

REPORT OF 2013 NAPLAN TEST INCIDENTS

Introduction

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests are held during May each year. In 2013 the tests were held on 14, 15 and 16 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 to ensure that the results validly, reliably and fairly capture student achievement. 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 to ensure students complete the tests under similar 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 2013, there were very few allegations of breaches. 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 analysed by ACARA and used to produce this report. Student cheating is not, in itself, considered a breach of the Protocols, and is dealt with through schools' existing procedures.

ACARA, in cooperation with states and territories, continues to review the Protocols to ensure they effectively support educators to administer the NAPLAN tests with consistency. This review is informed by analysis of the test incident information reported to ACARA, to improve processes and education about the program. The Protocols represent a common-sense approach to managing the risks associated with testing in a standardised environment.

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.
- 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 mal-administrative practices that are not in accordance with the agreed protocols, but which do not amount to cheating or affect test security.

^{*} 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 which 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.

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.

Statement on 2013 NAPLAN Test Incidents

The *Report of 2013 NAPLAN Test Incidents* reinforces the fact that teachers and schools work hard to ensure the integrity of the tests, evidenced 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 get back from the tests is as useful as possible.

In summary:

- There were fewer reported allegations of incidents in 2013 compared with 2012. This is likely to be due to the increasing familiarity of the Protocols in schools as NAPLAN tests become a more routine part of the school calendar.
- Only 43 test incidents were substantiated, affecting only a very small number of students and schools across the nation.
- Of these 43 test incidents, only three cheating breaches on the part of schools were substantiated (this is three fewer than in 2012).
- Almost half of substantiated test incidents involved improper handling of test materials. This poses a 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 2013 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. More than half of all substantiated incidents were directly reported to the TAA by the schools, indicating 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.

- The NSW Test Administration Authority proactively undertook an audit of schools where Scribes were available to support students with disability. This audit demonstrated that there were misunderstandings in some schools about the requirements for using this adjustment. ACARA welcomes activities by systems and schools to improve understandings of the requirements for NAPLAN tests, and recognises that Test Administration Authorities across Australia undertake a range of self-initiated activities to ensure NAPLAN tests are delivered consistently each year.
- If incidents are substantiated, 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. Examples of this include where the assistance was unsuccessful (e.g. as a result of being advised to redo an answer and getting it wrong), and where the assistance was not used (e.g. advice not taken or extra time not needed).

TABLE 1: Summary of Reported Incidents (as at 8 October 2013)

Incident category	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Under investigation	Total
Cheating breach (C)	3	10	1	14
Security breach (S)	21	14	0	35
General breach (G)	19	7	0	26
Total	43	31	1	75*
Total schools affected	39	28	1	68*

* NSW undertook a separate continuous improvement audit of the use of Scribes in NAPLAN tests. The results of that audit are not included in this table.

TABLE 2: Incidents investigated and substantiated (as at 8 October 2013)

Ref. #	State/ Territory	Incident Category	2013 National Protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
1	NSW	G	6.5	Protocols for use of a Scribe as a disability adjustment for the Writing test not followed. Relevant to students in numerous schools.	Some results were found to be compromised and were withheld. See also notes in the analysis section of this report.
2	NSW	G	8.8.1	Excess time provided to complete the tests. Relevant to two students.	No evidence that results were compromised. School instructed to increase understanding of protocols across the school.
3	NSW	G	4.3.10	Test materials not kept secure in a school during the test security period. Relevant to one student.	Results not processed due to ineligibility. School advised of correct procedures for future testing.
4	NSW	S	2.4.2	Test materials made available to students immediately prior to the test. Relevant to one year level.	One student's results were compromised and withheld. School undertook to improve test security procedures for future testing.
5	Vic.	C	2.2.5, 8.6.1	Students prompted to reconsider one answer. Relevant to three students.	No evidence that results were compromised. Referred for disciplinary action.
6	Vic.	G	2.1.2	Influence exerted on parents/carers to withdraw their child from testing. Relevant to two students in two schools.	Issue identified and rectified prior to commencement of tests. Results not compromised. Schools undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
7	Vic.	G	2.4.6, 8.9.3	Completed test booklets copied for retention at the school. Relevant to three schools.	Copies of booklets destroyed and results not compromised. Schools undertook to improve procedures for future years.
8	Vic.	G	2.2.7, 8.5.2	Inappropriate assistance (poster on wall) available to students during test. Relevant to one class.	No evidence that results were compromised.
9	Vic.	G	6.4.1	Disability adjustment provided without appropriate approval. Relevant to one student.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.

Ref. #	State/ Territory	Incident Category	2013 National Protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
10	Vic.	S	2.4.1, 4.3.1	Test materials lost and inadvertently destroyed before the test. Relevant to nine students.	Replacement materials provided to enable students to sit tests as scheduled. No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve security procedures for future testing.
11	Vic.	S	2.4.1, 4.3.7	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to one school.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve security procedures for future tests.
12	Vic.	S	2.4, 4.3	Test materials not received by school in line with correct procedures. Relevant to one class.	Replacement materials provided to enable students to sit the tests. Results not compromised.
13	Vic.	S	2.4.6, 4.3.9	Secure test content and responses made public by the school during the test security period. Relevant to one student.	No evidence that further results have been compromised. Referred for disciplinary action. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
14	Vic.	S	2.4.6, 4.3.9	Secure test content and response made public by the school during the test security period. Relevant to one student.	After investigation, insufficient evidence to identify school or student involved for further investigation.
15	Qld	C	2.2.6	Excess time provided to complete tests. Relevant to several classes.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing. No further information on outcomes known.
16	Qld	G	4.3.7	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to one school.	No results compromised. School counselled regarding importance of security protocols.
17	Qld	G	6.7.4	Procedures for disability adjustments not followed. Relevant to one student.	Results not compromised. School counselled regarding importance of disability protocols.
18	Qld	G	8.4.4	Tests provided to students in incorrect sequence. Relevant to one class.	No results were compromised. School counselled regarding importance of adherence to protocols.

Ref. #	State/ Territory	Incident Category	2013 National Protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
19	Qld	G	2.2.6, 8.8.1, 8.1.2	Student initially instructed to rewrite answer after completion of test. Relevant to one student.	After investigation, no results were found to be compromised. School counselled regarding importance of adherence to protocols.
20	Qld	S	4.3.10	Test materials not kept secure in a school during the test security period. Relevant to a number of students.	No results were compromised. School counselled regarding importance of adherence to protocols.
21	Qld	S	2.4.1	Secure test content made public by the school during the test security period. Relevant to all year levels.	No evidence that results were directly compromised. School counselled regarding importance of security protocols.
22	Qld	S	4.3.10	Test materials not kept secure in a school during the test security period. Relevant to a number of students.	No results were compromised. School counselled regarding importance of adherence to protocols.
23	WA	G	8.4.5	School interrupted tests for an unsanctioned break (recess). Relevant to one class.	No evidence that results were compromised. School advised of correct procedures for future testing.
24	WA	G	8.8.1	Student instructed to complete test twice. Original responses subsequently reinstated. Relevant to one student.	Results not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
25	WA	G	8.9.3	Test responses copied by test administrator. Relevant to one student.	Results not compromised. School advised of correct procedures for future testing.
26	WA	G	8.9.3, 8.9.4	Students required to transcribe their responses for retention and marking at the school. Relevant to one class.	Results not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
27	WA	S	8.9.1	Test materials not collected and stored securely at the end of the tests. Relevant to one class.	Results not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
28	WA	S	8.9.1, 8.9.4	Test materials not stored securely after the tests. Relevant to two year levels.	No evidence that results were compromised. Referred for disciplinary action.

Ref. #	State/ Territory	Incident Category	2013 National Protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
29	SA	G	2.1.2	Influence exerted on parents/carers to withdraw their child from testing. Relevant to one student.	Issue identified and rectified prior to commencement of tests and no results were compromised. School counselled regarding importance of participation protocols.
30	SA	G	2.4.6, 8.9.3	Completed test booklets copied for retention and marking at the school. Relevant to one class.	Results not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
31	SA	S	2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3	Test materials sent by one school to another school before the test in breach of security requirements. Relevant to one student.	Results not compromised. School counselled regarding importance of security protocols.
32	SA	S	2.4.2	Test materials made available to students immediately prior to the test. Relevant to a number of students in three schools	Results not compromised. School undertook to improve security procedures for future testing.
33	SA	S	2.4.2	Incorrect test administration instructions given to students. Relevant to one class.	Results not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
34	SA	S	8.5.2	Test materials not kept secure in a school during the test security period. Relevant to 18 students.	Results not compromised. School counselled regarding importance of participation and security protocols.
35	Tas.	C	8.6.11	Inappropriate assistance provided to students. Relevant to one class.	Results not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
36	Tas.	G	8.4.3	Test administered outside of sanctioned timetable. Relevant to four year levels.	No evidence that results were compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
37	Tas.	G	4.3.1, 8.9.4	Completed test booklet marked at the school. Relevant to one student.	Results not compromised. School undertook to improve procedures for future testing.
38	Tas.	S	4.3.10	Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to fewer than 12 students.	Results not compromised. School counselled on importance of security protocols.

Ref. #	State/ Territory	Incident Category	2013 National Protocol clause/s breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
39	NT	G	2.1.2	Influence exerted on parents/carers to withdraw their child from testing. Relevant to 12 students.	Issue identified and rectified prior to commencement of tests. Results not compromised. School undertook to improve understanding of participation procedures for future testing.