

Co-Managed Trials School Case Study

School	St Hilda's Collegiate School	MoE Id	380
Roll Year 11 cohort	412 82	Region	Otago
School Type	Independent Girls Years 7-15	Decile	10

St Hilda's Collegiate School was involved in the previous digital examinations:

2015 eMCAT and Online Practice Examinations

2016 Digital Trials in L1 History, L1 Geography and L1 Spanish
Digital Pilot in L1 English

2017 Digital Trial in L1 English
Digital Pilot in L1 and L2 English

Situation

St Hilda's Collegiate School has had a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) programme in place since 2010 and students use devices in all classes. The school has a one-to-one laptop programme based on Apple devices. Every subject requires digital work, and most subjects require some of their internal assessments to be submitted digitally.

The school is part of a Technology Professional Learning Group and the upskilling of staff is a major focus of school-based professional development. The school uses Google applications.

The school experienced some minor issues with the 2016 digital examinations, but that did not deter them from taking part in 2017. As a result of their 2016 experience, they increased the use of devices for assessment practice, and made full use of the Familiarisation Activities.

Examination Management

Students were given the option of sitting their English Trial examination in a digital context or on paper. On 14 September 2017, 26 students chose to complete the English Digital Trial.

The school divided their students between two adjacent classrooms. There was one supervisor in each classroom. The Exam Centre Manager (ECM) roved between the two rooms, and the Principal's Nominee (PN) was available as back-up and support.

The rooms were set up in a traditional manner, with the desks in a row facing the front. Students were spread throughout the room and the supervisor had their dashboard (which monitors students' examination-status) open at the front of the room. All students had their own laptops. Some multi boxes and extension cords were set out in each room, but they were not used.

The PN and ECM met with the students prior to the examination to explain the process and ensure the students understood what was required of. The school emailed students their login and passwords the day before the examination, and the supervisor only had to manage a few students who did not have their password login on the day.

The start of the examination went relatively smoothly, though some students experienced problems due to the energy saver settings on their device. Once this was discovered all students were informed to reset their energy saver to a high setting.

The supervisors started the examination at the front of the room, but it became apparent that the best place to observe what was happening was from the back of the room. This position provided them with a view of most student screens and they could better invigilate the examination.

The school expressed a concern regarding the availability of good supervisors who are IT literate. The Digital Supervisor was new to digital examinations, and also to examination invigilation. Fortunately, the other supervisor was relatively experienced and the two supervisors met regularly prior to the digital examination to ensure they were well prepared.

The ECM and the PN ensured there were no gaps in communication by sharing the material they received from NZQA. The school felt the material and the training was sufficient, though they would have felt more confident had the ECM been able to attend training alongside the Digital Supervisor. The PN felt that she would have liked to have access to the dashboard so that she could support the ECM and provide back up if required.

Overall the school felt that it was well prepared for the English Digital Trial, and was very confident about managing the Digital Pilot examination at the end of the year. Some students who opted for a paper examination have asked if they could change their decision. However, the school wished to keep the trial numbers small, and scale up in 2018 as it gains more experience managing digital examinations.

Staff impressions

When NZQA and staff first met in June, the staff asked if NZQA would be providing feedback for students who would be participating in the Co-Managed Trial examinations, since NZQA organised the marking of those examinations. NZQA does not have mechanism to provide feedback on examinations, but recognised that the Digital Trial examinations may be used for formative purposes. Thus NZQA provided a set of image files of student responses, accessible by the teachers of each Co-Managed Trial school, so that they could provide feedback .

Students had access to the Familiarisation Activities in class. Both staff and students felt that these activities prepared them well for the Digital Trial examination, and staff felt they provided students with reassurance and confidence about the digital examinations.

Student impressions

NZQA met with the students prior to the Digital Trial examination, and again after it was completed. At the first meeting, student concerns included:

- what the examination would look like

- what would happen if their computer froze or died, or there was a network failure
- screen peeking, and how students would be prevented from cheating
- having agency over the clock.

In the post-trial examination meeting, students commented that the Familiarisation Activities provided them with a good idea of what to expect – especially regarding navigation.

Students understood that the clock was only a guide and that they could turn it off if they wished. They were reassured about the autosave function, and two students who had experienced a 'loading hang' had found all their work had been saved.

One student experienced the lock out message, which is part of the anti-breach function. She was able to take action to remedy it within the 15 seconds by putting up her hand, and having the examination supervisor unlock her device. The students reported that they were too engaged in their own work to look at any other screen. Those students who did look up occasionally reported that the text on the neighbouring screens was too small to be read.

Some concern was expressed about the word count alerting students that their answer had exceeded the recommended word limit, as students had not expected this function. However, they could type past the recommended word limit without penalty, and felt that it was a useful guide that they should consider the length of their essay, and the quality of what they had written.

All the students indicated they had a strong preference for the digital examination. Their rationale was based on their ability to complete their essays faster and then edit their work to create better answers.

2017 Digital Pilot experience

St Hilda's Collegiate School students were entered in the L1 and L2 English Digital Pilot examinations, which generally went well. Following the experience from the Digital Trial examination, the examination supervisors supervised the examinations from the back of the room, and had a view of most student screens.

Several year 12 students who completed the Digital Pilot examination in 2016, sat the L2 English Digital Pilot examination and had a positive experience. One student who had intended to complete the examination for AS91100 (*Analyse significant aspects of unfamiliar written test(s) through close reading, supported by evidence*) on paper, changed her mind as she felt that the digital platform was working well.