

National Assessment Program Science Literacy 2026 – Field Trial

Information for schools



In 2025, as part of the National Assessment Program, a sample of Year 6 and Year 10 students from across Australia will take part in an online sample assessment in science literacy.

What is the NAP–Science Literacy assessment?

The National Assessment Program (NAP) is designed to measure student progress towards the goals outlined in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2019. NAP sample assessments test students' skills and understanding in science literacy, civics and citizenship, and information and communication technology (ICT) literacy. Only selected classes of students in Years 6 and 10 participate in these assessments, which are held on a rolling 3-yearly cycle.

The NAP–Science Literacy (NAP–SL) assessment measures students' ability to use scientific knowledge, understanding and inquiry skills to identify questions, acquire new knowledge, explain science phenomena, solve problems and draw evidence-based conclusions in making sense of the world. NAP–SL also measures students' ability to recognise how understandings of the nature, development, use and influence of science help us make responsible decisions and shape our interpretations of information.

NAP–SL assessments have been held every 3 years since 2003. Before the main study assessment is conducted, a field trial to evaluate potential questions for the main assessment is required.

Why is the NAP–SL assessment undertaken?

The purpose of the assessment is to:

- inform schools, education ministers and the community about levels of achievement in science education among Year 6 and Year 10 students across Australia
- support improvement in teaching and learning programs.

The study also assesses student achievement against recognised goals and standards, and helps drive improvements in student outcomes.

Each participating school and student in NAP–SL plays a crucial role in representing other schools with similar characteristics. It is important for sampled schools to participate in the assessment and contribute to this key measure of educational progress.

How is the NAP–SL field trial run?

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) develops the sample tests in consultation with curriculum specialists, education authorities, testing authorities and practising teachers in each state and territory. The NAP–SL field trial will be administered by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) on behalf of ACARA. The tests are delivered to students over an online platform.

The field trial will be held from **Wednesday 15 October to Wednesday 29 October 2025**.

Each test session will run for 60 minutes (Year 6) or 75 minutes (Year 10). Schools should set aside approximately 2 hours to allow time for setting up, preliminary instructions, and the completion of practice and survey questions.

How are schools and students selected to participate in the field trial?

Around 3,200 Year 6 and Year 10 students from approximately 128 government, Catholic and independent schools in metropolitan, rural and remote locations will participate in the field trial.

ACARA's contractor, ACER, will ask participating schools to supply class lists for the relevant school year (Year 6 or Year 10). From these, ACER will select one class with approximately 25 students from each participating year at each school.

How are the tests constructed?

The NAP–SL assessment consists of questions and tasks that enable students to show achievement at many levels. Students have an opportunity to complete practice questions before progressing to the online assessment.

The NAP–SL assessment is developed through a collaborative process with inputs from science experts. Assessment materials undergo a thorough review process in collaboration with the NAP–SL Working Group to ensure they are suitable for students at each year level. The NAP–SL Working Group has representatives from educational authorities in each state and territory, as well as the Catholic and independent school sectors and other relevant stakeholders.

Activity	Description
Practice questions	Students complete a small set of questions to familiarise themselves with the types of questions they can expect.
Objective test	Students complete a series of questions that include multiple-choice, “drag and drop” and short answer questions.
Inquiry task	Students engage in a task that reflects the key stages of a scientific investigation and answer a series of questions on it.
Student questionnaire	Students complete a short survey regarding their perceptions of and attitudes towards science, and their experiences of science learning at their school.

What do NAP–SL questions look like?

Some questions require students to choose from multiple options or drag and drop, while others involve short answers and providing clarifications. Examples of NAP–SL assessments can be found at the demonstration site: <https://www.nap.edu.au/nap-sample-assessments/the-tests>.

How will the field trial assessment be conducted?

During Term 3, ACER will contact participating schools to provide training material and help with the preparations schools must make to ensure they are ready to administer the test.

Before the assessment, schools will be able to determine the suitability of their computers/devices for the test by completing the required technical device checks.

On test day, the test session will be conducted by a nominated staff member from the school. The guideline materials ACER provides to schools will ensure that the assessment is administered in a nationally consistent manner.

What are the outcomes?

The field trial tests potential questions (also called “items”) for use in the NAP–SL main study, which aims to provide a general snapshot of science literacy. It is not about testing individual students or their ability, and students’ results are not published. Schools taking part in the assessment field trial will be excluded from the main study assessment, scheduled for May 2026.

Further information

Support for participating schools is available from the NAP–SL Helpdesk on 1800 155 108 or email: napscience@acer.org

General information about the National Assessment Program and the NAP–SL assessment can be found at [NAP – Science Literacy](#).