



## Get ready for NAPLAN Online in 2017

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The transition to NAPLAN Online has been in the planning phase for a few years now and seems certain to be on track for limited implementation alongside the pen and paper NAPLAN schedule in May next year. Whilst not all sectors and jurisdictions will participate fully, it is sure to create interest from many non-government schools, teachers, students and parents.

Back in 2014, Education Ministers formally agreed to work towards the implementation of NAPLAN Online through a phase-in approach starting in 2017. This national agreement required all states and territories to begin planning for this major transition. To facilitate planning, a national coordinating body was set up with representatives from all school sectors. Jurisdictions were given the freedom to plan their own transition, with the aim of all NAPLAN testing being fully online in 2019.

Education Services Australia (ESA) was funded by the Australian Government to develop the testing platform and infrastructure, while ACARA took up the responsibility of building the online testing modules. States and territories then established their own cross-sectoral school working groups to plan their implementation, with AIS and Catholic Education Commission staff in each jurisdiction invited to participate in ongoing consultations.

Test Administration Authorities (TAAs) in each jurisdiction have been given the role of coordinating the transition and supporting schools during the testing phase as required. The TAAs will perform a similar role to the one they currently perform for the pen and paper test.

However, schools should note that this move to online testing will bring some additional responsibilities. Schools will need to ensure that staff are trained in the new testing process, that they have suitable infrastructure in place and that they have appropriate devices to allow students to undertake the tests. All test scheduling and class list preparation will be done online, within the testing system, and schools will need the capacity to load the lock-down browsers for the testing process. Support mechanisms will be in place to help guide schools through this transition.

Whilst not all non-government schools will be doing online testing next year, it would appear that most of the schools that participated in the August trial run will be involved next year, plus a number of others as well. It is expected that in total around ten per cent of all schools will be doing online testing in almost every jurisdiction across all school sectors, with the likelihood that all South Australian and ACT schools will participate. The exception to this will be in NSW, who will not undertake any online NAPLAN testing in 2017.

One very important question now is, what should schools do from here?

Even if a school is not anticipating to be part of online testing next year, they should still ensure that they have a designated NAPLAN Online coordinator and that they regularly visit the National Assessment Program website ([www.nap.edu.au](http://www.nap.edu.au)), which is continually being updated with information to inform staff, students and parents and will also feature a number of school support tools. These tools include the latest technical requirements and a readiness evaluation tool to test if a school meets all the technical requirements for the online testing environment.

A public demonstration site will soon be available and by March next year all schools should be able to access a practice test site for teachers and students to become familiar with the online test structure. In particular, schools should look out for training opportunities from their respective TAAs and Departments of Education who will be rolling out a range of informational and development opportunities for school staff. ACARA, as well as maintaining information on the National Assessment Program website, will be producing a range of communications material for use by schools. These will cover information such as time frames, testing structures, reporting and research associated with the online testing environment.

One area that is still being finalised is advice to schools surrounding their data privacy requirements. The online testing concept has provided some challenges for both government and non-government schools in regard to the movement of data electronically, data storage and requirements around access to data. The Independent and Catholic sectors are working with ACARA to ensure that schools will be fully aware of their responsibilities in this regard. The non-government sector's Privacy Manual, jointly produced by the two non-government groups, is under ongoing review to ensure it fully covers the electronic test environment. It is also expected that ACARA will shortly produce specific advice that all schools can provide to parents covering privacy issues and data management.

It is not all plain sailing for next year, there are still some issues to be resolved. Education Ministers have requested ACARA provide additional advice on the suitability of online typing for year 3 students to complete writing tests, and there has been some concern expressed around the automated scoring of written tests. The final specifications for particular devices have also yet to be confirmed, as testing has shown that older iPad devices may not be suitable. ACARA and ESA are working to ensure that these issues are resolved as soon as possible.

As the NAPLAN Online project moves forward over the next few months, schools should monitor information flowing from ACARA, their local TAA or their Education Department. In this way schools can ensure they are well prepared and can make the best use of data from this new phase in the national testing process.

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