

NZQA Digital Practice Exams - User Experience Evaluation Report Summary



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As a key element of the NCEA Online Programme and so that NZQA could support the continuing growth of online assessment, NZQA planned to give schools the opportunity to offer digital practice exams using NZQA's online exam platform.

Schools had told us that the impacts of COVID-19 would make it especially useful to have some of their practice exams on the same platform as end of year NCEA exams. If conducted under exam conditions the results could be used for derived or unexpected event grades, if needed. So, we brought our plans forward and in May 2020 began preparing to offer this first opportunity for a limited range of digital practice exams.

The delivery method required some changes to enable teachers to mark students' exams and document formative feedback.

By the cut-off date of 7 August 2020, 109 schools had told us they wanted to participate. After that date another 12 schools responded that they wanted to take part and 23 schools withdrew, citing reasons that included inability to print student answer for marking, the effort required by teachers in this new process being too great; and that the timing of the digital practice exams was too early (being in Term 3 rather than Term 4).

The practice exam content came from three subject associations which had content available that could be digitised for delivery within the available timeframes. This enabled schools to offer digital practice exams for English, Agriculture and Horticulture Science and Classical Studies at all levels using NCEA Online. In response to a request from a Kura, new content was also developed for Te Reo Māori reading standards at Levels 1-3.

NZQA offered schools resources and support including advice around device and room set up, student practice activities and 2019 examinations. We worked with N4L to help schools check their infrastructure and access other technical support during exams.

In the lead-up to digital practice exams, our regular communications with schools included what they needed to do to prepare for the exams. Support material included information sheets, FAQs, links to website content and practice activities. We also sent participating schools our guides for administering, monitoring and marking digital practice exams.

Digital practice exams were available from 31 August to 25 September, with schools identifying the week that they intended to participate so that NZQA business teams could plan the support they were to provide. 6236 students from 96 schools participated, with 264 students doing more than one session. Given the short preparation time for this initiative, participation levels were greater than we expected.

Several schools gave us anecdotal feedback about their experience with the digital practice exams. This included comments about how well the exams went and that the supporting guides were useful, along with constructive feedback on areas for improvement.

We also asked for formal feedback from all participating schools and students through surveys of students, school exam administrators, supervisors and markers. The surveys included asking digital practice exam participants whether they had any feedback such as likes, dislikes and/or anything they thought should be included in the future.

The common suggestions from student respondents were: having the ability to adjust the text box sizes, adjust split screens, pin the planning box and view marker comments. These respondents also asked us to improve the spell check, introduce a 'find' tool, improve the tool bar, and make a timer available on screen.

We will use these insights to help us improve future NCEA Online services, processes and support resources to meet the needs of schools. For more information read the [report](#) on the user experience of those who took part in these first NZQA digital practice exams.