

REPORT OF 2017 NAPLAN TEST INCIDENTS

Introduction

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests are held during May each year. In 2017 the tests were held on 9, 10 and 11 May and, in total, approximately over one million students sat five million tests 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 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. 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, his or her 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 2017, there were very few allegations of breaches of the Protocols. Where an allegation is made that the Protocols have been breached, the relevant responsible entity¹ investigates and takes appropriate action in response. Reports are provided to ACARA summarising the test incidents, including investigations and outcomes. This information is then compiled 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.

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 which, 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,

¹ 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), 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.

which has a 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 aggregated 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 consequently.

Test incidents are aggregated within jurisdictions where incidents are of a similar nature and where the outcomes are the same. The scope of each incident within a jurisdiction is identified in table 2 and summarised in total schools affected set out in table 1.

Analysis of 2017 NAPLAN test incidents

The Report of 2017 NAPLAN Test Incidents reinforces the fact that teachers and schools work hard to ensure the integrity of the tests. This is evidenced through both the small number of incidents across the entire country and 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 2017, out of the approximately five million NAPLAN tests sat by students nationally, only 69 test incidents were substantiated, affecting only a very small number of students and schools across the nation.
- Of these 69 test incidents, only three cheating breaches on the part of schools were substantiated. This compares to two substantiated incidents in 2016 which was the lowest since NAPLAN was introduced.
- Where incidents were substantiated (refer to table 2), TAAs considered whether affected students' results were valid. This year's incidents demonstrate that in most of the situations where students might have had access to unauthorised assistance, there was no evidence that the assistance compromised their results.
- The majority of incidents, 45, were general breaches that relate to maladministration. This number is greater than in previous years as schools and TAAs become better at identifying and reporting these types of breaches.
- There were 21 security breaches that included instances of opening test materials earlier than allowed and test materials not being kept secure during the test security period.

- As in previous years, the majority of substantiated incidents were directly reported to TAAs by schools, representing a broad 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, and this is also reflected in the growth in the number of security and general incidents reported compared to last year.
- While the number of incidents overall close to previous years, the scope of the incidents was more widespread, in some instances. For example, there were incidents in several jurisdictions that occurred in numerous schools. This is reflected in 'total schools affected' reported in table 1.
- In 2016, there were nine test incidents under investigation as at 27 September 2016. TAAs have since worked to resolve these incidents. Of the nine incidents under investigation, five were unsubstantiated, four were substantiated.

Table 1. Summary of reported incidents (as at 27 October 2017)

Incident category	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Under investigation	Total	Average totals 2010–2016
Cheating breach (C)	3	3	7	13	18
Security breach (S)	21	2	3	26	19
General breach (G)	45	12	4	59	39
Total	69	14	14	98	75
Total schools affected	130	14	14	158	73

Table 2. Incidents investigated and substantiated (as at 27 October 2017)

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
1.	NSW	S	2.4.1 4.3.5	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to eight schools.	Schools undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
2.	NSW	S	4.3.9 4.3.11	Test material made public during the test security period. Relevant to six schools.	Schools undertook to improve procedures for future years. Secure content promptly removed. Data not compromised.
3.	NSW	G	6.5.4 6.5.5	The protocols for the use of a scribe not followed for writing test. Relevant to 29 schools and 42 students.	Schools undertook to improve procedures for future years. Response sent to relevant schools outlining breach and scribe protocols. Student data investigated. Data compromised and withheld.
4.	NSW	G	6.5.6	The protocols for use of a scribe for the writing test not followed. Relevant to nine schools and nine students.	Schools undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. Data compromised and withheld.
5	NSW	G	8.6.11	Test administration procedures not followed. Test administrator read items not permitted to be read aloud. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. Data compromised and withheld.
6	NSW	G	8.4.1 8.4.3 8.4.4	Tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to two year levels in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence of any effect on the data.
7	NSW	G	8.4.4	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to one year level at two schools and three students at one school.	Schools undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence of any effect on the data.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
8	NSW	S	2.4.2 10.4.2	Test procedures not followed correctly. Relevant to two year levels in one school and one year level in two schools.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.
9	NSW	G	2.2.4 2.5.1 8.6.6	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to two students in two schools.	Schools undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.
10.	NSW	G	8.6.11 8.7.1	Test procedures for writing not followed correctly. Inappropriate assistance provided to students. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.
11	NSW	G	8.6.4 8.6.6 8.9.1	Test materials not returned to school storage in line with correct procedures. Relevant to one year level in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.
12	NSW	C	8.6.1 8.6.3 10.4.2	Inappropriate assistance provided to students. Relevant to one students in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Staff member counselled and reminded of the importance of following test protocols. Student data investigated. Data compromised and withheld.
13	NSW	G	8.6.10	Test administration procedures not fully followed. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.
14	NSW	G	2.2.3 8.5.2	Inappropriate assistance available to student during test. Test procedures not followed correctly. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Staff member counselled regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
15	Vic.	G	8.4.4 8.4.3	Tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to three classes in two schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No impact on student results found. Data not compromised.
16	Vic.	S	2.4.2 8.6.8	Test materials not kept secure during test security period. Relevant to one school	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
17	Vic.	G	2.2.7 8.6.8	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
18	Vic.	S	4.3.9	Writing genre made public during the test security period. Scope unknown.	Importance of adherence to protocols emphasised to responsible party. Data not compromised.
19	Vic.	G	2.2.7	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data withheld.
20	Vic.	G	2.2.7	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.
21	Vic.	G	2.4.	Test materials not kept secure during the test period. Relevant to one student in one school.	Secured content promptly removed. Data not compromised.
22	Vic.	G	2.2.5	Inappropriate assistance provided to students during test session. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.
23	Qld	S	2.4.2 4.3.1	Content of test disclosed prior to the scheduled test. Relevant to two students in two schools.	Training procedures for test administrators reviewed by school for improvement. Data not compromised.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
24	Qld	G	2.2.4 8.5.2	Student was late to test and left unsupervised. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence data were compromised. School disciplinary action taken for staff member.
25	Qld	G	6.5 8.6.3	Unauthorised assistance provided to student during test. Relevant to two students in two schools.	No evidence data were compromised. School and teacher counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.
26	Qld	C	8.6.3	Unauthorised assistance provided to student during test. Relevant to one student in one school.	No evidence data were compromised. Disciplinary action taken.
27	Qld	S	4.3 8.4.3	Test sequence reversed. Relevant to one class in one school.	No evidence data were compromised.
28	SA	G	4.3.9 8.5.2	Inappropriate assistance available to student during test. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve processes for future years. Student data withheld.
29	SA	S	4.3.10	Non-NAPLAN year students informally completed the writing test. Relevant to one class in one school.	Staff member reprimanded regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Student data withheld.
30	SA	S	8.5.2	One student not properly supervised for one test. Relevant to one class in one school	Staff member reprimanded regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Student data withheld.
31	SA	G	8.6.7 8.6.8 8.6.9	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one class in one school.	School undertook to improve processes for future years. Data not compromised.
32	SA	G	6.5.4 6.5.6 6.4.1	Protocols for use of a scribe as a disability adjustment for the writing test not followed. Relevant to two students in two schools.	School undertook to improve processes for future years. Student data withheld.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
33	SA	S	8.9.1	Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve processes for future years. Data not compromised.
34	SA	G	2.2.3	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to four students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
35	SA	G	8.6.6	Test instructions not followed. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
36	WA	S	2.4 2.5 4.3.7 8.6.3 10.4.1	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to two classes in one school.	Staff member counselled regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Data not compromised.
37	WA	G	8.4.3 8.4.1 8.4.4	Tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to one class in one school.	Staff member counselled regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Data not compromised.
38	WA	S	4.3.9 4.3.11 8.6.8	Test material made public during the test security period. Relevant to one student in one school.	The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. Data not compromised.
39	WA	G	2.5.2 2.5.3 8.6.11	Inappropriate assistance available to students during test. Relevant to two students in one school.	Staff member counselled regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Data not compromised.
40	WA	G	6.4.1 6.5	Protocols for use of a scribe as a disability adjustment for the writing test not followed. Relevant to two students in one school, and one student in one school.	Staff member counselled regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Data not compromised.
41	WA	G	2.5.2	Inappropriate assistance available to students during test. Relevant to one class in one school.	The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. Data withheld where NAPLAN protocols not followed.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
42	WA	G	2.4.6 2.5.2 4.3.13 8.9.3	Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to one school.	Staff member counselled regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Data not compromised.
43	WA	G	2.2.7 8.6.7 8.6.8	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one student in one school.	The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. Data not compromised.
44	WA	G	2.3.4 2.3.5 2.3.6 2.4.4 2.4.5 8.6.1 8.9.4	Test administration procedures not followed. Inappropriate assistance provided. Relevant to one class in one school.	The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. Data not compromised.
45	WA	C	2.3 2.3.2 2.3.3 7.1.2	Inappropriate student test response preparation. Relevant to one year level in one school.	The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. Data compromised and withheld.
46	WA	G	8.4.1 8.4.3 8.6.9	Tests administered in incorrect order. Unauthorised materials in test room. Relevant to one class in one school.	The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. No evidence data were compromised.
47	WA	G	2.2.8	Test administration procedures not followed. Incomplete materials provided for test. Relevant to one student in one school.	The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. No evidence data were compromised.
48	WA	G	8.8.1	Incorrect time provided to complete the test. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence data were compromised.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
49	WA	G	2.2.3 2.2.8 2.5.3 8.7.1	Test administration procedures not followed. Incorrect test booklets supplied to students. Incomplete preparatory instructions given for test. Relevant to one class in one school.	School briefed and undertook to improve test administration procedures for future testing. The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. Data not compromised.
50	WA	G	2.2.4 8.6.6	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to two students in two schools.	The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. No evidence data were compromised.
51	WA	G	5.4.1 5.2.1	Test administration procedures not followed. Relevant to two students in two schools.	School briefed and undertook to improve test administration procedures for future testing. The principal counselled the teacher on appropriate protocols. Data not compromised.
52	Tas.	G	8.4.1 8.4.3	Tests administered in incorrect order. Relevant to fewer than 20 students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
53	Tas.	S	4.3.7 4.3.9	Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to one class in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
54	Tas.	G	8.6.11	Test administrator provided inappropriate assistance during test. Relevant to 10 students in two schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. One student response withheld.
55	Tas.	S	4.3.9	Test material made public during the test security period. Scope unknown.	Importance of adherence to protocols emphasised to responsible party. No evidence data were compromised.
56	NT	S	4.3.6	Incorrect delivery – test materials not delivered to school in time for testing window. Relevant to three schools.	Options explored for delivery to very remote areas in the future. Data not compromised.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
57	NT	S	2.4.1 4.3.5	Test materials opened earlier than allowed. Relevant to one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
58	NT	G	8.5.2	Inappropriate assistance available to student during test. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve processes for future years. Staff member counselled regarding the matter and reminded of the protocols. Data not compromised.
59	NT	S	8.6.3 10.4.2	Test procedures not followed correctly. Relevant to two students in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Student data investigated. No evidence results were compromised.
60	NT	G	8.6.6	Test procedures not followed correctly. Relevant to two students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
61	NT	S	8.6.6	Student given the incorrect year level test materials. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures. Data withheld.
62	NT	S	2.4.6 4.3.9	Test material made public during the test security period. Photo posted to social media. Relevant to one school.	Test administrator and school counselled on the need to ensure confidentiality of all test material up to the end of the secure period. Content removed. Data not compromised.
63	NT	G	2.5.1 8.2.2 8.8.1	Test procedures not followed correctly. Relevant to one student in one school	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
64	NT	S	8.9.1	Test materials not kept secure during the test security period. Relevant to one year level in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.

Ref. #	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2017 National protocols' clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
65	NT	G	2.5.1 8.8.1	Test procedures not followed correctly. Relevant to 360 students in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
66	NT	G	2.2.4 2.5.1 8.6.6	Test procedures not followed correctly. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
67	NT	S	2.2.1 4.3.7	Test integrity not maintained. Relevant to one student in one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not withheld.
68	ACT	G	8.6.8	Unauthorised materials in test environment. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
79	ACT	G	8.6.10	Unauthorised access to calculator. Relevant to one student in one school.	School undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.