



**Tertiary
Education
Commission**
Te Amorangi
Mātauranga Matua



Guidelines for using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool

Published by the Tertiary Education Commission

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National Office

44 The Terrace

PO Box 27048

Wellington, New Zealand

Updated in February 2017

ISBN 978-0-478-32056-5 (electronic)

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Guidelines for using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (Assessment Tool)

Purpose of document

This document provides information on the:

- › benefits and context of the Assessment Tool
- › assessment options and types inside the Assessment Tool
- › our funding requirements for using the Assessment Tool
- › our expectations for Assessment Tool usage by fund.

Introduction

The Assessment Tool is a teaching tool

The Assessment Tool helps tutors and trainers improve the literacy and numeracy skills of their learners. It does this by providing robust and reliable information that tutors and trainers can use to understand learners' literacy and numeracy skills and their progress.

This predominantly online adaptive tool can assess adult reading, writing, numeracy and vocabulary skills. The Assessment Tool is based on a nationwide framework of skills called the Learning Progressions – essentially a 6 step of literacy and numeracy skills. Very simply, Step 1 is 'low' and Step 6 is 'high'.

These assessments are online and adaptive which means the questions adjust to the learner's responses. We expect providers to use online adaptive assessments wherever possible because they are more robust and give immediate results to tutors, learners, and tertiary education organisations (TEOs). Paper based assessments are available if internet access is limited.

The Assessment Tool and the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions (Learning Progressions) are key components of the national literacy and numeracy resources we have developed. More information is in Appendix A at the end of this document.

Assessment Tool results help teaching and learning

The Assessment Tool design ensures results are robust, objective, reliable, comparable and immediate.

When an assessment is finished the Assessment Tool produces online reports of the individual student and student group's performance. This means no marking is required and reports are available immediately. Results can be

quickly and easily analysed and learning programmes adjusted to be more effective.

The results help:

learners	understand their own literacy and numeracy skills and what is required for their study and employment
educators	plan courses and programmes to address specific literacy and numeracy skills of learners
providers	evaluate their effectiveness in addressing literacy and numeracy
employers	understand employees' literacy and numeracy strengths and weaknesses
TEC	identify where progress is being made due to the nationally consistent measures of learner skill level and gain

The Assessment Tool is part of good practice – that's why we expect all providers to use it correctly

Use of the Assessment Tool is one part of good literacy and numeracy provision. Providers should:

- › Embed literacy and numeracy in vocational programmes and courses in all foundation education. This means:
 - the explicit teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy within the context and tasks of another, usually vocational, subject or skill (for example, panel beating).
- › Use Assessment tool data and the Learning Progressions to inform effective teaching and monitoring of learner progress.
- › Develop and maintain capability of their foundation-level teaching workforce. This means:
 - ongoing professional development and having a qualified workforce.
 - having a whole of organisational approach to literacy and numeracy, including an overall strategy outlining vision, aims and outcomes.

TEOs should have an organisation-wide plan for assessing learners' literacy and numeracy. The plan should ensure that:

- › assessments are planned to align with each individual learner's enrolment over their time of study
- › delivery of literacy and numeracy assessments is consistent across the organisation
- › educators understand the functionality of the Tool – for example, by using the 'global unlock' function to draw on assessments from other educators or TEOs if the learner has been assessed within the last 90 days
- › clear and consistent messages are given to learners, particularly about the purpose of the initial and progress assessments

- › TEOs use the aggregate information generated by the Tool to evaluate and improve the delivery and quality of their education.

For more information on embedded literacy and numeracy, go to this [page](#) on our website or visit The National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy website – the Te Arapaki Ako) [here](#)

Assessment Tool areas and types

The Assessment Tool has a range of assessment options which educators can use to assess diverse learners:

Figure 1: Assessment Tool options as of February 2017

Assessment Tool options for learners

Adult	Youth	Te Ata Hāpara	Starting Points
The ‘default’ option of the Assessment Tool. Recommended for most learners.	Items designed to be appropriate and engaging for learners aged 15-25. Can be used with any learners.	Reading option in English, items designed for Māori learners. Can be used with any learners.	Listening option for beginning ESOL learners, Reading option for ESOL and foundation-level literacy learners
Login here	Login here	Login here	Login here

The Assessment Tool has a number of different types of assessments as summarised in the following two tables.

Table 1: Availability of assessment area by assessment type

	Online Adaptive	Snapshot	Non-adaptive (paper-based)
Numeracy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reading	Yes	Yes	Yes
Writing			Yes
Vocabulary	Yes		
Step 2 Threshold Assessment for Reading		Yes	Yes
Starting Points	Yes		

The Starting Points options are designed to be done on tablets in a supported one-on-one situation although they can be done on a PC or Laptop. Confident learners may be able to complete the Starting Points assessment independently or with limited tutor support.

Two Starting Points Options are:

- › Starting Points Listening assesses listening vocabulary and is designed for beginning NZ English for Speakers of Other Language learners (ESOL), particularly those new to New Zealand.
- › Starting Points Reading assesses foundation level reading skills and is designed for both ESOL and non-ESOL learners. This option is **not suitable** for ESOL learners who are at very early stages of learning English.

For further information on how to use the Starting Points options see our guide to using the Starting Points assessment options [here](#).

Table 2: Availability of assessment area by assessment option

	Adult option	Youth option	Te Ata Hāpara	Starting Points
Numeracy	Yes	Yes		
Reading	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Writing	Yes			
Vocabulary	Yes			Yes
Step 2 Threshold (STA)	Yes	Yes		

The Youth option reading and numeracy assessments can be done as full length online adaptive or snapshot. The Te Ata Hāpara option covers reading. The Starting Points options cover listening vocabulary and reading.

Online adaptive assessments

We expect TEOs, tutors, and trainers to use the online adaptive assessments for reading and numeracy because the assessments are individualised and the results are more robust and reliable. Administrative work is reduced because these are marked by the computer.

Snapshot assessments (including Step Two Threshold assessments)

The Snapshot assessment is a shorter version of the adaptive assessment. Tutors and trainers can nominate a step threshold within the Snapshot assessment. This feature enables a specific step to be targeted and to see whether learners are below threshold, above threshold or somewhere in the middle (undecided). Note that learners still receive a scale score and a step level result.

The 'No Threshold' option should be used unless you are required to use the Step Two Threshold Assessment for Reading option (see below) or you have mapped the demands of your course content to inform the choice of a particular step threshold.

Step Two Threshold Assessment for Reading

This snapshot assessment is suitable for learners with very low reading skills and is often referred to as the 'STA reading assessment'. It enables appropriate referral to Starting Points if necessary. The STA reading assessment addresses feedback from the sector about learners with very low reading skills while meeting our data and assessment requirements.

Non-adaptive paper-based assessments

The non-adaptive assessments are appropriate **only** when access to the online assessment tool is limited or highly impractical. We recommend using online adaptive assessments when access to an online assessment is highly impractical. Online assessment are more accurate, because the questions adapt to the learner's responses, and give immediate results to tutors and learners.

The vocabulary assessments

The vocabulary assessment provides further diagnostic information for learners with very low reading skills. It provides one way to identify if a learner's vocabulary is the limiting factor in their reading.

We recommend that TEOs, tutors, and trainers:

- › become familiar with the assessment type (snapshot or adaptive) that will best give them and their learners the information they need; and
- › use the assessment option most likely to engage their learners.

We don't recommend that learners are asked to sit an assessment within a certain time limit. The length of time that a learner takes to complete the assessment does not affect their final score but learners need to be allowed as much time as they need.

It is important that learners give each assessment their very best effort so that every assessment report is an accurate record of their skills.

As a general guide, a snapshot assessment may take around 40 minutes to complete, and an adaptive assessment may take 80 minutes, but these are only estimates. Some learners may require more time and others may require less. If time is a constraint, remember that a learner can complete the rest of an unfinished online assessment at another time using the same assessment code.

All eligible learners should be assessed

Providers must assess all eligible learners at foundation level except in qualifications taught predominately in Te Reo Māori. These will be identified by qualification NZSCED 91502.

All eligible learners should get an:

- › initial assessment in both reading and numeracy at the beginning of a period of learning. We expect this to be within the first three weeks, and
- › a progress assessment in both reading and numeracy after there has been sufficient time and opportunity for learners to make gains. This should be after the 'half way' mark of a course. We suggest one month to two weeks out from the end of the course. This gives enough time to provide feedback to the learner and inform future plans.

As part of good practice, TEOs should also consider assessing:

- › learners in levels 1 to 3 courses that lead to the award of a qualification at level 3, and
- › any learner, regardless of course or qualification level, where the educator or tutor considers that the learner is likely to have reading and numeracy needs.

The Assessment Tool can also assess vocabulary and writing. However, reading and numeracy are the most important to skills to assess and improve first. This is why they are part of our Assessment Tool requirements.

The timing of initial and progress assessments should relate to the full duration of learner's enrolment. For example, if a learner is enrolled in a multi-year programme then annual assessments are required. This takes a holistic, learner-centred approach and avoids over-assessment.

Frequently asked questions

What if a learner is initially assessed at or above Step 4 reading or Step 5 numeracy?

A learner will not require further assessment in the relevant skill area if they have reached the threshold of Step 4 in reading or Step 5 in numeracy in a previous assessment.

For example:

- › if a learner reached a Step 4 reading in their initial reading assessment, they won't need to do a progress reading assessment
- › if a learner reached a Step 5 numeracy in their progress assessment at a previous TEO, they won't need to do an initial numeracy assessment.

Learners who, at any point, are assessed as being at or above these reading and numeracy thresholds are not required to complete any further progress assessments in the relevant area. This can include assessments a learner has sat prior to joining your organisation.

TEOs should always check what previous assessments a learner may have done prior to enrolling at the current TEO. This will help determine which learners are required to do an initial assessment (because they are below the Step 4 Reading or Step 5 numeracy thresholds).

When should learners in embedded literacy and numeracy courses be assessed?

Courses of three months duration or more are expected to provide sufficient opportunity for literacy and numeracy progress to be made.

The timing of initial and progress assessments should relate to the full duration of learner's enrolment. For example, if a learner is enrolled in a multi-year programme then annual assessments are required. This takes a holistic, learner-centred approach and avoids over-assessment.

How should learners in intensive literacy and numeracy-funded courses be assessed?

All learners need to be assessed using the Assessment Tool. Two new Starting Points options were introduced in early 2016.

- › Starting Points Listening assesses listening vocabulary and is designed for beginning (ESOL), particularly those new to New Zealand.
- › Starting Points Reading assesses foundation level reading skills and is designed for both ESOL and non-ESOL learners. This option is **not suitable** for ESOL learners who are at very early stages of learning English.

Starting Points Listening and Reading have been designed for use on a tablet (or PC/laptop) in a one-to-one supported assessment. Confident learners may be able to complete the assessment independently or with limited tutor support.

Providers can use other Starting Points resources as appropriate, for example the Starting Points [Assessment Guide](#) to provide further diagnostic information about their learners and their needs.

For information on how to use the Starting Points options see [our guide](#) to using the Starting Points assessment options.

The Step Two Threshold assessment can also be used for learners with very low reading skills, and enables appropriate referral to the Starting Points options if necessary. The vocabulary assessment is useful in diagnosing whether a learner's vocabulary is a limiting factor in their reading proficiency.

What proportion of learners in each course should be assessed?

All learners need to be assessed using the Assessment Tool. However, we recognise that learners may withdraw from courses after enrolments close.

We expect:

- › **95% of enrolled learners** required to complete an initial assessment to do so, and
- › **at least 90% of learners** who complete their course (or qualification, in the case of programmes with embedded courses) to undertake a progress assessment in the same strand and type as the initial assessment.

Learners who were assessed at or above Step 4 Reading or Step 5 Numeracy do not need to complete a progress assessment and are therefore excluded from the 90% progress assessment requirement.

What assessment areas and types should be used in progress assessments?

The assessment areas and types used in progress assessments should be the same as those used for initial assessments (this includes assessment thresholds set in snapshot assessments). This also applies to assessments done by TEOs prior to the current TEO. This ensures consistency in using the Assessment Tool and underpins reliable reporting on learner gain.

However, there will be situations where flexibility is appropriate based on the educator's judgement. For example, it may be appropriate in some situations to use snapshot progress assessments after full-length initial assessments.

Where can I get further support and information?

The [Assessment Tool login page](#) has an extensive online knowledge base available to support TEOs using the Assessment Tool. You can also contact the Assessment Tool Service Desk, run by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, on assessforadults@nzcer.org.nz or 04 381 4576.

For more information on embedded literacy and numeracy, go to this [page](#) on our website or visit The National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy website – [the Te Arapoki Ako](#))

Assessment Tool usage requirements by fund

Appendix B shows the Assessment Tool usage requirements current funding mechanisms for various foundation-level funds. They are also described on our website here.

Our methodologies show how we calculate Assessment Tool usage

This table summarises the detailed Assessment Tool methodologies.

	SAC, ILN, WLN, YG funds	ITF
Initial assessments are valid when done	The earliest assessment after or on the commencement date of the programme or sequence and prior to the mid-point.	no earlier than 90 days prior to the participation start date and prior to ,or on, the participation end date
Progress assessments are valid when done	After the mid-point of the programme of sequence , and prior to or on the end date of the qualification	After the start date, After initial assessment, and No later than 90 days after end date

For further information read the Assessment Tool usage methodologies.

Our expectations of Assessment Tool use by fund

This page outlines our expectations for Assessment Tool use and assessment areas for monitoring and reporting. There are two different sets of expectations based on which fund supports the particular course the learner is on.

Table 3: Our expectations of Assessment Tool use by fund

Foundation-level fund	Assessment areas for all learners	Assessment types for initial assessments	Assessment Types for progress assessments
Student Achievement Component (competitive and non-competitive) Level 1–3 courses in Level 1–2 qualifications Youth Guarantee Levels 1-3 DualPathways Pilot levels 1–3 Industry Training Fund Levels 1–2 Workplace Literacy Fund (TEO Led and Employer led strands) Trades Academies	Required: Reading and numeracy assessments. Optional: Writing, Vocabulary, and Starting Points* assessments	Any adaptive, snapshot or paper-based non-adaptive assessment. This includes the online or paper-based STA reading assessment.	Any adaptive, snapshot or paper-based non-adaptive assessment. This includes learners that were ‘Undecided’ or ‘Above Threshold’ in initial STA reading assessment. Learners who were ‘Below Threshold’ in initial STA reading assessment may be reassessed using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Starting Points options › a vocabulary assessment, or › a STA reading assessment.

Foundation-level fund	Assessment areas for all learners	Assessment types for Initial Assessments	Assessment Types for progress assessments
Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN) Fund Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Targeted English for Speakers of Other Languages (ILN)	Starting Points Listening and/or Reading options* Or STA reading	Online Starting Points options. Or Online or paper-based snapshot	Online Starting Points options.* Learners who are ‘Undecided’ or ‘Above Threshold’ in initial STA reading assessment can be reassessed using a Reading snapshot

ESOL).	assessment.	STA reading assessment.	assessment with 'no threshold'. Learners who are 'Below Threshold' in initial STA reading assessment may be reassessed using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Starting Points options › a vocabulary assessment, or › a STA reading assessment.
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*Specific guidance on how to use the Starting Points options with learners is [here](#).

As part of good practice, TEOs should also consider assessing:

- › learners in levels 1 to 3 courses that lead to the award of a qualification at level 3, and
- › any learner, regardless of course or qualification level, where the educator or tutor considers that the learner is likely to have reading and numeracy needs.

Appendix A: Background to our assessment tools

Strong adult literacy and numeracy skills deliver significant economic and social benefits for the individual, for employers and ultimately for New Zealand. Literacy and numeracy is a priority in the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014–2019, particularly raising the skills of learners in levels one to three provision.

Since 2006, we have engaged in a systemic approach to building the capability of the tertiary sector to strengthen the literacy and numeracy of learners at entry-level tertiary education. We have invested in both the development of a high quality national infrastructure to support educators and directly in delivery to learners through a range of funds and grants.

The Learning Progressions

These have been in place since 2008 and they show what adult learners know and can do at successive points as they develop their skills in literacy and numeracy. The Learning Progressions are available for download and in hard copy from the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults website on the [Learning Progressions page](#).

The Learning Progressions are a set of continuums with each step along the continuum representing a significant learning development. Because of this, the steps are uneven and the scales for reading, writing and numeracy are independent of one another.

The Assessment Tool

This predominantly online adaptive tool is primarily designed to provide robust and reliable information on the reading, writing, numeracy and vocabulary skills of adults to educators and tutors. This information informs the development of learning interventions appropriate for learners' needs. The Assessment Tool also allows learners to track their own progress over time and it enables educators and organisations to learn from the progress made by groups or cohorts of learners.

How we are using Assessment Tool data

Assessment Tool data enables us to understand the impact of national literacy and numeracy policies as well as the performance of TEOs. We are also sharing Assessment Tool data with the sector in 2016 to increase transparency and help improve literacy and numeracy performance. We are also using Assessment Tool to understand the trends in learner progress and to develop benchmarks for statistically significant gain.

Full and effective Assessment Tool usage by TEOs and educators will be critical to informing future policy and funding decisions in 2016 and beyond. Accurate and comprehensive data from TEOs will ensure these decisions are robust and evidence-based.

Our methodology for calculating Assessment Tool usage at TEOs is available under 'Methodology for calculating Assessment Tool usage' [on the Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool](#) web page. This methodology takes into account sector feedback about previous versions, and was last revised in February 2017 to reflect the inclusion of the Starting Points options.

Appendix B: Assessment Tool usage requirements in funding mechanisms 2015-2017

For information, we provide relevant extracts from past and present [funding mechanisms](#). For full information, please refer to your funding confirmation letter or use the '[Fund Finder](#)' on our website.

Specialised literacy and numeracy funds

Table 4: Assessment Tool 2017 usage requirements for specialised literacy and numeracy funds

Fund	2017
Workplace Literacy and Numeracy	Para 41b “has in place an effective assessment process for identifying each learner’s initial literacy and numeracy needs, and measure their progress, using the most appropriate version of the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool”
Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN)	Para 21b “has in place an effective assessment process for identifying each learner’s initial literacy and numeracy needs, and measure their progress, using the most appropriate version of the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool”
Intensive Literacy and Numeracy ESOL	Para 31 “A TEO...must have in place an effective assessment process for identifying a learner’s initial literacy and numeracy needs, and measure their progress, using the most appropriate version of the Assessment Tool.”
Refugee English Fund	No specific requirements

Table 5: Assessment Tool usage requirements 2017 for general foundation-level funds

Fund	2017
Student Achievement Component (SAC) 1-2	Para 34d and 45 “includes an assessment process, under which students are assessed using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (except for qualifications taught predominantly in Te Reo Māori)”
Competitive	“must have in place an effective assessment process for identifying a learner’s initial literacy and numeracy needs, and measure their progress, using the most appropriate version of the Assessment Tool”
SAC	Para 32d and 45

1-2 Non-competitive	<p>“includes an assessment process, under which students are assessed using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (except for qualifications taught predominantly in, Te Reo Māori)”</p> <p>“have in place an effective assessment process for identifying a learner’s initial literacy and numeracy needs, and measure their progress, using the most appropriate version of the Assessment Tool”</p>
Youth Guarantee	<p>Para 57b</p> <p>“has in place an effective assessment process for identifying each learner’s initial literacy and numeracy needs, and measures their progress, using the most appropriate version of the Assessment Tool”</p>
Dual Pathways Pilot	<p>Para 57b</p> <p>“has in place an effective assessment process for identifying each learner’s initial literacy and numeracy needs, and measures their progress, using the most appropriate version of the Assessment Tool”</p>
Industry Training Fund	<p>Para 33</p> <p>“A TEO must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to identify the literacy and/or numeracy needs of each industry trainee enrolled in a programme at level 1 or 2 on the NZQF and to measure the industry trainee's progress.”</p>
Maori and Pasifika Trades Training	<p>Para 41.</p> <p>“have in place an effective assessment process for identifying each learner’s initial literacy and numeracy needs, and measure their progress, using the most appropriate version of the Assessment Tool (such as the Adult, Youth, Te Ata Hāpara or Starting Points version).”</p>