



Getting ready for digital exams

Guide for Principal's Nominees and technical support

Exams are fast-approaching

In order to be confident your school is ready to offer one or more digital exams, there's a few things you need to do so you'll be ready to offer the best experience.

This guide covers what you need to know to prepare for digital exams, from infrastructure to getting your teachers and students confident and up to speed on the exam software.

You can check off each task on page 2 as you complete it, so you can keep track of what you've done.

When deciding if your school is ready to offer digital exams, you'll need to consider:

- Are the students learning digitally in class? If they're not, digital exams might not be the best option right now.
- Has your school participated in a digital trial or pilot in the past? If you have, what went well and what do you need to improve?
- Do you have the space required for the number of students you plan to have sit digital exams?
- Will there be enough suitable devices to support all students completing a digital exam?
- Who is providing devices - your school or the students?
- Are your exam centre staff, including your Exam Centre Manager, confident using computer technology?





Digital exams checklist

We want you to be confident in your school's ability to offer digital exams. Assign the tasks below to yourself or others helping you prepare and check off each task as you go to keep track of where you're at.

Click on the task or go to the page below to find out more information on each task.

Page		Task	Tick when you are done
3-4		Prepare your students	
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Prepare your students

If your students will be sitting a digital exam, they should already be using digital technology in their learning. Preparing them for their digital exams will require them to become familiar with the exam software as well as ensuring they are confident using a device for learning and assessment.

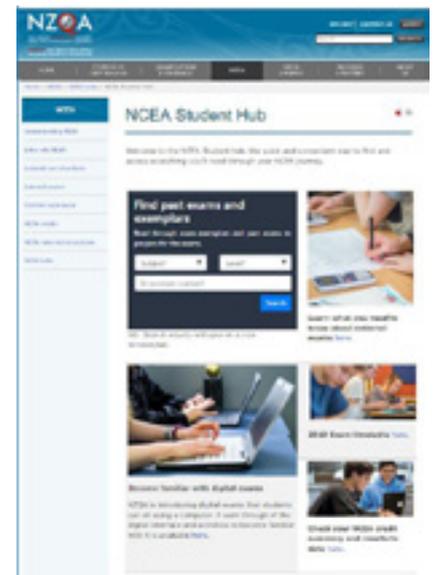
Practice activities

To help your students sit digital exams, first you and your teachers will need to get confident using the exam software.

NZQA will have practice activities for students and teachers available on the NZQA website from the end of July at nzqa.govt.nz/practice.

The practice activities will increase students' confidence in using the digital exam platform and prepare them for what to expect before and during a digital exam. Students will have the opportunity to navigate the exam software in a practice environment. These activities include:

- tasks to help students and teachers become confident using the exam software, become familiar with the different features it offers and know what to do if there is a technical issue
- 2018 past digital exam papers for subjects being offered online in 2019. While responses are not saved to the exam software during these activities, students can experience the look and feel of their online exams. Where past exams include copyright material, teachers can obtain login details via the banner on the school's NZQA provider login. All students can use the same login and they will have to agree to the copyright terms and conditions prior to entering the exam
- information on preparing devices for an exam
- what they need to know when going into the exam room e.g. how to log in, what they need to bring and what happens if something goes wrong in a digital exam.



Teachers need to spend time going through these activities and be confident with the exam software so they can begin teaching this to their students. The school should plan where class time can be used for running through the generic and subject based practice activities with students.

Students entering a digital exam should try these practice activities beforehand, to ensure they're prepared.

Online learning skills

Students sitting digital exams should be confident using a device in their learning. Skills your students will need include:

- reading and navigating webpages
- typing an answer
- using word processing
- tapping/moving a cursor to locate and select information on a page.

Consider whether you need to include student activities to increase confidence in these skills alongside the practice activities in the exam software.





Prepare your students cont'd

What your students need to know

Your students need to know what to expect on the day of a digital exam and will have questions. Below are some common questions and answers that we are giving to students. A complete list of common questions and answers can be found at nzqa.govt.nz/practice.

Where can I find my login details for a digital exam?

Your login details are on your NZQA admission slip. The school will give you your admission slip in term 4. If you lose or forget your admission slip on the day of your exam, go to the school office and ask them to print the admission slip. Your Principal's Nominee must sign your reprinted admission slip before you enter the exam room.

What if I can't log in?

Let your exam supervisor know if you can't log in. They will help you and contact technical support, if required. You can log into your exam up to 30 minutes before the exam start time. You can't access the content of the exam until your supervisor gives you access.

What if I decide not to do the exam online on the day?

You can choose to move to paper at any time before or during the exam. If you have started a standard online, you're encouraged to complete the standard digitally before moving to the next standard on paper. If you choose to switch to paper, the rest of the exam must be completed on paper. You will not be able to switch back to the digital exam.

What if I have a problem with the online exam that can't be resolved quickly?

You can switch to paper. If you are unable to work due to a technical problem during the online exam, your exam supervisor may give you additional time to complete your exam to make up for time lost. The exam supervisor will determine how much additional time should be given to ensure you have three hours to complete the exam. Your supervisor may move you to a paper exam due to a technical issue if it cannot be resolved quickly. You do not need to copy what you have completed so far onto the paper exam as this will be saved on the exam software server.

Will I still get a resource booklet?

Some exams will include a separate printed booklet of resource material. If your exam includes resource material in a separate booklet, your exam supervisor will give this to you.

What happens if I move away from the exam window?

If you attempt to move away from the exam or try to access other areas of your device, you'll get a warning message. If you do not return to the exam immediately, you'll be locked out of the exam. The supervisor can unlock the exam but may need to report the possible breach to NZQA.

How often is my work saved?

Your work is saved every 30 seconds and when moving between standards. If your device loses connection during the exam, a warning message will show on the supervisor's screen. They will contact technical support. If you have lost connection, a pop-up screen will alert you if you try to move between pages. **Don't worry!** Raise your hand and the supervisor and technical support staff will help you.

Don't refresh or close your browser. Once connection is established again, the supervisor can confirm that your work has been saved.





Check your internet capacity

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure your network has the required coverage and bandwidth for the digital exams you are offering.

The exam software is accessed through a web browser (refer to [page 7](#) for approved browsers). Your school does not need to download any software to run online exams.

For your school, having a strong internet connection is key to ensuring a successful experience.

Your IT support will need to be closely involved in making sure your network and internet connection are robust enough to support all your students sitting digital exams.

Tips for confidence on the day:

- Make sure you have technical support available during the exam.
- Prioritise the digital exam traffic: restrict use of the network in year 9 and 10 classes and other connected devices e.g. phones

Your school needs:

- an internet connection that is reliable and can manage the number of students taking part in a digital exam at the same time
- Wi-Fi or cabled connections in the buildings where students will sit the exams
- technical support available on the day of each exam.

If you are using cabled internet, you will need to ensure all computers have a hardwired connection. This includes providing hardwired connection points for any students who bring their own device.

If your school is using Wi-Fi, you'll need to ensure there is full, strong coverage of all areas being used for digital exams. This includes checking for any dead zones in rooms that are otherwise serviced by Wi-Fi.

Testing your internet

The students' work will be saved automatically every 30 seconds and is stored in the exam software cloud-service. You need to ensure your school's internet capacity has the bandwidth to support this. A slow or intermittent internet connection puts the students at risk of losing their work, as their work is not saved when their device is not connected to the exam software server.

To test your internet strength, have all students who are scheduled to complete a digital exam sign onto their device and play [this](#) video and have them in the space you will be using on the day of the exam.

If any of the devices experience lagging or can't load the video, this suggests you will need to increase your internet bandwidth or segregate your network. As well as strength, you need to consider coverage and test for any dead zones in exam rooms.





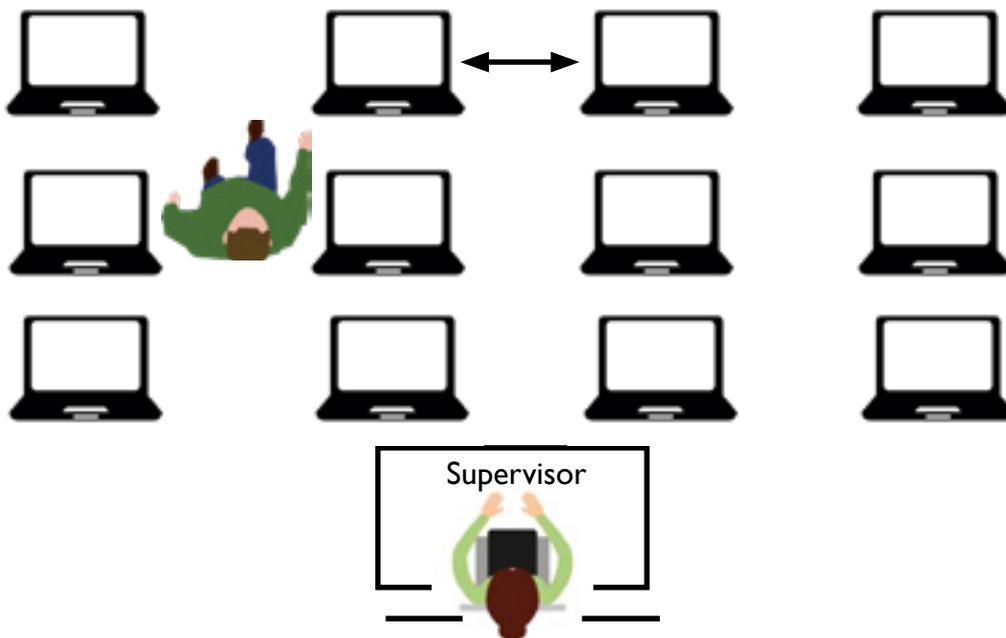
Prepare your space

Setting up your space

Space requirements for digital exams are different from paper exams. Work with your Exam Centre Manager to make sure you have the right kind of space available to offer digital exams. You'll need to keep the following in mind:

- Exam rooms must comply with health and safety regulations. This includes ensuring any plugs or cords are not a hazard.
- Each room requires one device for the exam supervisor(s) to monitor the exam from the supervisor dashboard.
- If possible, have students sitting digital exams in a separate exam room from those entered into the paper exam.
- If students sitting both paper and digital versions of the exam do share a room, have students sitting the exam digitally at the back of the room to reduce distractions.

Example set up



Depending on the kind of space you will be using and if your students are providing devices, your room set up may differ from the diagram above. For example, you may be using a computer lab with computers placed around a table or a space with desks that face each other. There are many different ways a digital exam room can be set up.

Key space considerations

- Ensure students are placed far enough apart so they cannot see the screens of other students.
- Supervisors need to easily walk between rows during the exam.
- Supervisors need to observe multiple students' screens from one vantage point. This may be between rows or by standing at the back of the exam room.





Check devices

The device students use during the exam needs to meet certain requirements to be compatible with the digital exam platform. Whether the students bring their device or the school is providing devices, it is up to you to make sure all devices being used in an exam meet the device requirements below. You will need a process to manage devices are fit for purpose before the exam starts whether they are school supplied or bring your own.

Make sure all devices have been checked by IT support and any updates made before the exam period. Students should also have a chance to familiarise themselves with the devices they will be using prior to the exam. If students are bringing their own device, set aside time before the day of the exam to check their devices meet the requirements for a digital exam.

Most laptop and desktop computers are compatible with the digital exam platform. Chromebooks are supported. Netbooks may support the digital exam platform, however they are not recommended as they have very small screens and slow processors.

Important: iPads and touch screen portable devices without physically attached keyboards cannot be used. Students using on-screen keyboards will be locked out of the examination by the security mechanisms in the software.

Device requirements

- Laptop or desktop computer
- Fully charged with minimum 3 hours of battery power or access to power source
 - Power banks can be used in the exam room. Students' power banks must be stored in their sealed emergency evacuation pack under their desk and they must ask the supervisor to retrieve it and plug it in. Supervisors must record the power bank usage.
 - Power banks with wireless capability and/or memory/storage capacity will not be allowed. If students bring these devices into the exam room it will constitute a breach of exam rules.
- The operating system being used is one of the following*
 - Microsoft Windows 7, 8.1, 10+
 - Apple Mac OS 10.13+
 - Chrome OS
- **Note:** The exam software cannot be accessed from an outdated or unsupported browser.
- The device has one of the following browsers installed*
 - Google Chrome, version 70+
 - Firefox, version 67+
 - Safari (Mac), version 11+
- Notifications, screensavers and automatic updates must be disabled*
- Screen resolution is set to minimum 1366 x 768 pixels
- The device is connected to the internet through the school's WiFi network, or a cabled connection
- Access to printing is not required.

* Not sure what to do?

Refer to device FAQs on the next page for more information on how to complete these tasks.





Check devices cont'd

Device FAQs

Click on the link to take you to more information on completing each task depending on the operating system or browser you are using.

How do I check which version of the operating system my computer is using?

[Chrome OS](#)

[Microsoft Windows](#)

[Apple Mac](#)

How do I disable notifications, screensavers and automatic updates?

[Chrome OS](#)

[Microsoft Windows](#)

[Apple Mac](#)

How do I check which browser version I have installed?

[Google Chrome](#)

[Firefox](#)

[Safari \(Mac\)](#)

How do I update my browser?

[Google Chrome](#)

[Firefox](#)

[Safari \(Mac\)](#)





Know where to get support

NZQA is here to support your school while you transition to offering digital exams. If you have questions about digital exams, get in touch.

Contact us:

- Get in touch with your school relationship manager by phone or email.
- Email us at ncea.online@nzqa.govt.nz.

NCEA online readiness webinar

Do you have questions about digital exams that haven't been answered in this guide? We strongly encourage you to attend an NCEA online exam readiness webinar.

This is a one-off session, designed for Principal's Nominees and technical support. We will run through everything your school needs to know while you're preparing for digital exams. We'll also show you what other schools have done to address the technical requirements of digital exams.

There will be an opportunity to send your questions beforehand, to make sure we cover them in the webinar. There will also be a chance to ask questions during the webinar.

We know you're busy, so you can find different times and dates for the webinar by following this link: nceadigitalexams.eventbrite.co.nz.

You must sign up at least 24 hours in advance of the webinar to secure your spot.





Digital exams FAQs

What your school needs to know about digital exams

How are student login details created?

For a student to have login details created for their online exam, your school will need to ensure they are entered in at least one digital exam. Once they are entered into a digital exam, their verification code will be created and this information will be reflected on their admission slip. Exam supervisors will also be able to see students' verification codes from their supervisor dashboard.

How frequently is the students' work saved in an exam?

Students' work is saved every 30 seconds, as long as they are connected to the exam software provider's server.

Where is the students' work stored after it is saved?

The information is stored in the the cloud-service of the exam software provider.

Is any information being saved on the school server by the exam software?

No, information collected during the exam is not saved on the school's server.

How fast does our internet need to be?

Your school will need to have sufficient bandwidth and coverage to ensure all students use the online exam software at the same time. For more information go to [Page 5](#).

Does our school need to download the exam software?

No, the exam software is a cloud-based service, accessed from a supported browser. Your school needs to ensure there is sufficient bandwidth and coverage and that the devices being used meet the requirements on [Page 7](#).

How is NZQA ensuring there is no privacy risk with the online exam software?

All data stored by the exam software provider is compliant with the [NZ Information Security Manual](#) for cloud-based services.

What happens if there is a widespread loss of connection during a digital exam?

There are two reasons why a school's devices may lose connection to the exam software provider. One is the internet connection in the school has gone down. Your IT support will assist the Exam Centre Manager (ECM) and exam supervisors to troubleshoot this issue. The second possibility is the exam software provider's server goes down. If this happens, NZQA will inform your ECM and work with the exam software provider to have the server up and running as quickly as possible. In the event the server is not restored within a short period of time, exam supervisors may choose to revert to paper exams. Students will not need to repeat the work they've already completed in the digital exam.

What processes are in place to ensure students are not disadvantaged by a technical issue?

If there is a technical issue during the exam, NZQA has processes in place to ensure students are not disadvantaged. This may include students switching to paper or additional time given to make up for time lost. Schools may also apply for an unexpected event grade.

