

2025 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Digital Technologies
Level:	3
Achievement standard(s):	91908, 91909

General commentary

The 2025 Level 3 Digital Technologies external assessments were effective in differentiating student understanding across Achievement, Merit, and Excellence. The revised formats clearly separated candidates with general knowledge from those demonstrating precise conceptual understanding, algorithmic reasoning, and critical analysis. Students who engaged authentically with the assessment contexts and demonstrated clear understanding of mechanisms, processes, and implications performed strongly. Overall, the assessments were fit for purpose and aligned well with Level 8 of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91908: Analyse an area of computer science

Assessment

The examination assessed candidates' understanding of a chosen area of computer science through a structured two-part format. Part One focused on short-answer conceptual understanding, including identification and explanation of key mechanisms, algorithms, applications, and issues. Part Two required deeper analysis, justification, and evaluation, including consideration of limitations, societal impacts, and human–computer interactions.

Commentary

The assessment clearly differentiated levels of understanding. Candidates with a strong grasp of underlying mechanisms, algorithmic processes, and real-world application were able to justify decisions and draw critical conclusions. Students relying on generalised descriptions or surface-level explanations struggled to meet the higher criteria. The assessment rewarded accuracy, specificity, and clarity rather than volume of writing.

Students familiar with the assessment specifications and expectations were noticeably advantaged. Calculator access issues did not materially affect outcomes, as marking prioritised reasoning and explanation rather than numerical precision alone.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified and described key concepts within the chosen topic, using simple explanations
- named relevant algorithms or techniques and describe their general purpose
- provided a basic real-world example and identified a simple benefit or limitation

- demonstrated descriptive understanding with limited technical depth.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- explained how processes worked, using appropriate computer science terminology
- described key stages or components of algorithms or systems
- applied concepts to real-world contexts with discussion of effectiveness and limitations
- demonstrated sound understanding but limited justification or evaluation.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- demonstrated in-depth algorithmic understanding, clearly explaining how and why processes operate
- justified conclusions using technical reasoning, calculations, or comparisons
- integrated low-level mechanisms with system-level applications and implications
- showed synthesis, evaluation, and insight beyond isolated explanations.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- provided incomplete or incorrect explanations of core concepts
- failed to correctly identify or explain required algorithms or mechanisms
- gave irrelevant or insufficient evidence across criteria
- responded in vague or general terms without demonstrating computer science understanding.

Achievement standard 91909: Develop a digital technologies outcome

Assessment

Candidates submitted a report reflecting on the development of a complex digital outcome. The assessment required candidates to explain and analyse decisions made during development, demonstrate understanding of tools and techniques, integrate stakeholder feedback, and critically evaluate outcomes and future improvements.

Commentary

Candidates undertook a wide range of authentic digital projects aligned with Level 8 expectations. Stronger responses demonstrated clear links between development decisions, stakeholder feedback, and the final outcome. Some candidates focused heavily on design description, with limited analysis of prototyping or iterative development. This restricted achievement at higher levels.

Group projects were acceptable, although candidates needed to clearly articulate their individual roles and reflections. Reports written from a group perspective limited the ability to demonstrate the depth of individual analysis that is required for Merit or Excellence.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- presented a project context with genuine end-user or stakeholder engagement
- described decisions made and actions taken during development
- provided limited reflection, often describing what was done rather than why
- identified individual roles when working in a group.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- undertook authentic projects of suitable complexity
- made clear connections between development stages and outcomes
- demonstrated iterative development informed by stakeholder feedback
- explained why specific tools or techniques were used to address needs or issues.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- delivered comprehensive reports centred on complex, non-trivial outcomes
- demonstrated strong stakeholder understanding and authentic engagement
- critically evaluated decisions and proposed non-trivial improvements
- connected reflections to broader considerations such as accessibility, ethics, sustainability, and futureproofing
- showed mature project management and evaluative insight.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not fully attempt or complete the assessment
- failed to clearly explain their individual contribution in group projects
- demonstrated work below Level 8 expectations
- focused on peripheral topics rather than the digital development process
- provided minimal evidence of iteration, refinement, or reflection.