

REPORT OF 2015 NAPLAN TEST INCIDENTS

Introduction

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests are held during May each year. In 2015 the tests were held on 12, 13 and 14 May and, in total, approximately five million tests were sat by over one million students nationally.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for the central management of NAPLAN. The test administration authority (TAA) in each state and territory is responsible for the administration of the tests in schools.

ACARA works with state, territory and non-government representatives to ensure the NAPLAN tests are delivered in accordance with nationally agreed protocols so that the results validly, reliably and fairly capture student achievements. The *National Protocols for Test Administration* ('the Protocols') provide detailed information on all aspects of the administration of the tests, specify security requirements and uniform processes and procedures. This is to ensure students complete the tests under standardised conditions so that all students' results are comparable across Australia. Where individual students require special arrangements to complete the tests, these are provided at the school in consultation with the student, their parents/carers, and the relevant TAA.

In the context of the more than one million students and just over 9,500 schools participating in NAPLAN across the country in 2015, there were very few allegations of breaches of the Protocols. Where an allegation is made that the Protocols have been breached, a relevant responsible entity* investigates and takes an appropriate action in response. Reports are provided to ACARA summarising the test incident, including investigations and outcomes. This information is then analysed by ACARA and used to produce this test incidents report.

ACARA, in cooperation with states and territories, reviews the Protocols annually to ensure they effectively support educators to administer the NAPLAN tests as required. This review is informed by analysis of the test incident information reported to ACARA, to improve processes and education about the program.

* For the purpose of investigating breaches of the *National Protocols for Test Administration*, a relevant 'responsible entity' will depend on the school governance arrangements and any existing agreements that allocate the responsibility for this activity. Responsible entities can include individuals such as principals, or organisations, such as school boards or system authorities (including public education authorities), which have authority to receive and assess initial reports of test incidents. More information on investigating test incidents is provided in the *Guidelines for managing test incidents in schools* on the NAP website.

NAPLAN test incidents are defined as follows:

- Cheating (C)** A breach of the *National Protocols for Test Administration* amounting to cheating occurs when there is intent to gain an unfair advantage or improperly influence test results. This category does not include instances of student cheating that, in itself, is not considered a breach of the Protocols. Such incidents are dealt with through schools' existing procedures.
- Security (S)** A breach of the *National Protocols for Test Administration* affecting test security occurs when early knowledge of test content is obtained, which has a potential to compromise the integrity of test results. Breaches of test security committed with intent to gain an unfair advantage are considered as cheating.
- General (G)** General breaches of the *National Protocols for Test Administration* include all other mal-administrative practices that are not in accordance with the agreed Protocols, but that do not amount to cheating or affect test security.

This report does not identify individuals or schools but provides information on breaches of the Protocols in two tables:

- **Table 1** summarises information about the number of allegations of cheating, security breaches or general breaches of test protocols.
- **Table 2** provides further information about the substantiated cases, including a description of the incident, and information on what action has been taken as a consequence.

Analysis of 2015 NAPLAN test incidents

The *Report of 2015 NAPLAN Test Incidents* reinforces the fact that teachers and schools work hard to ensure the integrity of the tests. This is evident both through the very small number of incidents across the entire country, as well as through the increasing numbers of schools reporting their own inadvertent breaches.

This report also plays an important educative role in reminding schools of correct procedure. The transparency and concern shown by schools in reporting incidents demonstrates their commitment to ensuring that the information they and their students receive from the tests is as useful as possible.

In summary:

- In 2015, out of the approximately five million NAPLAN tests sat by students nationally, only 42 test incidents were substantiated, affecting only a very small number of students and schools across the nation.
- Of these 42 test incidents, only six cheating breaches on the part of schools were substantiated.
- Of the security breaches reported in 2015, several involved the use of social media, which can also lead to other students' results being put at risk. Test administrators are increasingly aware of the challenges presented by social media, and are vigilant in

ensuring phones and other devices prohibited by the Protocols are not available to students during the tests.

- Less than a half of substantiated test incidents involved improper handling of test materials. This potentially poses the greatest risk to the security of the tests. Although the impact of breaches can be hard to determine, in most cases, students' results were determined to be valid and the risk was not realised.
- Where incidents were substantiated (refer Table 2), TAAs considered whether affected students' results were valid. This year's incidents demonstrate that in the majority of situations where students might have had access to unauthorised assistance, there was no evidence that assistance led to their results being compromised.

The majority of substantiated incidents were directly reported to the TAA by the schools, representing a broad level understanding of the Protocols and significant efforts by schools to ensure transparency in their processes. This is testimony to the professionalism of teachers and school administrators.

TABLE 1: Summary of reported incidents (as at 6 October 2015)

Incident category	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Under investigation	Total	Average totals 2010–14
Cheating breach (C)	6	3	6	15	20
Security breach (S)	9	0	1	10	21
General breach (G)	27	9	4	40	37
Total	42	12	11	65	78
Total schools affected	44	12	11	67	75

TABLE 2: Incidents investigated and substantiated (as at 6 October 2015)

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2015 National Protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
1.	NSW	G	4.3.11	Test material made public by the school during the test security period. Relevant to one school.	No evidence results were compromised. Response sent to school outlining breach and NAPLAN protocols.
2.	NSW	C	10.4.2	Inappropriate assistance provided to student. Relevant to one student in one school.	Response sent to school outlining breach and NAPLAN protocols. Student data withheld.
3.	NSW	C	10.4	Inappropriate assistance provided to students during the test. Relevant to one school.	No evidence results were compromised. Referred for disciplinary investigation. Data not withheld.
4.	NSW	G	6.5	Protocols for use of a scribe as a disability adjustment for the writing test not followed. Relevant to numerous students in a number of schools.	Response sent to relevant schools outlining breach and scribe protocols. Data withheld where NAPLAN protocols not followed.
5.	Vic.	S	2.4.1	Test packages opened for sorting earlier than allowed. Relevant to two schools.	No evidence that results were compromised. School counselled on importance of following test protocols.
6.	Vic.	G	8.4.4	Some tests administered outside of sanctioned timetable. Relevant to one class in one school.	Error corrected once identified. No students were advantaged or disadvantaged. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
7.	Vic.	S	4.3.9	Test material made public by the school during the test security period. Further scope unknown. Relevant to one student in one school.	Secure content was promptly removed. School was counselled and undertook to improve test administration procedures for future testing.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2015 National Protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
8.	Vic.	S	2.4.1	Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to one class in one school.	Secure content returned to school. School was counselled and undertook to improve test administration procedures for future testing.
9.	Vic.	S	4.3.9	Test material made public by the school during the test security period. Relevant to two schools. Further scope unknown.	Secure content promptly removed. School was counselled and undertook to improve test administration procedures for future testing.
10.	Vic.	G	8.9.3	Unused test books copied for retention at school. Relevant to one class in one school.	All copied books were destroyed. School was counselled and will ensure that only eligible students sit the tests in future.
11.	Vic.	S	2.4 4.3.9	Test material made public by the school during the test security period. Relevant to one school. Further scope unknown.	Secure content was promptly removed. School was counselled and will ensure confidentiality of test content is maintained until the end of the security period.
12.	Vic.	G	8.7.1	Incomplete preparatory instructions given for test. Relevant to one class in one school.	Results analysed and no disadvantage to students found. School undertook to improve procedures for future years.
13.	Vic.	G	8.9.3	Completed test book copied for retention at the school. Relevant to one student in one class.	Photocopy promptly destroyed. School was counselled and has undertaken not to copy test material again.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2015 National Protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
14.	Vic.	C	2.3.6 8.6.3	Student responses modified after two tests. Relevant to two classes in one school.	Staff member concerned reported breach to appropriate authority. Investigation found that results for two of the tests were compromised and results consequently amended. Staff member referred for disciplinary action by appropriate sectoral authority.
15.	Qld	S	4.3.9	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to one school.	No evidence of any effect on the data. School undertook to improve procedures for future years.
16.	Qld	C	2.2.5 8.6.3	Inappropriate assistance provided to students during the test. Relevant to one class in one school.	No evidence results were compromised. Referred for disciplinary action.
17.	Qld	G	8.6.3 8.8.1	Excess time provided to complete the test. Relevant to one class in one school.	No evidence results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future years.
18.	Qld	G	8.7.1	Test instructions not delivered. Relevant to four students in one school.	No evidence results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future years.
19.	Qld	G	2.4.1	Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to one class at one school.	Prompts returned to school next day. School was counselled and undertook to improve test administration procedures for future testing.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2015 National Protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
20.	SA	C	2.2.5 8.6.1	Inappropriate assistance provided to students during the test. Relevant to one school and three students.	No evidence results were compromised. Staff and student interviews conducted. Referred for disciplinary investigation.
21.	SA	S	2.4.4	Test material not kept secure during test security period. Relevant to one school and one student for one test.	No evidence results were compromised. School to review test invigilation procedures.
22.	SA	G	8.6.11	Test administrator read items not permitted to be read aloud. Relevant to one school and three students.	No evidence results were compromised. Reminded staff of responsibilities.
23.	SA	C	2.2.5 8.6.1	Inappropriate assistance provided to a student during the test. Relevant to one school and one student.	No evidence results were compromised. Referred for disciplinary investigation.
24.	SA	S	2.4.4	Test material not kept secure during test security period. Relevant to one school and four students.	Staff member already referred for disciplinary action for previous test incident.
25.	SA	S	4.2.4 4.3.1 4.3.3	Special print test material not kept secure during test security period. Relevant to one school. No students were affected.	No evidence results were compromised. Review of contractor procedures regarding labelling of special print test materials.
26.	SA	G	8.6.6	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to one school and one student.	No evidence of any effect on the data. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2015 National Protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
27.	SA	G	2.3.6 6.6.4 8.6.3	Test procedures for writing not followed correctly. Inappropriate assistance provided to a student during test. Relevant to one student in one school.	Data not compromised. Teacher was counselled and a verbal caution was given.
28.	SA	G	8.6.11 8.7.1	Test procedures for writing not followed correctly. Relevant to one school and four students.	Data not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
29.	SA	G	5.1.2	Students prevented from participating in testing. Relevant to one school and two students.	School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
30.	SA	G	8.9.1	Test materials not returned to school storage in line with correct procedures. Relevant to one school.	Data not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
31.	SA	G	8.4.3	Tests provided to students in incorrect sequence. Relevant to one school.	Data not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
32.	WA	G	8.6.11	Inappropriate assistance provided to student during the test. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence results were compromised. School was counselled regarding the importance of adhering to the protocols.
33.	WA	G	2.2.5 8.6.11	Inappropriate assistance provided to student during the test. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve administration procedures for future testing. Student did not receive a score.
34.	WA	G	8.9.1 8.9.2	The test was done on an electronic device and the work was not correctly saved. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve administration procedures for future testing.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2015 National Protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
35.	Tas.	G	6.7.1 6.7.3	Protocols for use of assistive technology not followed. Small number of students at one school.	Relevant staff provided counselling about protocols for using assistive technology. Results withheld.
36.	Tas.	G	8.4.5	Some tests administered outside of sanctioned timetable. Relevant to one school.	School undertook an internal review of test administration processes to ensure there is no future recurrence. No adverse effects of interruption to testing.
37.	Tas.	G	8.4.6	Tests administered outside of sanctioned timetable. Relevant to a small number of students.	Data reviewed and no evidence results were compromised. School was counselled regarding the correct procedures for future testing.
38.	NT	G	4.3.2	Completed test booklets were lost by the school and later located. Relevant to one school.	No evidence results were compromised. School undertook to improve administration for future test.
39.	NT	G	4.3.2	Test booklet destroyed. Relevant to one school and one student.	No evidence the security of the test was compromised. Staff reminded of responsibilities under protocols.
40.	ACT	G	4.3.3 4.3.9	Test materials not kept secure in school during test security period. Relevant to two classes at one school.	No evidence that data were compromised. Procedures for receipt of materials to be improved.
41.	ACT	G	2.2.6	Excess time provided to complete the test. Relevant to three to four students in one class.	No evidence that data were compromised. Staff reminded of requirements to read and follow procedures exactly as outlined in guidelines.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2015 National Protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
42.	ACT	G	2.2.3	Procedures for supervision not followed fully. Relevant to one school and on class.	No evidence that data were compromised. All staff reminded of their responsibilities around security of testing materials.