

**Tertiary Education  
Commission**  
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua



# Guidelines for using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool 2024

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**Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua**

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# About these Guidelines

These Guidelines explain:

- › uses and benefits of the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (LNAAT)
- › assessment options and types in the LNAAT
- › the TEC's (Tertiary Education Commission's) expectations for the LNAAT use, by fund.

## Introduction

### The LNAAT assesses learners' skills

The LNAAT supports educators to identify their learners' literacy and numeracy skills and challenges.

This tool assesses adult reading, writing, numeracy, vocabulary, and English proficiency. The LNAAT is based on a nationwide framework of skills called the Learning Progressions, which describes literacy and numeracy in six steps. Step 1 is "low" and Step 6 is "high".

The LNAAT offers both online and paper-based assessments. The online assessments are adaptive. They adjust to the learner's responses, getting harder or easier as learners answer questions correctly or incorrectly. Adaptive assessments are more robust and give immediate results to educators, learners and tertiary education organisations (TEOs). Paper-based assessments are available if internet access is limited.

### Good assessment benefits everyone

Knowing what knowledge and skills a learner has or needs to develop is vital to educational success. The results can help:

Ākonga/learners	understand their own literacy and numeracy skills and what is required for their study and employment.
Kaiako/educators	plan courses and programmes to address the 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 nationally consistent measures of learner skill level and gain.

### The LNAAT is part of good practice

The LNAAT is primarily an effective diagnostic tool. It identifies each learner's literacy and numeracy capabilities and areas for improvement, so you can support them appropriately.

## Literacy and numeracy needs can present at all levels

The TEC has specific requirements and expectations around using the LNAAT for our foundation funds.<sup>1</sup> However, we strongly encourage you to consider how the LNAAT can support your learners at many levels. We know that learners who are above foundation level often still have gaps in their literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills. These may present barriers to participating and succeeding in education and work.

## The LNAAT is just one tool in your kit

Diagnostic and formative assessment are important elements of all education. We want you to consider a range of approaches to ensure you fully understand your learners' needs and set them up for success.

## The Progressions guide your response to literacy and numeracy needs

The Learning Progressions help educators identify learners' skill needs and develop learning opportunities to move them to the next step. We expect all educators supporting adult literacy and numeracy to be familiar with the Progressions.

Ako Aotearoa offers downloadable resources and professional development for educators to support this. The Progressions for Adults are key components of the national literacy and numeracy resources available to all providers.

[Ako Aotearoa](#)

## Identifying needs is just the first step

We want a tertiary education system where all learners have the opportunity to succeed. When your assessment activity identifies a literacy and/or numeracy need for a learner, we want to know you have a plan to respond. Your response may include:

- › embedding literacy and numeracy in vocational programmes and courses in all foundation education
- › mapping the literacy and numeracy demands of programmes and courses
- › explicit literacy and numeracy teaching/learning within the context and tasks of another, usually vocational, subject or skill (eg, panel beating)
- › using LNAAT data and the Learning Progressions to inform effective teaching and monitoring of learner progress
- › supporting learners using Pathways Awarua.

[Pathways Awarua](#)

## Staff need the right skills to support learners

Your foundation education teaching workforce may be skilled in supporting learners with literacy and numeracy challenges, but sometimes vocational or higher-level educators are less familiar

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Table 1: Our expectations of use the LNAAT by Fund.

with this area. We want you to consider how you can develop and maintain capability in your teaching workforce. This means:

- › ongoing professional development to ensure a qualified workforce
- › having a whole-of-organisation approach to literacy and numeracy, including an overall strategy outlining vision, aims and outcomes, and
- › accessing external expertise when your organisation does not have the appropriate skills internally.

We expect providers to work with their literacy and numeracy educators to ensure they have the required qualifications:

[Qualifications required of educators who teach foundation-level literacy and numeracy](#)

### **Foundation skills are important across your organisation**

As a provider, you need an organisation-wide plan for assessing learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Your plan should ensure that:

- › assessments and reassessments are scheduled based on each individual learner's enrolment date and their length of study
- › literacy and numeracy assessments are delivered consistently across your organisation
- › educators understand the functionality of the LNAAT – including how to set the appropriate assessment and how to interpret results
- › learners get consistent and positive messages, particularly about the purpose of assessments, and
- › you use assessment information, including from the LNAAT, to evaluate and improve the skill levels of your learners and how your delivery can best support their education.

## **We expect you to assess learners early**

Since 2023, we have focused on using the LNAAT as a diagnostic assessment. Because of this, we want to see providers assessing their learners early in their programme, when educators feel learners are ready for assessment.

From 2024, these funds require use of the LNAAT to determine funding eligibility:

- › Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN)
- › Employer-led Workplace Literacy and Numeracy (EVLN)
- › TEO-led Workplace (TEO-WLN).

## **Support your learners around assessment**

During the initial assessment, we expect you to consider how to minimise learners' anxiety about completing the LNAAT. We suggest letting learners know:

- › that this is a way of identifying skills, not a test they pass or fail
- › how much time they have available and when they can use tools (eg, a calculator or pen and paper) to help
- › that everyone will get questions wrong (this is especially true for adaptive assessments, as the tool presents more difficult questions to learners who perform well)
- › that their result will be private between you and them

- › what impact the result will or will not have on their programme enrolment and study, and
- › what support will be available for those who need it.

If you are not sure of a learner's digital skills, explore these before setting an online assessment, as limited digital skills can make the results less accurate. A paper-based assessment may be more appropriate for some learners.

Before learners take their assessment, you could encourage them to watch the Youth Assessment introductory video on the LNAAT site. This is available in English, te reo Māori, Samoan and Tongan.

### [Youth Assessment introductory video – Literacy and Numeracy Youth Assessment](#)

For information on supporting neurodivergent learners – and learners with learning challenges – see the Frequently Asked Questions on page 11 of these guidelines.

### **Neurodivergent learners should be supported to use the LNAAT in the way that is most appropriate for their needs**

We provide resources and advice to help you build capability and support neurodivergent learners and learners with learning challenges like dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia/developmental coordination disorder and visual and hearing impairment to use the LNAAT:

#### [Neurodiversity resources](#)

Below are some suggested approaches for supporting neurodivergent learners and learners with learning challenges.

Ensure the assessment environment is right – the learner has the right tools and any specific accommodations that are needed:

- › Ensure a safe and mana-enhancing environment – you could make alternative arrangements for learners who need to read text out loud or require silent environments.
- › Be aware of negative prior learning experiences.
- › Ensure learners have access to appropriate resources.
- › For numeracy assessments, ensure learners have access to calculators and know where to check if the question allows calculators.
- › Use coloured paper or coloured overlays for learners with Irlen's Syndrome.
- › Make screen adjustments to enhance visual quality for learners with visual impairment – colour, brightness/darkness, large font.
- › Where appropriate, a reader-writer may be part of the learner's support package.

Explain what the LNAAT is and what the results are used for, and answer any questions:

- › Explain why the assessments are important for learner support and learner success.
- › Explain how teaching staff use the LNAAT results and feedback.
- › Give clear instructions on where to find the LNAAT and how to use it.
- › Give clear instructions on what to expect during the assessments, a suggested time for completion, and the number of questions likely to be included.

Provide appropriate support during the assessment:

- › Reassure learners.
- › Suggest moving to the next question if a learner has spent a long time on one question.
- › Find out why a learner has spent a long time on a question – there may be a spelling mistake, a mark on the computer screen, text out of alignment, an emotional trigger, or an environmental issue (eg, noise).
- › If reading or understanding the text is difficult, suggest learners read the text by mouthing the words silently (this adds a kinaesthetic layer to the text and saying the text out loud may help them to identify the words).

Provide assurance and information at the end of the assessment:

- › Reassure the learner and answer any questions they have.
- › Confirm what happens with the results.
- › Supply feedback, if required, at a suitable time.

## Measure progress in the most appropriate way

Your funding conditions require you to have an effective assessment process in place to ensure that learners progress in line with our guidelines. As part of best practice to support learner success, we expect you to find a way to measure your learners' increasing skills and knowledge.

For many learners, completing another LNAAT assessment will be appropriate. This is most useful when learners have had deliberate targeted tuition in reading or numeracy. Where content has been embedded in other learning, or where the focus has been on writing, or speaking and listening, the LNAAT may not be the best tool to measure progress.

If you do not have another way to measure progress, you can continue to use the LNAAT.

Consider how to make the most of the insights offered by the LNAAT to meet the varying needs of learners. This may mean using it differently than you have in the past.

If you currently use the LNAAT for your progress assessments and this works well, there is no need to change anything.



# Our expectations of LNAAT use by fund

## We expect that the LNAAT will continue to be used as a diagnostic tool

The LNAAT will still be the primary method of diagnosing literacy and numeracy needs for our foundation funds and funds that specifically support learners with high literacy and numeracy needs.

From 2024, it is a mandatory requirement to use the LNAAT to assess learner eligibility for funding under the ILN, EWLN, and the TEO-WLN funds.

Using the LNAAT is not mandatory for other funds. However, you are still required to use an effective assessment process. We recommend the LNAAT.

We will consider effective assessment usage as an indicator of good practice and this will inform our funding decisions. For funds where LNAAT use is expected, we will specifically consider this.

## An alternative tool may be more appropriate in some settings

You should identify literacy and numeracy needs appropriately in all learning modes and at all levels, and respond to them accordingly. Although we recommend you use the LNAAT, an alternative tool may be a more appropriate primary diagnostic in some settings.

**Table 1** and **Table 2** below outline our expectations for use of the LNAAT in different assessment areas.

### Foundation-level funds

You **must** use the LNAAT to determine learner eligibility for these literacy and numeracy foundation-level funds:

- › Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN)
- › Employer-led Workplace Literacy and Numeracy (EWLN)
- › TEO-led Workplace Literacy and Numeracy (TEO-WLN).

Most learners on those programmes have specific language, literacy or numeracy needs.

For all other foundation level funds (including other specialised literacy and numeracy funds), we **recommend** you use the LNAAT.

For some of our foundation funds, results from the LNAAT are a condition of eligibility. Please ensure that when you use the tool to identify learner eligibility you do so in line with your funding conditions.

**Table 1: Our expectations for use of the LNAAT for foundation-level funds**

Fund	Expected assessment approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› <b>Delivery at Levels 1 and 2 on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (DQ1-2) except for te reo Māori</b></li> <li>› <b>Youth Guarantee Levels 1 to 3</b></li> <li>› <b>Trades Academies</b></li> </ul>	<p>We recommend you complete an LNAAT reading <b>and/or</b> numeracy assessment using the LNAAT (any adaptive, snapshot or paper-based LNAAT assessment).</p> <p>We encourage an additional writing assessment when relevant and appropriate.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Workplace Literacy Fund (WLN) (TEO-led and Employer-led strands)</li> <li>› <b>Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN)</b></li> </ul>	<p>We require you to complete an LNAAT reading <b>and/or</b> numeracy assessment using the LNAAT (any adaptive, snapshot or paper-based LNAAT assessment) to assess each learner’s eligibility.</p> <p>For the exact learner eligibility criteria, please refer to the funding conditions.</p> <p><a href="#">Funding Conditions Catalogue</a></p> <p>We encourage an additional writing assessment when relevant and appropriate.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› <b>English Language Teaching (ELT) (formerly Intensive Literacy and Numeracy – English for Speakers of Other Languages (ILN ESOL))</b></li> </ul>	<p>We recommend you complete an LNAAT Starting Points listening <b>and/or</b> reading assessment using the LNAAT (online Starting Points options, or online or paper-based snapshot).</p>

**Vocational and degree-level funds**

For vocational and degree-level funds, we expect appropriate assessment with a diagnostic tool that identifies literacy and/or numeracy needs so educators can support learners. This may be the LNAAT or another diagnostic tool.

These funds have lower expectations of using the LNAAT than the foundation-level funds, as not all learners will have language, literacy or numeracy needs. We recognise that for some programmes, the LNAAT may be impractical to use.

When an issue is identified, we expect providers to investigate the learner’s needs and appropriate supports.

**Table 2: Our expectations for use of the LNAAT for vocational and degree-level funds**

Fund	Expected assessment approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Delivery at Levels 3–7 (non-degree) on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework and all industry training (DQ3-7) (including Level 2)</li></ul>	<p>We recommend you complete an appropriate diagnostic assessment for all learners on Level 2 and 3 programmes. This assessment may use the LNAAT. If you have no other diagnostic assessment tool, we recommend you use the LNAAT.</p> <p>For Levels 4 to 7, consider completing an appropriate assessment when a need is identified by an educator.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Māori and Pasifika Trades Training Fund (Fees Top-ups Fund Funding and Brokerage Services Fund Funding) (MPTT)</li></ul>	<p>We expect you to complete an appropriate diagnostic assessment for all learners funded through the MPTT fund. This assessment may use the LNAAT. If you have no other diagnostic assessment tool, we recommend you use the LNAAT.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Delivery at Level 7 (degree) and above on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (DQ7+)</li></ul>	<p>Consider completing an appropriate assessment when a need is identified by an educator.</p>

Learners who have been assessed using the LNAAT within the last 24 months, and who have achieved a result at or above Step 4 Reading or Step 5 Numeracy, do not need to be reassessed.

## Frequently asked questions

### When should learners have their initial assessment?

For the ILN, EWLN, and TEO-led WLN funds, you are required to assess learners using the LNAAT before enrolment, to ensure they meet the learner eligibility requirements in the [funding conditions](#).

For all other funds, we no longer require an initial assessment in the first half of a programme. However, as the LNAAT is a diagnostic tool that will identify a learner’s skill and knowledge level, we recommend it is used by educators early in a learner’s programme, at the point when educators feel the learner is ready for assessment.

### What is the difference between Adult, Youth and Te Ata Hāpara assessment options?

The assessment questions and texts for these options have different contexts and settings that may be better suited to different learners. All three assessment options are based on the Adult Progressions and can be used interchangeably. You can choose the assessment option that will best engage your learners.

For more information, see Appendix 1 – Choosing the right assessment, or visit the links below:

[Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy](#)

[Learning Progressions for Adult Numeracy](#)

### **What is meant by an effective assessment process?**

An effective assessment process identifies literacy or numeracy needs accurately and is appropriate to the learner. Experienced practitioners will have a range of ways they can do this. We expect that educators will continue to use the LNAAT. However, if an organisation wants to check or authenticate the appropriateness and effectiveness of an alternative assessment, they can run it in parallel with or cross-check it against the LNAAT.

### **Are providers using the LNAAT still required to report on Statistically Significant Gain (SSG)?**

No, there are no reporting requirements or targets for learner progress as calculated by the Gain Report in the LNAAT. However, we strongly encourage providers to track learner progress throughout learners' studies.

### **Can I use the LNAAT for enrolment and job screening purposes?**

No, the LNAAT is not designed for this purpose. It is designed to find out where a learner sits on the progressions in reading, writing, numeracy and vocabulary. Information about strengths and weaknesses can provide starting points to identify specific learning needs. The LNAAT will give information about responses to individual items that represent different progressions, as well as an aggregated score. The information will be most useful when learners and educators discuss a learner's results and plan next learning steps.

### **What is the lifespan of assessment results below the thresholds?**

When assessing learning eligibility under ILN, EWLN and TEO-led WLN funds, we require the LNAAT data to be up to date and reflective of the learner's current learning needs.

When assessing learners for other purposes, we recommend that learners who are below the reading and numeracy thresholds are reassessed if the data is more than 24 months old. This gives both the learner and the provider the opportunity to update the data and see if the learner has met or progressed beyond the nominated thresholds for reading and numeracy.

If the learner has reached or exceeded the thresholds in previous assessments, they do not need to be reassessed.

### **What does a discontinued result mean for Starting Points Listening and Starting Points Reading assessments?**

Starting Points Listening and Starting Points Reading assessments have a "discontinued" feature that will end the assessment after seven incorrect or skipped answers. A discontinued result is a valid result for both funding and educational purposes. A learner may have multiple discontinued assessment results, where each time they have engaged with more questions.

If you have any questions about interpreting reports, please contact the LNAAT Service Desk at [assessforadults@nzcer.org.nz](mailto:assessforadults@nzcer.org.nz).

**Why have you changed the eligibility of ILN, EWLN and TEO-led WLN to rely on LNAAT assessment?**

The ILN, EWLN and TEO-led WLN funds are designed to support learners with low levels of literacy and/or numeracy. We want to ensure these funds are being used to support this target group.

We are aware that TEOs were previously enrolling learners in these funds that did not have low levels of literacy and numeracy. We have changed the eligibility criteria to ensure provision targets those who meet the intent of the funds; to fund learners with low levels of literacy and numeracy.

**For more information please see the LNAAT Support pages:**

- › [Educational FAQs](#)
- › [Technical FAQs](#)

# Appendix 1 – Choosing the right assessment

## LNAAT options and types

The LNAAT has a range of assessment options that educators can use to assess diverse learners.

Use the option most appropriate to your learners.

Figure 1: LNAAT options as of November 2023

LNAAT options for learners			
Adult	Youth	Te Ata Hāpara	Starting Points
The “default” option of the LNAAT. Recommended for most learners.	Items designed to be appropriate and engaging for learners aged between 15 and 25.	Reading option in English, items designed for Māori learners.	Listening option for ELT (ESOL) learners, reading option for ELT and foundation-level literacy learners.
<a href="#">Adult option login</a>	<a href="#">Youth option login</a>	<a href="#">Te Ata Hāpara login</a>	<a href="#">Starting Points login</a>

The LNAAT has several types of assessments, summarised in the following two tables.

Table 3: 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		
Starting Points*	Yes		

\* The Starting Points options are designed for 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 educator support.

Two Starting Points options are:

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

**Table 4: Availability of assessment area by assessment option**

	Adult option	Youth option	Te Ata Hāpara	Starting Points
<b>Numeracy</b>	Yes	Yes		
<b>Reading</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Writing</b>	Yes			
<b>Vocabulary</b>	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 educators to use the online adaptive assessments for reading and numeracy wherever possible. 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

The snapshot assessment is a shorter version of the adaptive assessment. Educators can nominate a step threshold within the snapshot assessment. This feature enables a specific step to be targeted to see whether learners are below threshold, above threshold, or somewhere in the middle (undecided). Learners still receive a scale score and a step level result. The “No Threshold” option should be used unless you have mapped the demands of your course content to inform the choice of a particular step threshold.<sup>2</sup>

### Non-adaptive paper-based assessments

The non-adaptive assessments are appropriate **only** when access to the online LNAAT is limited or highly impractical. We recommend using online adaptive assessments unless this is not possible or

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<sup>2</sup> The Step 2 Threshold for Reading option (known as STA reading assessment) previously used for learners with very low reading skills has been replaced by Starting Points reading.

suitable for your learners. Online assessment is more accurate, because the questions adapt to the learner's responses, and give immediate results to educators and learners.

### **Vocabulary assessments**

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

### **General assessment guidance**

We recommend that educators:

- › 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 do not 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. Learners can take as much time as they need.

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

Educators should not provide/coach learners with the answers (teach to the test) as this will result in an inaccurate assessment.

As a general guide, a snapshot assessment may take around 40 minutes to complete, and an adaptive assessment may take 80 minutes. Some learners may need more time and others may need less. If time is a constraint, a learner can complete the rest of an unfinished online assessment later using the same assessment code.