

REPORT OF 2014 NAPLAN TEST INCIDENTS

Introduction

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests are held during May each year. In 2014 the tests were held on 13, 14 and 15 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 and specify security requirements, 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 9500 schools participating in NAPLAN across the country in 2014, there were very few allegations of breaches of the Protocols. Where an allegation is made that the Protocols have been breached, the relevant responsible entity* investigates and takes 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. To improve processes and education about the program, this review is informed by analysis of the test incident information reported to ACARA.

* For the purpose of investigating breaches of the *National Protocols for Test Administration*, the 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), that 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 the potential to compromise the integrity of the 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 maladministrative 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 as follows:

- **Table 1** summarises information about the number of allegations of cheating, security breaches or general breaches of test protocols, and
- **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 2014 NAPLAN test incidents

The *Report of 2014 NAPLAN Test Incidents* reinforces the fact that teachers and schools work hard to ensure the integrity of the tests. This is evident in the very small number of incidents across the entire country, as well as in the increasing number 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 2014 out of the approximately five million NAPLAN tests sat by students nationally, only 51 test incidents were substantiated, affecting only a very small number of students and schools across the nation.
- Of these 51 test incidents, only seven cheating breaches on the part of schools were substantiated.
- Less than half of the substantiated test incidents involved improper handling of test materials. This potentially poses the greatest risk to the security of the tests: if students are aware of test content before they sit the tests, the validity of their responses could be called into question. Although the impact of security breaches can be hard to determine,

in most cases, students' results were determined to be valid and the risk was not realised.

- Some of the security breaches reported in 2014 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.
- It is clear that schools take NAPLAN security very seriously. The majority of substantiated incidents were directly reported to the TAA by the schools. This indicates a greater understanding of the Protocols, increased attention paid to test integrity, and significant efforts by schools to ensure transparency in their processes and a desire to be doing the 'right thing'. This is testimony to the professionalism of teachers and school administrators.
- Where incidents are substantiated (refer to Table 2), TAAs consider whether affected students' results are valid. This year's incidents demonstrated that there can be situations where students might have had access to unauthorised assistance, but where there was no evidence that assistance led to their results being compromised.

TABLE 1: Summary of reported incidents (as at 10 October 2014)

Incident category	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Under investigation	Total	Average totals 2010–2013
Cheating breach (C)	7	5	9	21	20
Security breach (S)	10	3	2	15	23
General breach (G)	34	6	4	44	36
Total	51	14	15	80	79
Total schools affected	47	14	12	73	75

TABLE 2: Incidents investigated and substantiated (as at 10 October 2014)

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category	2014 national protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
1.	NSW	S	4.3.1	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to one school.	No evidence results were compromised. School undertook to improve security procedures for future tests.
2.	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.	Some results were found to be compromised and were withheld. Schools were instructed to improve procedures for future testing.
3.	NSW	C	8.4.5 8.8.1	Excess time provided to complete the test. Relevant to numerous students in two year levels in one school.	No evidence results were compromised. School was advised to improve procedures for future tests.
4.	NSW	C	8.4.5 8.8.1	Excess time provided to complete the test. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence results were compromised. School was instructed to improve procedures for future tests.
5.	NSW	C	8.6.1	Students prompted to change their answers. Relevant to a few students in one class in one school.	Matter identified but resolved after the issuing of student reports. Results were not withheld. School undertook to improve procedures for future tests.
6.	Vic.	G	2.1.2	Influence exerted on parents/carers to withdraw their child from testing. Relevant to one student in one school.	Issue identified and rectified prior to commencement of the test. School undertook to improve processes.
7.	Vic.	G	8.4.3 8.4.4	Tests provided to students in incorrect sequence. Relevant to one class in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was counselled regarding the importance of adhering to the protocols.
8.	Vic.	G	2.2.6 8.8.1	Excess time provided to complete the test. Relevant to one class in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was counselled regarding the importance of adhering to the protocols.

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9.	Vic.	G	2.1.2	Influence exerted on parents/carers to withdraw their child from testing. Relevant to one student in one school.	Issue identified and rectified prior to commencement of the test. School was counselled regarding the importance of adhering to the protocols.
10.	Vic.	G	8.9.3	Completed test books copied for retention at the school. Relevant to two classes in one school.	Issue identified and rectified at the school. Copies of booklets destroyed. Results not compromised. School was counselled regarding the importance of adhering to the protocols.
11.	Vic.	S	2.4 4.3.9	Secure test content made public during the test security period. Scope unknown.	Secure content was promptly removed. No evidence that results were compromised. School counselled regarding the importance of security protocols.
12.	Vic.	G	2.2.3	Insufficient time provided to student to complete the test. Relevant to one student in one school.	Issue identified and rectified. Student provided with correct time to complete the test. No evidence that results were compromised. School was advised of correct procedures for future testing.
13.	Vic.	G	2.2.3 8.7.1	Insufficient time provided to students to complete the test. Relevant to one class in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was counselled regarding the correct procedures for future testing.
14.	Vic.	C	2.2.5 8.6.3 8.7.1	Inappropriate assistance provided to students during the test. Relevant to two students in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. Referred for disciplinary action.
15.	Vic.	S	4.3.1	Writing test material opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to one school.	Writing results compromised and withheld. Referred for disciplinary action.
16.	Vic.	C	4.3.7 8.6.3	Writing test material made available to students prior to scheduled test day. Relevant to two classes in one school.	Writing results compromised and withheld. Referred for disciplinary action.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category	2014 national protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
17.	Vic.	G	8.4.3	Some tests administered outside of sanctioned timetable. Relevant to one year level in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was counselled regarding the correct procedures for future testing.
18.	Vic.	S	2.4 2.4.1 8.5.2	Test material not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to two classes in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
19.	Qld	S	2.4 4.3.7	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to three schools.	No evidence that results were compromised. Schools undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
20.	Qld	G	2.4.2 4.3.10	Test materials not kept secure in a school during the test security period. Relevant to two schools.	No evidence that results were compromised. Schools undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
21.	Qld	G	2.1.2	Influence exerted on parents/carers to withdraw their child from testing. Relevant to one school.	School was counselled regarding importance of participation protocols.
22.	Qld	C	8.6.1 8.6.11	Inappropriate assistance provided to students. Relevant to one class in two schools.	No evidence that results were compromised. Referred for disciplinary action.
23.	Qld	G	4.3.11	Test material made public by the school during the test security period. Relevant to one school. Further scope unknown.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was counselled regarding importance of security protocols
24.	Qld	G	8.9.4	Completed test booklets marked at the school. Relevant to two schools.	No evidence that results were compromised. Referred for disciplinary action.
25.	Qld	G	8.4.3 8.4.4	Tests provided to students in incorrect sequence. Relevant to one class in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
26.	Qld	G	4.3.11	Test material made public by the school during the test security period. Relevant to one school. Further scope unknown.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve security procedures for future testing.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category	2014 national protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
27.	WA	G	8.9.1	Completed test booklets were lost by the school and unrecovered. Relevant to one student in one school.	Student's results unavailable. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
28.	WA	G	8.9.3	Completed test booklets copied for retention at the school. Relevant to two classes in two schools.	No evidence that results were compromised. Schools were advised of correct procedures for future testing.
29.	SA	G	2.4.2	Test materials made available to students immediately prior to the test. Relevant to one year level in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
30.	SA	G	2.2.4 8.6.6	Procedures for supervision not followed fully. Relevant to one year level in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
31.	SA	G	6.5.4	Protocols for the use of a Scribe as a disability adjustment for the writing test not followed. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
32.	SA	G	8.6.1	Inappropriate assistance provided to student. Relevant to one student in one school.	The student's results were compromised and withheld. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
33.	SA	G	8.7.1	Inappropriate assistance provided to student during test. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. Disciplinary action taken.
34.	SA	G	6.6.1	Inappropriate assistance provided to student during test. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future years.
35.	SA	G	8.4.4	Tests provided to students in incorrect sequence. Relevant to four year levels in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future years.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category	2014 national protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
36.	Tas.	G	8.4.1	Tests administered outside of sanctioned timetable. Relevant to one class in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was reminded of correct procedures for future testing.
37.	Tas.	S	4.3.1	Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was reminded of the importance of security protocols.
38.	Tas.	G	8.5.2	Student left unsupervised during testing. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was counselled regarding the importance of adherence to protocols.
39.	Tas.	G	8.4.1	Excess time provided to student to complete the test. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School was counselled regarding the importance of adherence to protocols.
40.	Tas.	G	8.6.11	Inappropriate assistance provided to students during the test. Relevant to fewer than six students in one school.	Results were compromised and withheld. School was counselled regarding the importance of adherence to protocols.
41.	Tas.	G	5.2.3	Participation status protocol inappropriately applied. Relevant to fewer than 5 students in one school.	School was counselled regarding the importance of participation protocols.
42.	NT	G	2.1.2	Influence exerted on parents/carers to withdraw their child from testing. Relevant to one year level in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for participation in future testing.
43.	NT	S	4.2.3	Test materials not delivered securely. No schools affected.	Materials were secured appropriately at the regional office. Follow-up was undertaken with the contractor. No evidence that results were compromised.
44.	NT	S	4.2.2	Test materials not delivered securely. Relevant to one school.	Materials were secured appropriately at the school. Follow-up was undertaken with the contractor. No evidence that results were compromised.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category	2014 national protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
45.	NT	G	8.6.9	Inappropriate assistance available to student during test. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.