



# National Testing

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National Assessment Program testing in Literacy & Numeracy (NAPLAN) commenced in 2008. These tests are developed by ACER and are not based on any recognised curriculum.

## What is Required

All Australian State and Territory governments have agreed that national tests in literacy and numeracy be conducted annually in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 on the same days nationally in May. Currently States and Territories conduct, mark and report on the tests, and "own" the data which stay with the States and Territories. The data is aggregated for reporting, with disaggregation for particular groups such as Indigenous, gender and socio-economic status.

Sample testing in Science, Civics & Citizenship, and ICT is conducted every three years.

## The Research

The census testing regime in the US has had a profound effect on schools, curriculum, teaching and the treatment of students. It has led to a narrowing of the curriculum, marginalising subjects not tested (to the exclusion of subjects such as history and art) and narrowing the teaching of even core subjects specifically related to testing, e.g. aspects of English such as classroom discussions, creative writing and critical thinking.

Other worrying effects include an increase in the number of high school drop-out rates in years 11 and 12 since the introduction of national tests (schools encourage low performing students to leave in these year levels), and the concentration by schools on students just behind or on the cusp of achieving the benchmark levels to the exclusion of lower achieving students.

## QTU Position

The QTU supports system accountability through sample testing but is opposed to national or state census testing because of the negative effects on curriculum practice. The test results are not a comprehensive indicator of the work of teachers and schools; privileging test information devalues teacher judgement on broader student performance on the whole school curriculum.

## Further References

Nichols, S.L. & Berliner, D.C. (2007) *Collateral Damage. How High-Stakes Testing Corrupts America's Schools*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard Education Press, Chapter 5.