

Digital External Assessment Prototypes Project: key learnings

The Digital External Assessment Prototypes (DEAP) Project was designed to help understand how to transition into delivering assessments digitally. This included testing key elements of a new operating model, and learning how that model might work in practice.

To progress this, NZQA worked in partnership with an external vendor to undertake a second iteration of the electronic Mathematics Common Assessment Task (following on from a trial in 2014), and two Online Practice Exams (French and Science). In total, 17,106 students from 208 secondary schools across New Zealand participated in these online assessments, with approximately 4,000 students taking part in more than one online assessment.

The subsequent evaluation considered the outcomes, user experiences, and insights in relation to implementation, technology, and change management. To gain insight from those involved in the pilot, a survey was undertaken with participating students and the teachers that were involved.

Key learnings

1. The range of student performance results of the 2015 eMCAT was very similar to the 2014 MCAT. However, most students who responded to the survey (one third of those who sat the eMCAT) reported that they still used pen and paper during the eMCAT in some way (i.e. for note taking or working out their answers before entering their final answers digitally).
2. Although students are familiar with the online environment and are used to working in this context, work needs to be done to ensure participants' confidence in any online assessment (such as familiarisation with tools being used).
3. Most of the teachers involved in the eMCAT who responded to the survey reported that administering the eMCAT was a positive experience. This contrasts with the eMCAT students who completed the survey, who indicated undertaking the online assessment was a less satisfactory experience than undertaking the paper-based assessment.
4. In relation to the French Online Practice Exam, most participants (both teachers and students) in the French OPE who completed the survey reported a positive experience with the assessment.
5. In relation to the Science Online Practice Exam, the majority of participants in the Science OPE who completed the survey indicated that undertaking the online assessment was a less satisfactory experience than undertaking the paper-based assessment.