

Scholarship Online Research 2020 Summary

NCEA Online Programme



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In 2020 we looked at the potential barriers to NZQA providing digital Scholarship exams.

Some schools have asked why Scholarship isn't currently offered digitally, noting that their students who have sat digital exams for up to all three NCEA Levels in previous years may be disadvantaged by not being able to sit Scholarship in the same (digital) format.

Schools' feedback that exams should be available in the same format as the learning and that consistency of experience is paramount aligns with NZQA's view that only those schools that are already teaching and internally assessing digitally should offer digital examinations.

The significance of equitable access for Scholarship candidates - having a "level playing field", for example through having a choice of delivery mode - is higher than for NCEA exams. This is because New Zealand Scholarship is competitive with a limited number of awards available, which can have substantial associated financial benefits.

Research involving key NZQA stakeholders showed that the following key factors need to be considered for digital Scholarship:

1. There is no current NZQA policy to manage the outcome of a digital disruption affecting Scholarship candidates during an exam, although the existing processes for a lost paper-based Scholarship response could be used.
2. Each year NZQA carries out statistical and psychometric analysis to compare student performance in NCEA exams in paper-based and digital formats. The 2019 Psychometric and Statistical Analysis Report describes the analyses carried out "to investigate the extent to which the two [digital and paper] formats afforded students equivalent assessment opportunities... Digital- and paper-format results from the same set of schools participating in Digital Examinations were compared. Subsequent analysis compared the results after adjusting for student ability, by matching on students' internally-assessed standards."
 - A different method to do similar analysis of student performance in Scholarship exams will need to be developed. This is because there are not enough students doing Scholarship by subject to provide reliable comparisons of the two assessment formats.
 - It is difficult to determine the ability of a Scholarship subject group as is currently done for NCEA. This is because you can't match student ability against their internally assessed standards because at Scholarship level there are no internal assessments, and not all Scholarship students come through the NCEA pathway.
3. Changes will be needed to the NCEA Online marking application to achieve initial test marking, benchmarking, marking and check-marking for digital Scholarship exams.

In 2021 we'll further investigate the feasibility of offering/trialling a Scholarship text-based subject digitally.