

NATIONAL STANDARDS FACTSHEET

The Role of Formal Assessment Tools in National Standards Assessment

Assessment that is fit for purpose

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching as both respond to the information it provides.

Assessment in relation to National Standards must follow the characteristics of effective assessment outlined in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

- Benefits students
- Involves students
- Supports teaching and learning goals
- Is planned and communicated
- Is suited to the purpose
- Is valid and fair

Assessment activities should be chosen to suit the nature of the learning being assessed, as well as the varied characteristics and experiences of the students. Teachers will draw on the full range of assessment information already gathered for teaching and learning purposes when determining achievement and progress in relation to National Standards. The range of assessment activities used for teaching and learning should be sufficient to form a robust and defensible overall teacher judgement in relation to National Standards.

No one tool can effectively assess against a National Standard

National Standards offer rich descriptions of progress over time that follow the deeper features of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. In order to assess this effectively, teachers need to use a range of approaches that are suited to the teaching and learning context. It is a well accepted assessment principle that no one single source of information can provide an unequivocally accurate summary of a student's achievement. In addition, we have learned from overseas that the best systems are those that value and utilise teachers' professional judgement. Teachers' professional judgement can provide an accurate and rich interpretation of what a student knows, understands and can do, rather than measuring performance on a narrow range of key indicators.

Why not mandate a set of assessment tools?

The Ministry does not intend to mandate the use of particular tools as this may serve, over time, to narrow the assessment focus and render specific tools as de facto National tests. This has the associated risk of inadvertently promoting the management of the appearance of achievement and progress, rather than promoting authentic teaching approaches which rely on a strong learner focus and quality professional judgement.

Will teachers be required to use norm-referenced assessment tools?

Although there is no legislated requirement to use any specific assessment tools, NAG 1 includes a requirement that schools, through a range of assessment practices, gather information that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable the progress and achievement of students to be evaluated.

Research in assessment indicates that assessment information should be drawn from a comprehensive range of diverse sources including at least one norm-referenced or externally-referenced tool. Such tools (tests, tasks, reading series, other scenarios such as diagnostic interviews), if used appropriately, will provide an external reference point against which teachers can weigh up their professional judgement across a range of assessment information in order to reach an overall teacher judgement (OTJ) which is valid and defensible.

There is a range of well established norm-referenced or externally-referenced assessment tools available for use in New Zealand schools. Many schools are already using these tools within their assessment programmes because they recognise the contribution these tools make to good assessment practice. The Ministry is actively developing an ongoing programme to align these tools to the standards.

Assessment tools which are aligned to the standards will supplement the information gathered by teachers from all other sources. There will not be hard-and-fast mappings, but rather indicators which show how the tools and standards relate to one another. These alignments will be updated as more research evidence is gathered.