

# REPORT OF 2018 NAPLAN TEST INCIDENTS

## INTRODUCTION

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests are held during May each year. In 2018, the tests were held between 15 and 25 May. In total, approximately 5.5 million tests were sat by over 1.1 million students.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for the central management of NAPLAN. The test administration authority (TAA) in each state and territory is responsible for the administration of the tests in schools.

ACARA works with state, territory and non-government representatives to ensure the NAPLAN tests are delivered in accordance with nationally agreed protocols so that the results validly, reliably and fairly capture student achievements. The *National Protocols for Test Administration - NAPLAN 2018* and the *National Protocols for Test Administration - NAPLAN 2018 Online* (collectively known as the 'National Protocols for Test Administration' or the 'Protocols') provide detailed information on all aspects of the administration of the tests and specify security requirements, uniform processes and procedures. This is to ensure students complete the tests under standardised conditions so that all students' results are comparable across Australia. Where individual students require special arrangements to complete the tests, these are provided at the school in consultation with the student, their parents/carers and the relevant TAA.

In the context of the more than 1.1 million students at approximately 9,500 school campuses across the country participating in NAPLAN in 2018, there were very few allegations of breaches of the Protocols. Where an allegation is made that the Protocols have been breached, the relevant responsible entity<sup>1</sup> investigates and takes appropriate action. Reports are provided to ACARA summarising the test incident, including investigations and outcomes. This information is then compiled by ACARA and used to produce this test incidents report.

ACARA, in cooperation with states and territories, reviews the Protocols annually to ensure they effectively support educators to administer the NAPLAN tests as required. This review is informed by analysis of the test incident information reported to ACARA to improve processes and education about the program.

As 2018 is the first year of dual mode NAPLAN assessment, the report breaks down incidents by paper and online and total across both modes. While online and paper incidents are reported separately, the Report does not provide commentary on the relative frequencies of online versus paper incidents as the numbers are too small for meaningful analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of investigating breaches of the National Protocols for Test Administration, the relevant 'responsible entity' will depend on the school governance arrangements and any existing agreements that allocate the responsibility for this activity. Responsible entities can include individuals, such as principals, or organisations, such as school boards or system authorities (including public education authorities), which have authority to receive and assess initial reports of test incidents. More information on investigating test incidents is provided in the Guidelines for managing test incidents in schools on the NAP website.

Technical issues associated with NAPLAN online are **not** considered test incidents for the purposes of this report, unless they result in a breach of the national protocols.

NAPLAN test incidents are defined as follows:

- Cheating (C)** A breach of the National Protocols for Test Administration amounting to cheating occurs when there is intent to gain an unfair advantage or improperly influence test results. This category does not include instances of student cheating, which, in itself, is not considered a breach of the Protocols. Such incidents are dealt with through schools' existing procedures.
- Security (S)** A breach of the National Protocols for Test Administration affecting test security occurs when early knowledge of test content is obtained, which has a potential to compromise the integrity of the test results. Breaches of test security committed with intent to gain an unfair advantage are considered as cheating.
- General (G)** General breaches of the National Protocols for Test Administration include all other maladministrative practices that are not in accordance with the agreed protocols, but that do not amount to cheating or affect test security.

This report does not identify individuals or schools but provides information on breaches of the Protocols in two tables as follows:

- Table 1 summarises information about the aggregated number of allegations of cheating, security breaches or general breaches of test protocols.
- Table 2 provides further information about the substantiated cases, including a description of the incident, and information on what action has been taken as a consequence.

Test incidents are aggregated within jurisdictions where incidents are of a similar nature and where the outcomes were the same. The scope of each incident within a jurisdiction is identified in Table 2 and summarised in total schools affected set out in Table 1.

## ANALYSIS OF 2018 NAPLAN TEST INCIDENTS

The Report of 2018 NAPLAN Test Incidents reinforces the fact that teachers and schools work hard to ensure the integrity of the tests. This is evidenced both through the small number of incidents across the entire country, and through the increasing number of schools reporting their own inadvertent breaches.

This report also plays an important educative role in reminding schools of the correct procedure. The transparency and concern shown by schools in reporting incidents demonstrates the schools' commitment to ensuring that the information they and their students receive from the tests is as useful as possible.

In summary:

- In 2018, out of the approximately 5.5 million NAPLAN tests sat by students nationally, 68 test incidents were substantiated, affecting only a very small number of students and schools across the nation.

- Of these 68 test incidents, only one cheating breach on the part of a school was substantiated at the time of reporting. This figure is the lowest since NAPLAN was introduced.
- Where incidents are substantiated (refer to table 2), TAAs consider whether affected students' results are valid. This year's incidents demonstrate that in most of the situations where students might have had access to unauthorised assistance, there was no evidence that assistance led to their results being compromised.
- The majority of substantiated incidents, 47, were general breaches that relate to maladministration. This number is greater than the average of previous years, as schools and TAAs have become better at identifying and reporting these types of breaches.
- There were 20 substantiated security breaches that included instances of opening test materials earlier than allowed and test materials not being kept secure during the test security period.
- As in previous years, the majority of substantiated incidents were directly reported to the TAA by the schools, representing a broad level understanding of the Protocols and significant efforts by schools to ensure transparency in their processes. This is testimony to the professionalism of teachers and school administrators, this is also reflected in the growth in the number of security and general incidents reported compared to last year.
- While the number of incidents overall is largely consistent with previous years, the scope of the incidents is more widespread. For example, in several jurisdictions, there were incidents that occurred in numerous schools. This is reflected in 'total schools affected' reported in table 1.
- In 2017, there were 14 test incidents under investigation as at 27 October 2017. Of those resolved to date, only one has been substantiated. ACARA continues to follow up with relevant authorities until all cases are resolved.

**TABLE 1: Summary of reported incidents (as at 28 September 2018)**

Incident category	Substantiated		Unsubstantiated		Under investigation		Total	Average totals 2010–17	
	Paper (P) or Online (O)	P	O	P	O	P			O
Cheating breach (C)		1	0	2	0	6	1	10	17
Security breach (S)		14	6	0	0	3	1	24	20
General breach (G)		35	12	3	0	4	2	56	41
Total		68		5		17		90	78
Total schools affected		183		5		21		209	83

**TABLE 2: Incidents investigated and substantiated (as at 28 September 2018)**

Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
1	NSW	S	P	4.3.5	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to three schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
2	NSW	S	O	4.3.2	Contingency test material opened without TAA approval but correct test mode still sat. Relevant to 10 schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
3	NSW	S	O	4.3.2	Contingency test material opened without TAA approval and incorrect test mode sat. Relevant to two schools and nine students.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. Data compromised and withheld.
4	NSW	S	P	4.3.9 4.3.11	Test material made public during test security period. Relevant to 11 schools.	Schools counselled on the need to ensure confidentiality of all test material up to the end of the secure period. Data not compromised.
5	NSW	S	O	4.3.10	Test material made public during test security period. Relevant to one school.	School counselled on the need to ensure confidentiality of all test material up to the end of the secure period. Data not compromised.
6	NSW	G	P	8.4.3	Tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to one year level at two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
7	NSW	G	O	8.4.2	Tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to all students at eight schools, one year level at three schools and two students in one school.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.

Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
8	NSW	G	P	6.5.4	Protocols for use of a scribe not followed. Relevant to 23 students in 19 schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
9	NSW	G	O	6.5.4	Permission not sought for use of a scribe. Relevant to three students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
10	NSW	G	P	6.5.6	Scribe rules not followed. Relevant to 14 students in 12 schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
11	NSW	G	O	6.5.6	Scribe rules not followed. Relevant to four students in two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
12	NSW	G	P	6.10.2	Scribe provided for a temporary injury. Relevant to six students in six schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
13	NSW	G	O	6.9.2	Scribe provided for a temporary injury. Relevant to two students in two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
14	NSW	G	P	6.4.1	Protocols for use of adjustment not followed. Relevant to 14 students in 14 schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence that data were compromised.

Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
15	NSW	G	P	8.6.7	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to three students in two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence that data were compromised.
16	NSW	G	P	8.6.7	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to six students in six schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
17	NSW	G	O	8.6.7	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to four students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence that data were compromised.
18	NSW	G	O	8.6.7	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to four students in four schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
19	NSW	C	P	8.6.3	Inappropriate assistance provided to students during the test. Relevant to 19 students in two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
20	NSW	G	P	8.7.1	Incorrect test administration instructions given to students. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence that data were compromised.
21	NSW	G	P	8.8.1	Incorrect time provided to complete test. Relevant to one year level in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence that data were compromised.

Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
22	NSW	G	P	8.4.3	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
23	NSW	G	O	5.5.2	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
24	NSW	S	O	8.9.3	Test materials not kept secure. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence that data were compromised.
25	NSW	G	O	8.8.4	Students sat the same domain more than once. Relevant to six students in three schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised. Only valid attempts released.
26	NSW	G	P	8.9.4	Invalid test booklets returned to TAA. Relevant to two students in two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
27	Vic.	S	P	4.3.9	Test material made public during test security period. Relevant to six schools.	Teachers and schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
28	Vic.	G	P	8.4.3 8.4.1	Tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
29	Vic.	S	P	2.4.1	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to two classes in one school and one class in one school.	Schools counselled on importance of following test protocols. Data not compromised.



Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
30	Vic.	G	O	8.4.1 8.4.3	Tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to one class in each of three schools, two classes in one school and three students in one class in one school.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
31	Vic.	G	P	2.2.3	Tests not properly administered according to test protocols. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and results withheld.
32	Vic.	G	P	2.2.4 8.6.8	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to two students in two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
33	Vic.	G	P	2.2.4 8.6.8	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to two students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and results withheld.
34	Vic.	S	P	2.4.4	Test materials not secured after test. Relevant to one class in one school. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
35	Qld	S	P	4.3.11	Test material made public during test security period. Relevant to four schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
36	SA	G	P	8.6.7 8.6.8	Unauthorised material in test environment. Relevant to two students in two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.

Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
37	SA	G	P	8.4.1	Test materials distributed in incorrect sequence. Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to two to four students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
38	SA	G	P	6.10.2 6.5.6	Protocols for use of a scribe as a disability adjustment for the writing test not followed. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
39	SA	G	P	6.5.4 6.5.6	Protocols for use of a scribe as a disability adjustment for the writing test not followed. Relevant to two students in two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
40	SA	S	P	8.9.1	Test materials not returned to school storage in line with correct procedures. Relevant to two students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
41	SA	S	O	4.3.9 4.3.12	Test material made public during test security period. Relevant to eight students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
42	SA	S	P	8.3.3 8.3.4	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to approximately 100 students in one school.	School undertook to improve test security procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
43	SA	G	P	8.6.7 2.2.4	Unauthorised material in test environment. Relevant to one student in one school.	Responsible parties counselled. School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
44	SA	G	P	8.4.3	Tests administered in the incorrect order. Relevant to two classes in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.

Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
45	SA	S	P	2.4.2	Test materials not kept secure during test security period. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
46	SA	S	P	4.3.9	Test material unaccounted for at the end of the day. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
47	SA	S	P	2.4.4	Test materials not secured promptly. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
48	SA	G	P	2.2.5	Unauthorised assistance provided during test. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
49	SA	G	O	8.6.10	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
50	WA	G	P	8.6.8	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one student in one school.	Data not compromised.
51	WA	G	P	8.7.1	Test administration protocols not followed. Relevant to one class in one school.	Teacher counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
52	WA	G	O	8.4.1	Online tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to one class in one school.	Data not compromised.
53	WA	G	P	8.6.3	Unauthorised time provided to students during test. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.

Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
54	WA	G	P	8.6.8	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one student in one school.	Data compromised and withheld.
55	WA	G	P	8.6.8 2.2.4	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
56	WA	S	P	4.3.11	Test material made public during test security period. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
57	WA	G	P	5.2.3	Parents not consulted prior to exemption of students. Relevant to five students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve training and processes. Data not compromised.
58	WA	G	P	6.2.3 6.5	The protocols for use of a scribe for the writing test not followed. Relevant to one student in one school. Relevant to two students in one school. Relevant to four students in one school.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve training and processes. Student data investigated. Data not compromised.
59	WA	G	P	2.2.8 2.5.3	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to two students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve training and processes. Data not compromised.
60	Tas.	S	P	4.3.9	Test material not kept secure during the test period. Relevant to three classes in one school.	Staff counselled on the need to ensure confidentiality of all test material up to the end of the secure period. Data not compromised.
61	NT	S	P	4.3.5	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to one school.	School counselled on the importance of following protocols. Data not compromised.
62	NT	G	P	8.4.2	Test scheduling instructions not followed. Relevant to one school.	School counselled on the importance of following protocols. Data not compromised.

Ref.	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	Paper or online (O, P)	2018 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
63	NT	G	P	8.8.3	School did not contact TAA in the event of test disruption. Relevant to one school.	School counselled on the importance of following protocols. Data not compromised.
64	NT	G	P	6.5.6	The protocols for use of a scribe for the writing test not followed. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and reminded of the importance of following protocols. Data compromised and withheld.
65	NT	G	P	8.6.10	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled on the importance of following protocols. Data not compromised.
66	NT	G	P	8.9.2	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to nine students in one school.	School counselled on the importance of following security processes. Data not compromised.
67	ACT	G	O	8.6.8	Unauthorised materials in the test environment. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
68	ACT	S	O	4.3.10	Test material made public during test security period. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.