Co-Managed Trials School Case Study

School	Tamaki College	MoE Id	057
Roll Year 11 cohort	611 117	Region	Auckland
School Type	State Co-educational Yrs 9-15	Decile	1

Tamaki College was involved in the previous digital examinations:

2014   English Online examination
2015   eMCAT
2017   Digital Trials in L1 English, History, and Art History
        Digital Pilot in L1 English

Situation

Tamaki College has had a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) programme since 2011. The majority of parents purchase Chromebooks through the Manaiakalani Education Trust. Most feeder-schools also belong to the Manaiakalani Education Trust.

The school uses Google applications and devices are used often, across all subjects. Staff have professional development through "Google Apps for Education"; there are "toolkit" sessions and the focus for teacher-only days is on technological pedagogy.

The school has undergone the School Network Upgrade Project twice and has good wi-fi coverage. It has an onsite technician and has the ability to priority-load the wi-fi for the digital examinations.

Examination Management of the 2017 Digital Trials

Students at Tamaki College participated in the Level 1 English, Art History and History Digital Trial examinations. The school conducted an audit of student devices prior to the Digital Trial examinations to ensure that they were fit for purpose.

Seventy seven students sat the Level 1 English Digital Trial examination on 13 September. Most of the students were in the school auditorium and used Chromebooks. The balance worked on PCs in the school library. Students assigned to the auditorium, who were unable to access the digital examination on their devices, were sent to the library. There were four supervisors in the auditorium and three in the library. The Digital Supervisor spent most of their time in the auditorium, where students sat in rows facing the front.

The Principal's Nominee had placed lists on the auditorium windows, informing students where they had to be for their examination.

In the auditorium, some students experienced login issues when they entered an incorrect username or password, which was a complicated ten-characters of upper and lower-case letters. As a result of the login issues, some students answered the assessment on paper.

In the library, students took some time to log into the school network before they could access the digital examination. The library was set up like a computer lab and supervisors expressed concern about screen-peeking. They agreed that the students should be separated by at least one bay each in the Digital Pilot examinations.

Several students experienced a loading issue when moving from one achievement standard to another. The supervisor advised them to refresh their screens when this occurred.

Towards the end of the examination, students were reminded that they should submit their examination before departure, and they had to put up their hand for a supervisor to check. There was a delay between students submitting the examination and it showing up on the Exam Centre Manager (ECM) dashboard as having been completed. This delay resulted in some concern as to whether students had submitted their examination before leaving the room. All work was confirmed as being submitted within a few minutes.

Four students sat a Level 1 Art History Digital Trial examination that was open to the internet. These students were required to use evidence from the internet to support their answer to the examination questions. These students used their own devices in the school library. Students were given access to the examination through Google Drive and uploaded their answers there for marking. Their teacher was the examination supervisor.

The Principal's Nominee (PN) felt that communication from NZQA was good. She commented that there was a lot of information to be processed and that on reflection, it would have been helpful for her to have attended the NZQA training with the ECM, as students often asked her questions. As well as the pre-examination device audit, students were told to have their devices fully-charged. The PN acknowledged that conducting the digital examination in the auditorium added complications due to the number of students involved. The suggestion was made to divide up the auditorium into different spaces for the Digital Pilot examination, with students allocated based on National Student Number (NSN), and to have these separate spaces reflected on the ECM dashboard.

The PN planned to spend more time with the Digital Supervisor to train other examination supervisors. She felt much better prepared for the Pilot examinations, and sees digital examinations as benefiting special assessment condition (SAC) students who would qualify for computer use, or use of a writer.

Staff impressions

Students did not use the Familiarisation Activities for History as the teacher felt that the questions were fairly generic and broad. However, the teacher did go through the navigation of the Familiarisation Activities with his students on a large screen.

English students used the Familiarisation Activities and the teacher felt that this prepared them well for the digital examination. She commented that some students may have been put off by the text box turning red to indicate the answer exceeding the recommended word limit.

Other than the login issues, which were particularly evident in the English Digital Trial examination, the teachers were pleased with student engagement with the Digital Trial examinations. Students appeared to better enjoy the examinations and made more effort, often writing more. The History teacher felt that his students performed better in the Digital Trial examination, compared to a paper examination, though he commented that this may have been more a function of student ability than the examination platform.

The Art History teacher commented that she has concerns about plagiarism when the students have open access to the internet for digital examinations, and found evidence of this in some student answers to the Art History Digital Trial. She did not feel that students did any better with the digital examinations, and commented that a more obvious barrier to student success in Art History is the requirement in the achievement standard to use Art terminology.

The teachers commented that the split-screen in the examination, where resources are on the left-hand side and the answer space is on the right, makes the examination more accessible for students than a single-screen, as it reduces page scrolling. They expressed some concern that there was no function to allow students to highlight material in the resources as part of their processing and planning of the answers. The Art History teacher commented that if resources such as images were to be part of the digital examination, she would prefer that the images were presented separately on paper.

Student impressions

Students use computers regularly for research and for their assignments across all subjects.

Students who had used the Familiarisation Activities found them useful for experiecing functions such as spellcheck and the navigation of the assessment. A few students were a little confused by the textbox and word count turning red when their answer exceeded the recommended word limit. They felt that they had to reduce the length of their answer. Some students also found the traffic light system within the examination indicating completion of each section a little confusing; while others liked this function.

Students liked the drop-down boxes for indicating their language feature selection in the English Digital Trial examination. They generally preferred the digital examination to answering on paper, as they felt that they could type faster, and the ease of editing helped them to better organise their answers without having messy arrows or obvious deletion within their answers. Some students said they would have liked the ability to annotate within the resources provided. Some used the digital planning page to put down ideas and one planned on paper. When asked, one student commented that she would find a mind-map function too difficult to use.

Though several students experienced the loading issue, they were comfortable that refreshing the page had resolved the issue, and none had lost any part of their answer. One student felt that the anti-breach function was very sensitive, as she triggered it twice when clicking slightly outside the text box.

Most students felt that their performance in the Digital Trial examinations was comparable to completing a paper examination. All students were keen to sit the English examination digitally at the end of the year.

2017 Digital Pilot experience

For the Level 1 English Digital Pilot examination, Tamaki College labelled desks and provided seating plans for the Lead Digital Supervisor and the examination management team. There was more technical support for the PN and ample devices available, in case student devices failed.

Students were comfortable and confident in the Digital Pilot examination. Five students were unable to log into the digital examination, and they sat the examination on paper. The school has requested the ability to reset passwords for future digital examinations.