

Enhancing Benchmarking and Check Marking Innovation Trial 2020 Summary

NCEA Online Programme



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2020 Innovation Trial Summary: Enhancing Benchmarking and Check Marking

Trial overview

Within days of candidates sitting an exam, their work is sorted and distributed to NZQA panels who mark externally assessed standards. The marking panel is run by a panel leader who carries out benchmarking, trains markers, and ensures effective quality control so that the marking process is fair, valid, and reliable. The first 40 consecutive valid candidate assessments from each marker's allocation are marked, and check marked to ensure marking consistency. The paper-based benchmarking process is constrained by how quickly papers can be delivered to panel leaders once the exam is finished.

NCEA Online exams are marked online using the RM Assessor³ e-Marking tool. As candidates' work is submitted online panel leaders can access a larger number of candidate responses, compared to those completed on paper, within 24 hours of the assessment being completed.

Trial objectives

The objectives of the Enhancing Benchmarking and Check Marking trial were to see if RM Assessor³ standardisation processes could be used for finalising the Assessment Schedule, confirming markers are ready for live marking, and ensuring quality of marking consistency.

Before the trial, the RM Assessor³ functionality was analysed to understand how it might be used to meet NZQA needs. Four panels with 2019 Digital Assessments were identified as having enough digital results to provide a pool for benchmarking and check marking processes to be run in RM Assessor³. A random sample of digital scripts from English (L1 and L2) and History (L2 and L3) 2019 exams were used in the trial. A workshop was held with the four panel leaders and NZQA staff to discuss different aspects of the process and functionality.

We targeted the week starting 20 April as the best time to run the trial and planned for panel leaders and check markers to come into NZQA offices to do their benchmarking activities and then a further two days of marking. However, the COVID-19 lockdown altered these plans. Panel leaders and check markers were asked to do the trial in their own environment while also managing their teaching activities. This created challenges for NZQA staff to provide them with remote support. Due to the lockdown, most schools started their school holidays early and returned to online schooling from 20 April. As a result, the trial was extended until 8 May 2020.

Trial outcome and evaluation

Panel leaders and check markers undertook their benchmarking activities using RM Assessor³. Once the benchmarking and check marking processes were completed, panels then had virtual meetings to share their views on the trial. Trial participants provided feedback using an evaluation questionnaire.

The RM Assessor³ functionality trial met all or most of the current goals and objectives of benchmarking and marker training. Feedback from participants included:

- The ability to see all the responses to select from for benchmarking purposes was both an advantage and disadvantage. Some markers stated they were overwhelmed by the choice, and others commented that they found the shift from paper to online processes challenging.
- More training and information should be provided to support markers to use RM Assessor.

Overall, the RM Assessor³ functionality trialled was determined to be useful for carrying out benchmarking and quality assurance processes digitally.

Next steps

Recommendations from the trial include progressing digital benchmarking and check marking along with scanning during 2021.