

Preparing students for digital exams



Introduction

In 2020 [21 subjects](#) will have exams available to be completed digitally.

This guide will help you prepare your students for digital exams, from device and digital exam platform familiarisation to general information on what students can expect when they are in a digital exam.

Deciding to do digital exams

Digital exams are appropriate for students who are already learning and being assessed on a device.

You can enrol your entire cohort into a digital exam or select motivated students who are confident being assessed digitally.

Entering students in digital exams should follow a wider discussion with your PN and the leadership at your school, who will need to decide if school infrastructure can support students sitting exams digitally.

If you do enter your students in a digital exam, they can still choose to swap to a paper exam at any point before or during an exam.

This means if they prefer to complete some standards digitally and others on paper, they can do so, as long as they complete their digital standards first.

You can find out who needs to do what, when by using our [NCEA Online preparation timeline](#).

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Prepare your students



If your students are sitting a digital exam, you should go through the activities and familiarise yourself with the digital exam platform so you are confident before teaching this to your students.

Students need to become familiar with the exam software and be confident using a device for learning and assessment.

Practice activities

NZQA has practice activities available at www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ncea-exams-and-portfolios/external/digital-exams/

Practice activities show students how to use the digital exam platform. Resources also prepare them for what to expect before, during and after a digital exam.

Activities and resources include:

- Opportunities to become familiar with the exam features and messages they may receive during an exam.
- 2019 past digital exam papers for subjects being offered online in 2020 can be accessed from the [student exam hub](#). Individual standards can be accessed from the [subject page](#). While responses cannot be saved to the exam software during these activities, students can experience the look and feel of their online exams.
- Information on preparing devices for an exam.
- How to log in, what they need to bring and what happens if something goes wrong during a digital

Accessing copyrighted past exam papers

Past exams that include copyright material require a login for access.

Login information can be found in your school's NZQA provider login.

All students should use this login. They will have to agree to the copyright terms and conditions prior to accessing the past exam.

Audio files and resource booklets for language exams can be downloaded from the resources for externally assessed standards.



TIP

Have students complete practice activities on the device they will be using for their digital exam.

Being familiar with the device they're using increases confidence.

Online learning skills

Students sitting digital exams should be confident using a device.

[TKI](#) provides teaching resources for digital learning you can refer to.

Consider whether you need to include student activities to increase confidence in these skills along with getting familiar with the digital exam software.

Skills your students will need include:

- Reading and navigating web pages
- Typing an answer
- Using word processing
- Tapping/moving a cursor to locate and select information on a page.
- Using a language keyboard, if they are writing their answers in Te Reo Māori or a foreign language
- Using keyboard shortcuts.

The following shortcuts can be used in a digital exam. Other shortcuts will be blocked to reduce the chance of students accidentally triggering the invigilation software:

Shortcut key	Function
Ctrl+A	Select everything on page
Ctrl+Z	Undo
Ctrl/Command & Y	Redo
Ctrl/Command+C	Copy selected text
Ctrl/Command+F	Find text on page
Ctrl/Command+V	Paste selected text
Ctrl/Command+X	Cut selected text
Ctrl/Command+0	Return to default page magnification setting (100%)
Ctrl/Command+B	Mark as bold
Ctrl/Command+I	Mark as italics
Ctrl/Command+U	Underline
Ctrl/Command+(- or+)	Zoom in or out
Insert/Ins	Toggle between adding text and overwriting text



Check devices



Whether your students bring their own device or the school provides them, you will need to ensure they meet the specifications for a digital exam.

Most laptop and desktop computers are compatible with the digital exam platform, including Chromebooks. Netbooks are not recommended due to having small screens and slow processors.

Students should have a chance to familiarise themselves with the device they'll be using prior to the exam.

Have IT support check devices or use the guidance below with students. Make sure you set aside time before exams begin to complete a check.

The digital exam device readiness check on our website shows the browser, operating system and screen resolution of the device being used.

You can find it here: <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ncea-exams-and-portfolios/external/device-readiness-check/>

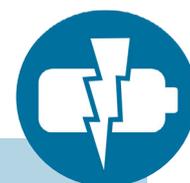
Device specifications

- Laptop or desktop computer
Touch screen portable devices can only be used if they have physically attached keyboards. Students using on-screen touch functionality will be locked out of the exam by the security mechanisms in the software.
- Fully charged with minimum 3 hours of battery power or access to power source
- The operating system being used is one of the following
 - Microsoft Windows 7, 8.1, 10+
 - Apple Mac OS 10.13+
 - Chrome OS
- The device has one of the following browsers installed
 - Google Chrome, version 74+
 - Safari (Mac), version 11+

Note: The exam software cannot be accessed from an outdated or unsupported browser. Firefox, IE and Edge are NOT supported.

Device set up

- Notifications, screensavers and automatic updates must be disabled
- Screen resolution must be set to minimum 1366 x 768 pixels
- The browser must be set to full screen
- The device must be connected to the internet through the school's WiFi network, or a cabled connection
- A language keyboard has been installed and enabled, for students answering in Te Reo Māori or a foreign language.



Using power banks in digital exams

Students may bring power banks into the exam room. These must be stored in their sealed emergency evacuation pack under their desk.

Students can ask the supervisor to retrieve and plug in the power bank if required. Any instances of power bank use will be recorded by the supervisor.

Power banks with wireless capability and/or memory/storage capacity will not be allowed and a student bringing this type of device will constitute a breach of exam rules.



Digital exams mythbusters



Your students need to know what to expect on the day of a digital exam and will have questions. A complete list of common student questions and answers can be found at

<https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ncea-exams-and-portfolios/external/digital-exams/>

Myth: If I'm enrolled in a digital exam, I have to do my exam digitally

Fact:

Students enrolled in a digital exam can move to paper at any point before or during the exam. It is your individual preference. However, once you've moved to paper, you can't go back to digital. You should keep this in mind if you are intending to complete your standards in a particular order and ensure you complete standards digitally before moving to paper.

Myth: If my computer stuffs up in a digital exam, I will get a Not Achieved

Fact:

No student will be disadvantaged if their device stops working during a digital exam. If a device stops working, all responses will have been saved and the student can resume working on another device with no time or work lost. If no other device is available, the exam supervisor will note how much time was taken for the student to switch to paper and grant additional time at the end of the exam. An Unexpected Event Grade may also apply in certain circumstances.

Myth: I can copy and paste my answers from a different webpage or a Word document

Fact:

You cannot copy and paste from outside the digital exam software. However, you can copy and paste within it - for example, copy and pasting the resources or copy and pasting your work into different textboxes. If you try 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.

Myth: If I do a digital exam, I have to do all my planning on the computer

Fact:

You can request paper to complete planning from your supervisor. Make sure you bring pens (black and blue colours are permitted), pencil and an eraser for note taking or in case you need to switch to paper.

Myth: Using spellcheck will affect my grade

Fact:

The spellcheck function is an option available for students. Spelling is not marked in exams, so deciding to use it, or not use it, will not affect your grade.



Digital exams FAQs



These frequently asked questions have been put together based on common questions we received from schools by email and in our 2019 digital exams webinars.

How do students login to a digital exam?

Students will use the same login details to access their digital exam as they use to access their [learner login](#).

Make sure students new to NCEA have set up their learner login account and returning students know their login information before going into their digital exam.

How often is the student's work saved?

Work is saved every 30 seconds during a digital exam. Once saved, the information is stored in the cloud service of the exam software provider.

Can schools access the same software you use – for example to use for practice exams?

Not at present, but NZQA is looking at this for the future. This is unlikely to be available in the next couple of years, given the focus on bedding down the NCEA exam process on the platform.

Do students have to set up language keyboards for Te Reo Māori, Te Reo Rangatira and foreign languages?

Students will be able to use a different language, as appropriate for the subject, by switching the language keyboards.

The language keyboards software packs must be downloaded and fully enabled prior to entering the exam.

We recommend students become familiar with language keyboards throughout the year, ideally using the same device they will use in the exam.

How can students find their digital exam answers from last year?

NZQA keeps digital exam responses for students until June 30 of the year following the exam. These can be accessed in the digital exam platform.

Can students copy and paste within the browser to move paragraphs around etc?

Yes, students can copy and paste within the exam browser but not from outside the exam browser. You can see how this works by using the practice activities under [Have a Play](#).

We recommend students use full screen mode so they do not accidentally move outside the browser window while navigating the exam.

Can VPN, LanSchool software or incognito browsers affect the authenticity software in a digital exam?

We have not identified any VPNs or incognito browsers that would circumvent the technical, human and process controls we have in place.

We recommend all background software is disabled to ensure it does not interfere with the exam invigilation software.

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

There are two reasons why a school's devices may IThere are a range of reasons that can cause a loss of connection during a digital exam.

NZQA, N4L and the exam software provider will be monitoring connectivity through all exams.

If an issue is identified, they will contact your school's ECM to inform them and work to resolve the issue.

In the event the issue is not resolved 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.

