



Frequently asked questions

Comparability of paper and online NAPLAN tests



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The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) helps parents, carers and teachers see if students are meeting important numeracy and literacy standards. It allows teachers to monitor students' progress over time and to identify areas of strength and areas for development. To ensure that paper-based test results can be compared to online results:

- both test formats assess students on the same curriculum content
- results from both test formats are placed on the same NAPLAN assessment scale.

NAPLAN will move online from 2017, over a three-year period. During the transition period, some schools will conduct the test online, and some will use pen and paper. States and territories will determine when their schools commence NAPLAN Online.

Will there be an advantage in results depending on whether students complete NAPLAN online or on paper?

NAPLAN Online has been specifically developed to ensure results are comparable whether the test is completed online or on paper.

The paper and online tests have been developed to assess skills in literacy and numeracy that are developed over time through the school curriculum. Students are presented with questions that test the same range of difficulty, regardless of whether they complete the test online or on paper.

Results for both paper and online formats are reported on the same NAPLAN assessment scale. The use of common scales, covering Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for each domain assessed, allows for an individual student's achievement to be mapped as the student progresses through their schooling.

ACARA has carried out studies between paper-based and online tests to ensure both modes of testing measure the same literacy and numeracy skills and offer comparable test results.

How can ACARA ensure results are comparable between paper and online NAPLAN and between test years?

ACARA has undertaken an extensive research program to ensure comparability of NAPLAN online and paper, and comparability of NAPLAN trend data from previous years into the future.

The research has included trials of test items or questions, using samples of students from each state and territory answering sets of test questions. The tests were conducted to evaluate the quality and performance of potential material being considered for NAPLAN assessments.

Studies in 2016 included a linking study involving almost 200 schools. To enable direct comparisons of performance across the two test modes, students who completed NAPLAN in 2016 on paper also participated in a trial of the online test. The study findings clearly demonstrate that results between both modes are comparable at the student, school, state and territory level.

This is the same model of test development that has been applied to developing and equating NAPLAN paper tests since 2008 and that will continue for NAPLAN Online.

Have ACARA's research and studies been externally reviewed to ensure results can be compared?

ACARA commenced a broad research program in 2012 to inform the transition to NAPLAN Online. The results of this program has shaped the overall design of NAPLAN Online. ACARA's approach was developed in consultation with educational measurement experts (the Measurement Advisory Group).



This group has also provided advice on technical methods, and specifications for reporting, equating and standards.

Is NAPLAN Online the same as the paper test?

NAPLAN Online includes a computer-adaptive or tailored test design that presents students with questions of greater or lesser complexity according to the student's performance during the test. This means that while students are presented with the same number of questions, whether completing the test online or on paper, the online test allows each student to answer questions 'tailored' to their unique ability level.

Tailored testing is a key benefit of NAPLAN Online, giving students a greater opportunity to demonstrate what they know. Importantly, the questions test the same range of difficulty in both paper-based and online formats.

For more information, visit the NAP website: www.nap.edu.au or email: naplanonline@acara.edu.au

