

4. ACTION REQUIRED

4.1 Data quality assurance – accuracy and completeness

Data for national reporting should be as accurate and complete as possible. Schools need to ensure that procedures for collecting student background information from parents, via enrolment forms or special data collection forms, are carefully considered and managed.

Schools or school systems are responsible for reviewing and adjusting their data collection tools and data processing procedures to ensure their collections include the agreed standard question modules for each data item.

Subsection 4.2 provides information for existing users of the manual. New users should refer to Subsection 4.3.

Data on student background characteristics associated with educational disadvantage need to be reliable, complete and robust. These data will be used to develop the evidence basis to support the achievement of national objectives aimed at reducing that disadvantage.

4.2 Existing users

NAPLAN test administration authorities and the contractor for the triennial sample assessments have raised concerns about the variable quality of student background data provided by some jurisdictions and sectors. Particular concern has been expressed about the substantial variation across jurisdictions and between sectors in the extent of incomplete data and, most notably, the high levels of missing data for the parental education and parental occupation data items.

In some school systems and schools, the collection of data for the parental education and parental occupation indicators has proved difficult. One problem identified as contributing to poor response rates from parents was the designation (either directly or indirectly) of the questions on enrolment forms seeking information on student background characteristics as optional or non-mandatory. Ministers' adoption of the parental education and parental occupation indicators reflected their agreement that the use of single measures applicable to individual students was the most appropriate way to monitor and report on the effects of socio-economic background (as distinct from other factors, such as Indigenous status, language background other than English or geographic location) on student outcomes.

State and territory education departments or assessment agencies, and non-government peak bodies, are urged to put in place more rigorous mechanisms to obtain the requisite student background data from schools. School systems and schools may need to adopt a variety of techniques for maximising responses rates, such as:

- where data are held at the school level, test administration authorities or assessment authorities making multiple contacts with school liaison officers prior to assessments to confirm the availability of data; and, where data are held centrally and appears incomplete, central agencies seeking the outstanding data from schools
- state and territory test administration authorities (in the case of full cohort NAPLAN assessments) or the assessment contractor (in the case of the national sample assessments) issuing reminders to school systems and non-government peak bodies of the obligations of their constituent schools to provide the requisite data
- schools, in turn, following up missing data and providing advice to parents, explaining, in positive terms, the rationale for collecting data on student background characteristics, and encouraging them to provide the information
- conducting a concerted information campaign encompassing all stakeholders to generate improved response rates for all the student background variables and, particularly, the parental education and parental occupation data items
- jurisdictions and sectors identifying individual schools with high levels of incomplete or missing data and, as necessary, providing support in the form of information on data collection, entry, storage and retrieval protocols and procedures that have proved effective elsewhere

- school systems emphasising the importance of having data on educationally disadvantaged groups of students available at the state and territory and individual school levels to provide an evidence base for intervention strategies or for directing additional resources
- as necessary, government systems or, in the case of non-government schools, state and territory Catholic Education Offices and Associations of Independent Schools, conducting briefings and workshops for key stakeholders and personnel.

'Indigenous status'

The accuracy of information on students' Indigenous status is paramount to creating the evidence base to inform the reform directions taken as part of the 'Closing the Gap' strategies and reporting on progress towards achievement of the COAG targets.

Existing users should ensure that responses to the 'Indigenous status' question are correctly coded for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Where a parent/guardian does not provide a response to the question, the response should not be left blank: it should be coded to the 'not stated' category.

Current coding indexes for 'Main language other than English spoken at home' and 'Country of birth of student' questions

Existing users need to ensure that data collected from parents for the 'Main language other than English spoken at home' variable is coded to the 1267.0 - *Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL), 2011*; and data collected from parents for the 'Country of birth of student' data item is now being coded to the 1269.0 - *Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC), 2011*.

The ASCL (2011) made substantial changes to the classification by adding or separately identifying a number of languages, including Indigenous languages. In order to provide a more accurate and useful presentation of Australia's language profile, a number of languages or language categories were also reclassified. [Attachment 3](#) provides further information on amendments to the classification and contains an electronic link to the coding index for the classification (in both alphabetical and numerical code order).

The SACC (2011) made only a small number of amendments to the classification, such as the addition or deletion of countries in response to world political change or changes in the names of countries. Schools or school systems were asked to carry out the necessary modifications to their student information systems in 2009 to ensure that, for enrolments from 2010, their data systems could accommodate the required fields for 'Country of birth' coding as per the SACC. [Attachment 5](#) provides further information on amendments to the classification and contains an electronic link to the coding index for the classification (in both alphabetical and numerical code order).

Provision of data to test administration authority

Existing users should ensure that information has been obtained from the test administration authority for the relevant assessment on the agreed process and format for providing student background information for linking to students' test data. A checklist for existing users is provided at [Attachment 1A](#).

4.3 New users

The key steps for schools or school systems collecting data for the first time using the nationally agreed definitions of student background characteristics are set out below.

Informing the school community of the data collection requirements and the rationale underlying the requirements

Schools or school systems need to advise new school communities that information is required from parents to enable nationally comparable reporting on student achievement, disaggregated by student background characteristics; and to compile student population profiles for performance reporting at the individual school level.

Information for parents should emphasise the importance of having complete data on all students, including those with student background characteristics known to be associated with educational disadvantage. The availability of the data at the state and territory and individual school levels provides an evidence base for monitoring the progress of all students and identifying the need for intervention strategies and, as appropriate, for directing additional resources to reduce the effect of disadvantage on student outcomes.

Revision of enrolment forms

Enrolment forms need to include the agreed question modules set out in Section 5 of the manual (Technical Specifications). **To ensure consistency in national reporting, the question modules must be used exactly as specified.** ([Attachment 2](#) provides two samples of how the question modules might appear on enrolment forms.)

Use of special data collection forms

Schools or school systems which have not modified their enrolment forms to collect student background information using the agreed technical standards will need to use special data collection forms to collect the necessary information from parents of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students for linking to students' NAPLAN results and from parents of Year 6 and Year 10 students in those schools selected to participate in the National Assessment Program (NAP). [Attachment 2](#) provides two sample special data collection forms using the agreed question modules.

Coding of 'Main language other than English spoken at home' and 'Country of birth' data using current editions of classifications

New users need to ensure that (a) responses to the 'Main language other than English spoken at home' question are linked to the *1267.0 - Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL), 2011* coding index (see [Attachment 3](#) and [Attachment 4](#)); and (b) responses to the 'Country of birth' question are linked to the updated *1269.0 - Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC), 2011* coding index (see [Attachment 5](#) and [Attachment 6](#)).

Information for test administration authorities

Processes need to be in place for entering and coding data from enrolment forms to computer files or, where the student background data collection requirements have not been incorporated into the enrolment process, from special data collection forms so that the information can be readily provided to or accessed by:

- the test administration authority for the national literacy and numeracy tests (see Subsection 3.2)
- the assessment contractors engaged to conduct the sample assessment (see Subsection 3.3).

New users therefore need to ensure that information has been obtained from the test administration authority or assessment contractor for the relevant assessment on the agreed process for providing student background information for linking to students' test data.

Revision of student data storage system to include required fields

Section 5: Technical specifications provides details of the required question modules, together with guidance on how the responses should be coded and stored. The following details need to be checked:

- student data records include fields for all the information specified in Section 5
- the fields in electronic records meet the information system requirements specified in Section 5
- student background information is able to be retrieved in such a way that it can be linked to students' test data by the test administration authority or assessment contractor, for example, by means of a suitable unique student identifier.

Schools may provide information accompanying enrolment or special data collection forms explaining to parents the rationale for the collection of the student background data and the uses to which it will be put. They may also need to work with parents and have arrangements in place to follow up where forms are incomplete. In some cases, parents may need assistance in interpreting and answering some of the questions.

A checklist of key steps and tasks for new users is provided at [Attachment 1B](#).

4.4 Help for schools

Government sector

The implementation of the data collection arrangements is managed centrally by state and territory education departments.

Catholic sector

In diocesan/systemic schools, implementation is managed at diocesan level.

In non-diocesan/non-systemic schools, implementation varies across states and territories. Please consult your Catholic Education Commission for further information.

Independent sector

Implementation in this sector is either at the individual school level or, where groups of independent schools are organised on a systemic basis (e.g. the Lutheran, Anglican and Seventh Day Adventist school systems), at the systemic level.

Contacts for schools

Within the **government** sector, the primary contacts for schools are:

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| New South Wales | Lucy Lu NSW Department of Education and Communities Phone: (02) 9561 8691, Email: lucy.lu@det.nsw.edu.au |
| Victoria | Susan Dennett Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Phone: (03) 9637 2175, Email: susan.dennett@edumail.vic.gov.au |
| Queensland | Adrian Seabrook Department of Education, Training and Employment Phone: (07) 3237 0730, Email: Adrian.Seabrook@deta.qld.gov.au |
| South Australia | Miriam Doull Department for Education and Child Development Phone: (08) 8226 1477, Email: miriam.doull@sa.gov.au |
| Western Australia | Dale Miller Department of Education Phone: (08) 9264 4668, Email: Dale.Miller@education.wa.edu.au |
| Tasmania | Andrew Oakley Department of Education Phone: (03) 6233 2012, Email: andrew.oakley@education.tas.gov.au |
| Northern Territory | Susan Kulda Department of Education Phone: (08) 8999 55943, Email: susan.kulda@nt.gov.au |
| Australian Capital Territory | Tracy Stewart Education and Training Directorate Phone: (02) 6205 5511, Email: tracy.stewart@act.gov.au |

Within the **Catholic** sector, systemic schools can contact the local Catholic Schools Office or Catholic Education Commission for further information. Non-systemic Catholic schools can contact the relevant state/territory Catholic Education Commission.

Within the **independent** sector, schools can contact their state or territory Association of Independent Schools (AIS) representative:

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| New South Wales | Robyn Yates The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales Ltd (AISNSW) Phone: (02) 9299 2845, Email: ryates@aisnsw.edu.au |
| Victoria | Peter Roberts Independent Schools Victoria Phone: (03) 9825 7211, Email: peter.roberts@independentschools.vic.edu.au |
| Queensland | Dr Deidre Thian Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) Phone: (07) 3228 1515, Email: dthian@aisq.qld.edu.au |
| South Australia | Bronwyn Donaghey Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) Phone: (08) 8179 1420, Email: donagheyb@ais.sa.edu.au |
| Western Australia | Robert Hassell Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia Inc. (AISWA) Phone: (08) 9441 1625, Email: rhassell@ais.wa.edu.au Meika Birch Phone: (08) 9441 1665, Email: mbirch@ais.wa.edu.au |
| Tasmania | Tony Crehan Independent Schools Tasmania Phone: (03) 6224 0125, Email: admin@independentschools.tas.edu.au |
| Northern Territory | Gail Barker Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory Inc. (AISNT) Phone: (08) 8981 8668, Email: gail.barker@aisnt.asn.au |
| Australian Capital Territory | Andrew Wrigley Association of Independent Schools of the ACT Inc. (AISACT) Phone: (02) 6162 0834, Email: director@ais.act.edu.au |

4.5 Privacy requirements

Schools and school systems should review and, if necessary, revise their privacy policies and related documentation providing advice to parents on the collection, storage, use and disclosure of personal information. Such information should be distributed to parents with enrolment or special data collection forms, reproduced in the school's or school system's privacy policy as well as any other relevant documents and, if appropriate, provided on associated websites.

Non-government schools

A comprehensive *Privacy Compliance Manual* is available. This document was developed jointly by the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) with the assistance of Minter Ellison Lawyers. It provides advice for non-government schools and school systems on compliance with Commonwealth privacy legislation by private sector organisations. It also includes advice on obtaining parents' consent to the collection and use of personal information and examples of standard collection notices. The *Privacy Compliance Manual* is available on the NCEC and ISCA websites. (See www.ncec.catholic.edu.au and www.isca.edu.au.)