



Schools' involvement in the National Assessment Program

ACARA is responsible for the overall management of two major components of Australia's National Assessment Program: The National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (**NAPLAN**), and the three-yearly sample assessments in Science Literacy (NAP—SL), Civics and Citizenship (NAP—CC), and Information and Communication Technology Literacy (NAP—ICTL).

The **NAPLAN** tests are national assessments of **Reading, Writing, Language Conventions** (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and **Numeracy**. The tests are completed on the same days each year by all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia.

The **NAP – Sample Assessments** test students' skills and understanding in Science Literacy, Civics and Citizenship, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy. Selected groups of students from across Australia in Years 6 and 10 participate in these sample assessments (Year 6 only for Science Literacy), which are held on a rolling three-yearly basis.

As part of the development of these two components of the National Assessment Program, some schools will be required to participate in small scale tests. These include:

- NAPLAN —> trial and equating tests
- NAP Sample Assessments —> trial and main sample tests

What is the purpose of these small scale tests and why are they important?

ACARA is committed to ensuring the tests developed for the National Assessment Program are of a world class standard. The tests are constructed to assess knowledge, skills and understandings appropriate to students in particular year levels and to be interesting and engaging.

The development and review process for the tests required for the National Assessment Program takes about 18 months to complete. This rigorous process includes the administration of **small scale tests** for the 'trailing' and 'equating' phases of the development of the NAPLAN tests and for the 'trailing' and main sample phases of the NAP Sample Assessments.

Trialling involves samples of students from each state and territory completing sets of test questions. The tests are conducted to evaluate the quality of potential test material being considered for inclusion in future tests. **The main purpose of the trial tests (NAPLAN and the NAP Sample Assessments) is to determine the quality of potential test items, not individual student or school performance.**



For NAPLAN, individual student results are **not** collected, reported or published, and any identifying student information is destroyed. Raw student data are provided to schools involved in the NAP Sample Assessment trials (and main tests).

Equating is a process carried out to enable test results completed year to year to be reported on the same assessment scales. For NAPLAN, a representative national sample of students is selected annually to participate in this additional ‘equating’ phase or ‘equating study’ so that NAPLAN test results can be compared over time.

For NAP Sample Assessments there is no separate ‘equating study’. To enable performance on the main NAP Sample Assessments to be compared between relevant years, a proportion of main sample test items from previous years are incorporated into each current main sample test. These are called ‘link items’ and this process also allows test results from different years to be placed on the same scales.

QUICK FACTS

Who participates in small scale tests?

For NAPLAN trial and equating tests, students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 from a national sample of schools participate. At each selected school, generally two classes from two different relevant year groups participate.

For NAP Sample Assessment trials and main tests, students in Years 6 and 10 from a national sample of schools participate (Year 6 only for NAP—Science Literacy). Typically one class from each year level (ie Year 6 and/or Year 10) for each selected school is selected, but for NAP—ICT Literacy, only twenty students from each year level are selected to participate.

There is proportional representation (ie by state/territory/sector) in the sample of schools selected for the small scale tests, and ACARA takes steps to ensure the same school is not selected to participate for both NAPLAN and NAP Sample Assessments in the same year. However, smaller states and territories with fewer schools may be involved more regularly in the small scale tests through this sampling selection process.

Why is it important to participate?

Participating in these test development processes means your school and students are helping to ensure that the quality of the final tests will enable students to demonstrate their best abilities and learning. Participation also helps to ensure future tests are valid and reliable. Ministers’ agreements and legislation requires schools selected to participate in the small scale tests to do so.



When do the small scale tests take place?

The timeline for developing test materials and constructing the tests for the National Assessment Program means that the small scale tests are administered throughout the year at different times. ACARA and its contractors liaise with selected schools to ensure dates selected are suitable and students are available.

Are the results of the small scale tests reported or published?

NAPLAN trial and equating test results are not reported at a school or student level, and results do not affect a school or student's final NAPLAN results in any way. Information about individual student or school performance will not be disclosed to education authorities.

Raw data are provided to schools involved in the NAP Sample Assessment trials, however these are a different set of students to those that are selected to participate in the main NAP Sample Assessments. The results of the main NAP Sample Assessments are reported at the National/ State/Territory level via a Public Report.

Who will conduct the small scale tests?

ACARA manages expert professionals and trained test administrators to administer the small scale tests to students in your school. For the NAP—SL and NAP—CC main studies each sampled school will be required to appoint an assessment administrator who is usually a classroom teacher. For the NAP—ICTL trial and main study, a trained IT specialist invigilator will be assigned to each class. All test administrators and expert professionals will have current Working with Children approval, in accordance with local requirements.

How will the tests impact on school time and resources?

Every effort is made to minimise disruption in your school, and care is taken to ensure the small scale tests are carried out on a day that is convenient for your school within the trial period. The test administrator will work closely with your school contact to ensure the tests are administered efficiently, and the test administrator will perform all the administrative tasks related to the tests. This includes collecting some student information, and the test administrator will need assistance from the school to ensure that all data are accurate. Class teachers are not permitted to make copies of any of the test materials, or remove any of the materials from the test rooms.

Is parent permission required?

No. Parental permission is not required for those students selected to participate in the small scale tests. These tests are a component of the National Assessment Program, an agreed part of national education requirements.