

25 July 2016

Communique

The Education Council convened a meeting on 21 July 2016 via video conference to progress key school education and early childhood matters. Important matters considered by Ministers included Online Assessment, National Teacher Induction Guidelines, and the future of National Assessment Program sample testing.

Online Assessment

The Education Council took the opportunity to experience first-hand elements of the online platform that will support online assessment nationally, including NAPLAN tests. Ministers tested the new types of questions made possible by the online environment, including interactive test items (e.g. drag and drop, hot spot or text entry) designed to improve assessments for students and provide faster turnaround of results for schools, parents and their communities.

The Council received an update on forthcoming milestones as the transition to online assessment, which begins in 2017 for some states and territories, nears. Following considerable planning, state and territory education authorities are introducing a training program for selected schools on the platform to prepare for the upcoming platform trial and readiness test (PTRT) which will occur during August 2016. The PTRT will simulate, as far as practicable, the proposed experience of NAPLAN online in 2017, and provide schools with an opportunity to use the platform to test their readiness to administer tests online. The PTRT will also allow students to experience the online testing environment.

The Australian Government, states and territories will continue to work together, alongside the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and Education Services Australia (ESA) to closely oversee and monitor the next stages of this work.

Ministers noted that each jurisdiction will determine whether Year 3 student writing will be conducted online or on a paper-and-pen basis for 2017. ACARA will provide advice to Council in the second half of 2016 to assist jurisdictions in making this determination, noting jurisdictional approaches will be influenced by whether online delivery is shown to constitute the most effective practice for this age group.

Education Council noted that further research will be undertaken in the second half of 2016 into the assessment of writing using computer devices in the early years, coordinated by senior officials, including commissioning an international literature review of best practice in the teaching of handwriting and keyboarding skills and convening a roundtable of international experts in literacy development to discuss this issue in greater detail.

The timing of implementation of NAPLAN Online is a decision being made by jurisdictions based on readiness. Some states and territories will begin transitioning to NAPLAN Online tests from 2017, with all schools expected to transition by 2019.

School Education funding

Noting the agreement of COAG in April to finalise school funding arrangements by early 2017, Education Council agreed to progress these issues as a matter of urgency for discussion in September and December.

National Assessment Program sample testing

The National Assessment Program (NAP) sample program commenced in 2003 with *NAP – Science Literacy*, followed by *NAP – Civics and Citizenship* in 2004 and *NAP – Information and Communication Technology Literacy* in 2005. The program operates on a three-year cycle, drawing on a sample of Year 6 and/or Year 10 students.

The Education Council has agreed to extend *NAP – Science Literacy* to Year 10 students from 2018. Scientific literacy, the ability to engage with scientific concepts and principles, is identified as essential to help meet the complex environmental, social and economic pressures of the future. The continuing importance of a national measure of student performance in scientific literacy is illustrated by Council endorsement of the *STEM School Education Strategy* and supported by this expansion of the NAP Science Literacy program.

In addition, the Education Council determined that it would expand the *NAP Civics and Citizenship* assessment to include History from 2019. The *Melbourne Declaration* notes that if students are to become active and informed citizens, they must have ‘an understanding of Australia’s system of government, history and culture’, and that such understanding helps to develop a society that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future.

Ministers requested ACARA to further explore the proposal that, from 2017, schools not included in the NAP sample in a given year will be able to access tests voluntarily, via the online platform, at a time of their choosing. This will enable all schools to benefit from NAP tests as an additional teaching and learning resource, if they choose.

The Education Council directed ACARA to continue working with internal and jurisdictional experts on improvements to the NAP sample program. This work includes alignment with the Australian Curriculum, updating assessment frameworks, developing innovative items, improved reporting and providing ongoing access to each sample assessment for all non-sample schools on an opt-in basis.

National Induction Guidelines

The Education Council endorsed *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession*, produced by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). The Guidelines address what effective induction is, why it matters, conditions necessary for high-quality induction, effective strategies and the roles played by various agencies and individuals in managing and delivering induction programs. AITSL consulted with representatives of systems and sectors in all jurisdictions, graduate teachers, educational leaders and initial teacher education providers in developing the Guidelines.

The Education Council emphasised that the induction of graduate teachers is the responsibility of State and Territory jurisdictions, regulatory authorities and education settings. There are currently a range of induction policies and strategies in place, and jurisdictions will use the Guidelines to ensure these are aligned with effective practice, having regard to their local needs and circumstances.

To assist jurisdictions support the uptake and impact of the Guidelines, AITSL is developing resources including an app to support initial transition to the profession for graduate teachers, video case study examples of successful induction approaches and additional materials to promote the importance of effective induction. Ministers endorsed the release and promotion of the Guidelines from October 2016, for adoption from 2017.

National Education and Care Services Ombudsman, Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioners

The Education Council agreed to an extension of the appointment of Ms. Lesley Foster to the roles of National Education and Care Services Ombudsman, Freedom of Information Commissioner and Privacy Commissioner pursuant to its powers under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*. Ms Foster has held the aforementioned positions for the past 6 months and has extensive experience in all aspects of early childhood education and care. Ministers congratulated Ms Foster on her reappointment to these roles from today until 30 June 2018.

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