2025 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Digital Technologies
Level:	1
Achievement standard(s):	92006, 92007

General commentary

The 92007 standard was in its first (and only) year of being a digitally submitted mini portfolio.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 92006: Demonstrate understanding of usability in human-computer interfaces

Assessment

The full set of grades were awarded. Overall, the responses were shorter than in the past. Fewer candidates wrote well over the suggested word limit. Most demonstrated sound understanding. Candidates who gave Mātāpono Māori responses generally performed well. Candidates tended to use the examples given in Resource A, while some went further, using other Māori values such as kaitiakitanga or rangatiratanga.

Commentary

The short answer questions were designed to ease candidates into the exam. Some candidates could not provide four different heuristics and only used the ones given to them as examples. Some wrote too much for the short answer questions, where brief, concise answers were all that was required. Candidates with good knowledge and understanding were less likely to duplicate elements.

The variety of interfaces analysed was wide, which was good to see, although there were many old favourites such as Air New Zealand, Mitre 10, and Google Docs appearing, which was helpful.

Candidates who used their own school website or who wrote about their own designed interfaces were sometimes disadvantaged, as many of these lacked the dynamic features needed to demonstrate a range of heuristics.

General information

When discussing Accessibility, a few acknowledged neurodiversity, vision, or hearing challenges with a limited number of recommended limited accommodations (size of font, colour contrast, perhaps screen reading technologies), with no consideration of other disabilities or supports. Most referred to it in terms of language barriers.

Where candidates used the formatting tools (bold, underline, and spacing) in their answers, it was a lot easier to extract meaning.

The heuristics User Control & Freedom and Flexibility & Efficiency were often mixed up, as were Error Prevention and Error Recovery.

It was encouraging to see more students using Mātāpono Māori responses and principles such as rangatiratanga in their responses. Stronger candidates seamlessly blended these with heuristics in their responses.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified features demonstrating usability principles in a given interface and clearly stated the principle
- described why the consideration of usability principles is important when designing an interface
- primarily identified and described 3–4 usability principles correctly in question B for the given screen shots
- easily matched the definitions in A(i) and gave a correct example of Match between System & Real World in A(ii).

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

- explained features that related to a usability principle for an interface of their choice, and linked these to the purpose of the interface
- related the usability principles to how they made the user experience more efficient when using the interface
- identified specific implementation of features linked to usability principles, and explained how they would support users in a specific scenario
- demonstrated an extended understanding of usability principles, enabling them to identify examples linked to a wide range of principles and also identify the relationships between these principles and their effect on usability.

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

- articulated the role of usability principles in usability, evidenced by a range of implementations / examples
- compared two interfaces and stated key similarities or differences of each of them in terms of like for like usability principles (e.g. how they both used Error Prevention when making an account)
- identified improvements that could be made to an interface, and linked these improvements to a usability principle
- compiled their ideas succinctly
- generally included distinctions between User Control and Freedom (with emergency exit / undo) and Flexibility and Efficiency of Use (with accelerators) in their explanations; similarly, they differentiated Error Prevention and Error Recovery with confidence.

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

- often talked about interface features without reference to usability principles
- made attempts to identify and describe usability principles, often incorrectly
- quite often mixed up the classic ones that are similar, such as Error Prevention and Error Recovery
- sometimes used the literal meaning of the words in a usability principle to describe usability, for example: “User control and freedom is when you can roam around the website wherever you want”.

Achievement standard 92007: Design a digital technologies outcome

Assessment

There was huge variety in assessment formats, as teachers did not follow the specifications of a mini portfolio. Some schools submitted highly scaffolded learning activity evidence, or highly scaffolded exam-style assessments. Some schools indicated Achievement, Merit, and Excellence next to the assessment question / prompt / heading.

Commentary

For some candidates the level of evidence presented for the 5-credit Design standard lacked depth and was below what was expected at level 6 of the curriculum.

It was often hard to differentiate what was copied and pasted from a candidate's project work in class versus collated in a portfolio in a 3-hour assessment. Some candidates included many images that were used to show written responses.

A continuing issue was confusion between 'designing' and 'developing' a digital outcome, with some submissions including evidence aligned with 92004 / 92005 rather than designing, refinement, and evaluation of a completed design.

The specifications were clear that candidates should submit a mini portfolio focused on the design stage / phase only. Despite this, there was considerable variation in submission types and ongoing reliance on templates, with some responses so heavily scaffolded that they limited authentic decision-making.

Stronger submissions were typically those where candidates had genuine choice and followed a coherent design process: they established a clear need / opportunity, identified users and specific requirements, generated a range of ideas, refined a selected design using valuable feedback, and justified fitness for purpose by linking decisions back to requirements and context. In contrast, teacher-driven or templated tasks often produced unclear or imposed purposes and requirements, and candidates struggled to explain the 'why' behind decisions.

Feedback was commonly included, but was often vague or used to choose an idea rather than improve the design itself. A common weakness was the final evaluation, where some candidates described what changed without explaining why it mattered, what requirement it improved, or how it strengthened fitness for purpose.

The understanding of manaakitanga / kaitiakitanga improved from 2024, but candidates still confused the concepts and, in many cases, were given manaakitanga and / or kaitiakitanga as the context itself rather than embedded practices demonstrated through design decisions and the design process. Manaakitanga needs to go beyond simply "respecting feedback" and should be shown through deliberate choices that care for users and support wellbeing, inclusion, and culturally responsive practice.

An emerging issue was 3D figurine proposals, where design evidence was primarily AI-generated images produced from prompts and reference imagery. These submissions often lacked candidate-led ideation and refinement, and showed limited understanding of how the 'design' would translate into a manufacturable 3D outcome, for example: form and structure, scale, parts and joins, and an achievable modelling / production workflow. In these cases, the evidence reflected an image creation task rather than an authentic design process that demonstrates the design thinking underpinning a design for a proposed digital technologies outcome.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- showed evidence of a design process to create a design for a proposed digital technologies outcome
- identified an actual need or opportunity, potential users, and requirements for the design
- included generated design ideas
- included a completed design and described how it addressed the need / opportunity and met the requirements
- described how manaakitanga or kaitiakitanga was used authentically within the design or design process.
- often collected feedback, but did not clearly show how it was applied to improve the design; in some cases, feedback was vague, resulting in only minor changes with limited impact
- showed images of changes / iterations, but provided limited written explanation of the design decisions behind them
- were given a brief where the context and purpose were unclear to candidates, resulting in a constrained and limited design process.

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

- used feedback effectively, making at least two clear improvements and including images that showed these changes
- explained how at least one design decision improved the quality of the design for the proposed digital technologies outcome
- used different examples to illustrate improvements and design decisions
- did not refer back to requirements when justifying the completed design's fitness for purpose, or repeated improvements / design decisions rather than explaining how requirements were met.

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

- worked through a structured design process, clearly generating design ideas, refining the design, and producing a final design
- presented a detailed final design that clearly communicated how the proposed outcome would look and work
- used a range of specific examples drawn from their own design work (rather than generic statements)
- justified how decisions made during the design phase / process contributed to the completed design's fitness for purpose, using evidence (research, feedback, and design principles) and clearly linking back to the need or opportunity, end-user needs and requirements
- explained why key changes were made during refinement and the impact those changes had on the design, showing not only "what changed", but also how each decision improved quality and alignment with requirements.

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

- focused on the developed outcome rather than the design, often blurring design vs development
- showed limited understanding of the design process, resulting in minimal, incomplete, or repeated responses
- had a missing or unclear need / opportunity
- identified an end user but did not clearly define their requirements

- did not adequately address manaakitanga or kaitiakitanga
- had insufficient design evidence of design ideas and a final design
- relied heavily on images with limited written explanation, including images containing the written evidence instead of a clear written response
- used AI / internet-generated images as ‘design evidence’ without demonstrating their own design thinking and decision-making
- included design content that breached legal / copyright expectations
- proposed design outcomes that were too simple for Level 6 or were not a design for a digital technologies outcome.