with moving to an automated marking solution for the Writing assessment we are implementing a human check-marking process for the May Writing assessment. Human check-marking will be done where the student is on the boundary of achieving/ not achieving the Writing standard.
13. Although the machine marking results are available very quickly, the process of human check marking requires additional time (we are anticipating 4 weeks after the end of the assessment event). Human markers will re-mark responses at and within 1 to 2 score points of the achievement boundary, which will amount to approximately 40% (20,000) of assessments.
14. The human check-marked result will override the ATS mark if there is a difference.

Shortening timeframes for results release

15. The period between the first assessment event and the release of results in 2025 will be shortened compared to 2024, allowing for more time between the results release and the second assessment event. The table below shows the planned release dates for the May 2025 event, the timing of assessment event 2 and the time between results release and the start of assessment 2.

| | Assessment Event 1 2025 | Planned results release date 2025 | Assessment Event 2 2025 | Time between results release event 1 and start of assessment event 2 |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Reading | 19-30 May | 25 June | 1-12 September | 9.5 weeks |
| Writing and Numeracy | 19-30 May | 14 July | 1-12 September | 7 weeks |

16. Results releases for the Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite assessments will follow the same timeframe as for Writing and Numeracy.

Approaches to shorten the results release timeframe

17. The following sections outline the approaches taken to shorten the timeframe for releasing results for each assessment.

Reading

18. The Reading assessment, which can be entirely machine-marked, will be released three days before the end of Term 2 (Wednesday 25 June).
19. Whilst this assessment is entirely machine marked, there are system and quality assurance processes that are undertaken to prepare results for release. These processes are outlined later in this paper.

Writing

20. The Writing assessment comprises of two written sections and a multiple-choice section.
- The piloted ATS solution will be used to mark the two writing sections for the assessments taken digitally.
 - Machine marking will be used to mark the multiple-choice section, as is used for the Reading assessment.
 - Students on the achievement boundary will have the two writing sections re-marked by NZQA markers to ensure sector confidence.
21. Changing to ATS and machine marking reduces the number of markers and marking time needed for this assessment and has contributed to the shortened timeframe for releasing results.

Numeracy

22. We have adjusted the format of the Numeracy assessment for 2025 to enable machine marking of most of the questions (e.g. multiple-choice questions).
23. Human marking will still be required for the written response questions, which are needed to ensure students are able to:
- a. formulate mathematical and statistical approaches to solving problems in a range of everyday situations
 - b. use mathematics and statistics to meet the numeracy demands of a range of everyday situations
 - c. explain mathematical and statistical responses to situations¹.
24. This assessment was previously all human marked. The number of human markers and marking time required has been reduced by introducing the machine markable questions, contributing to reducing the timeframe for releasing results.

System improvements

25. We have standardised our marking approach by moving marking to a centralised platform where possible. This gives consistency to markers and supports efficiencies in the marking process.

¹ These are the three outcomes required as a part of the Numeracy standard: <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/units/pdf/32406.pdf>

Results collation and quality assurance

26. Following the completion of marking of the individual items within each assessment and prior to the release of results, the following tasks are completed:
- scores are collated;
 - the achieved/not achieved boundary for the overall assessment is confirmed²;
 - identification and follow up of potential breaches³;
 - system checks (e.g. that students that met the achieved boundary are showing as 'passed' in the system); and
 - feedback reports are prepared.
27. Individual feedback reports are provided to students that did not achieve, and consolidated feedback reports are provided to schools. These help students identify areas they need to work on and enable schools to provide the necessary support to prepare students for future assessment events.
28. We have implemented system changes to reduce the overall time to complete these steps for the May 2025 assessment round.

Paper versus digital

29. NCEA co-requisite assessments for Literacy, Numeracy, Te Reo Matatini, and Pāngarau are offered digitally, with paper by exception.
30. In 2024, approximately 2% of responses submitted were paper.
31. Students sitting assessments by paper in 2025, may get their results back later than those sitting digitally due to additional time needed for receiving and processing paper scripts from schools and the associated human marking requirements.
32. We will notify schools of this prior to the assessment round.

Communications plan

33. We are developing a communications plan with details of the shortened timeframes project outcomes.
34. We intend to notify schools and the sector of the project outcomes and the results release dates for the May co-requisite assessment events in the coming weeks.

Next steps

35. We will use learnings from the May assessment event to further refine our approach for the August-September 2025 assessment event.

² To receive an Achieved grade for a standard, students need to achieve a minimum score across all of the items in the assessment. This is referred to as the 'cut score'. The achieved/not achieved boundary (cut score) is formally set once all assessments for an assessment event round are marked. This is done for each different assessment each year, helping ensure that assessment questions do not unfairly skew results from one year to the next. If a student meets the requirements of the standard, the student will achieve.

³ Behaviours which compromise the integrity of the assessments and the assessment process.

36. The writing standard parameters for the Writing co-requisite⁴ being marked by ATS are tightly defined and therefore more amenable to reliable AI marking. It is too early to reach a view about how widely AI marking can be used at this point in external end-of-year assessments, however we will consider lessons learned in any future planning.
37. We will provide you with further updates through the fortnightly reports leading up to the May event.



Dr Grant Klinkum

Chief Executive

21 March 2025

Hon Erica Stanford

Minister of Education

— — / — — / — —

⁴ <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/units/pdf/32405.pdf>