



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

**Tertiary  
Education  
Commission**  
Te Amorangi  
Mātauranga Matua



Published by the Tertiary Education Commission

Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

National Office

44 The Terrace

PO Box 27048

Wellington, New Zealand

Updated in April 2016

ISBN 978-0-478-32056-5 (electronic)

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# Guidelines for using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (Assessment Tool)

## Purpose of document

This document provides information on the:

- › Benefits and context of the Assessment Tool
- › Assessment types inside the Tool;
- › TEC's funding requirements for using the Assessment Tool; and the
- › TEC's expectations for Assessment Tool usage by fund.

## Introduction

### What is the Assessment Tool?

The Assessment Tool helps tutors and trainers improve the literacy and numeracy skills of their learners. It does this by providing robust and reliable information that tutors and trainers can use to understand learners' literacy and numeracy skills and their progress. This predominantly online adaptive Tool can assess adult reading, writing, numeracy and vocabulary skills.

The Assessment Tool and the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions (Learning Progressions) are key components of the national literacy and numeracy infrastructure developed by the TEC. More information is in Appendix A at the end of this document.

### Why is it valuable to use?

Tutors and trainers should use Assessment Tool results to develop appropriate teaching interventions and to inform learning and goal-setting conversations between tutors and learners. This in turn can strengthen learners' literacy and numeracy skills in areas which need improvement.

Tertiary education organisations (TEOs), tutors, and trainers can track and report on the progress made by individual learners or groups of learners against the Learning Progressions. Learners can also see their results and track their progress over time.

Assessment Tool data is also used to generate nationally consistent measures of learner skill levels and skill gain over time. Data is important to help assess skill levels as well as the effectiveness of policy interventions, funding, and tertiary provision.

## Assessment Tool usage is part of good embedded literacy and numeracy

TEOs must use the Assessment Tool and Learning Progressions for foundation-level provision as part of good embedded literacy and numeracy.

Tutors and trainers need to assess their learners as they enter courses and programmes so they understand the literacy and numeracy skills and needs of their learners. This enables tutors and trainers to adjust their delivery and measure learner progress over time.

TEOs should have an organisation-wide plan for assessing learners' literacy and numeracy. The plan should ensure that:

- › assessments are planned to align with each individual learner's enrolment over their time of study;
- › delivery of literacy and numeracy assessments is consistent across the organisation;
- › learners are assessed at appropriate intervals (for example, assessing at the beginning and end of every course is likely to be an over-assessment);
- › educators understand the functionality of the Tool - for example by using the 'global unlock' function to draw on assessments from other educators or TEOs if the learner has been assessed within the last 90 days;
- › clear and consistent messages are given to learners, particularly about the purpose of the initial and progress assessments; and
- › TEOs use the aggregate information generated by the Tool to evaluate and improve the delivery and quality of their education.

For more information on embedded literacy and numeracy, go to this [TEC page](#).

## Assessment Tool areas and types

The Assessment Tool now has a range of assessment options which educators can use to assess diverse learners:

**Figure 1: Assessment Tool options as of April 2016**

### Assessment Tool options for learners

Adult	Youth	Te Ata Hāpara	Starting Points
The 'default' option of the Assessment Tool. Recommended for most learners.	Items designed to be appropriate and engaging for learners aged 15-25.	Reading option in English, items designed for Māori learners	Listening option for ESOL learners, Reading option for ESOL and foundation-level literacy learners
<a href="#">Login here</a>	<a href="#">Login here</a>	<a href="#">Login here</a>	<a href="#">Login here</a>

We recommend using the Adult option for most learners, but TEOs, tutors, and trainers can use the option most appropriate to their learners.

The Assessment Tool contains a number of different types of literacy and numeracy assessments as summarised in the following two tables.

**Table 1: 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		
Step 2 Threshold (STA)		Yes	Yes
Starting Points	Yes		

The Adult option is available online and also on paper. The Youth option and Te Ata Hāpara options are only available online. The Starting Points options are designed to be done on tablet in a supported one-on-one situation and are shorter than full-length assessments.

**Table 2: Availability of assessment area by assessment option**

	Adult option	Youth option	Te Ata Hāpara	Starting Points
Numeracy	Yes	Yes		
Reading	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Writing	Yes			
Vocabulary	Yes			Yes
Step 2 Threshold (STA)	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

The TEC encourages TEOs, tutors, and trainers to use the online adaptive assessments for reading and numeracy because 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 (including Step Two Threshold assessments)

The Snapshot assessment is a shorter version of the adaptive assessment that is particularly suitable for follow-up or progress assessments. It is also available in a paper based option.

Tutors and trainers can nominate a step threshold within the Snapshot assessment. This feature enables a specific step to be targeted and to see whether learners are below threshold, above threshold or somewhere in the middle (undecided). Note that learners still receive a scale score and a step level result.

The 'No Threshold' option should be used unless you are required to use the STA reading option (see below) or you have mapped the demands of your course content to inform the choice of a particular step threshold.

### Step Two Threshold Assessment for Reading

This snapshot assessment is suitable for learners with very low reading skills and is often referred to as the 'STA reading assessment'. It enables appropriate referral to Starting Points if necessary. The STA reading assessment addresses feedback from the sector about learners with very low reading skills while meeting the TEC's data and assessment requirements.

### Non-adaptive paper-based assessments

The non-adaptive assessments are appropriate only when access to the online assessment tool is limited or highly impractical. The TEC recommends using online adaptive assessments whenever possible.

### The vocabulary assessments

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

## Frequently asked questions

### **When should I use the Assessment Tool?**

The TEC expects TEOs to assess learners at the beginning of a period of learning and to hold progress assessments at intervals after there has been sufficient time and opportunity for learners to make gains. For example, progress assessments should be held after the 'half way' mark of a course.

### **When should learners in embedded literacy and numeracy courses be assessed?**

Courses of 3 months duration or more are expected to provide sufficient opportunity for literacy and numeracy gains to be made.

The timing of initial and progress assessments should relate to the full duration of learner's enrolment. For example, if a learner is enrolled in a multi-year programme then annual assessments are required. This takes a holistic, learner-centred approach and avoids over-assessment.

### **How many assessments should be given?**

Learners in embedded or workplace literacy courses should have at least:

- › an initial assessment in both reading and numeracy (unless they have already reached the threshold of Step 4 in reading or Step 5 in numeracy); and
- › a progress assessment in both reading and numeracy (unless they reached either threshold in their initial assessment).

### **What if a learner is initially assessed at or above Step 4 reading or Step 5 numeracy?**

Learners who, at any point, are assessed as being at or above these reading and numeracy thresholds are not required to complete any further progress assessments in the relevant area. This can include assessments a learner has sat prior to joining your organisation.

TEOs should always check what previous assessments a learner may have done prior to enrolling at the current TEO. This will help determine which learners are required to do an initial assessment (because they are below the Step 4 Reading or Step 5 numeracy thresholds).

### **How should learners in intensive literacy and numeracy-funded courses be assessed?**

All learners need to be assessed using the Assessment Tool. The Step Two Threshold assessment is recommended for learners with very low reading skills, and enables appropriate referral to the Starting Points options if necessary. The vocabulary assessment is useful in diagnosing whether a learner's vocabulary is a limiting factor in their reading proficiency.

More information on how to use the Starting Points options with learners is on the [Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool web page](#) on the TEC website.



### What proportion of learners in each course should be assessed?

All learners need to be assessed using the Assessment Tool. However, we recognise that learners may withdraw from courses after enrolments close.

For embedded, workplace or intensive literacy and numeracy courses, the TEC expects:

- › **95% of enrolled learners** required to complete an initial assessment to do so, and
- › **at least 90% of learners** who complete their course (or qualification, in the case of programmes with embedded courses) to undertake a progress assessment in the same strand and type as the initial assessment.

Learners who were assessed at or above Step 4 Reading or Step 5 numeracy do not need to complete a progress assessment and are therefore excluded from the 90% progress assessment requirement.

### What assessment areas and types should be used in progress assessments?

The assessment areas and types used in progress assessments **should** be the same as those used for initial assessments (this includes assessment thresholds set in snapshot assessments). This also applies to assessments done by TEOs prior to the current TEO. This ensures consistency in using the Assessment Tool and underpins reliable reporting on learner gain.

However, there will be situations where flexibility is appropriate based on the educator's judgement. For example, it may be appropriate in some situations to use snapshot progress assessments after full-length initial assessments.

## Assessment Tool usage requirements by fund

**Appendix B** shows the Assessment Tool usage requirements which are in the past and current funding conditions for various foundation-level funds and also described in the Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool. These conditions are also included in the funding mechanisms for each fund.

## TEC expectations of Assessment Tool use by Fund

The following tables outline the TEC's expectations for Assessment Tool use and assessment areas for monitoring and reporting. There are two different sets of expectations based on which fund supports the particular course the learner is on.

**Table 3: TEC expectations of Assessment Tool use by Fund**

Foundation-level fund	Assessment areas for all learners	Assessment types for Initial Assessments	Assessment Types for Progress Assessments
Student Achievement Component (competitive and non-competitive) Level 1-3 courses in Level 1-2 qualifications Youth Guarantee Levels 1-3 Industry Training Fund Levels 1-2 Workplace Literacy Fund (TEO Led and Employer led strands) Trades Academies	Required: Reading and numeracy assessments.  Optional: Writing, Vocabulary, and Starting Points* assessments	Any adaptive, snapshot or paper-based non-adaptive assessment.  This includes the online or paper-based STA reading assessment.	Any adaptive, snapshot or paper-based non-adaptive assessment.  This includes learners that were 'Undecided' or 'Above Threshold' in initial STA reading assessment.  Learners who were 'Below Threshold' in initial STA reading assessment may be reassessed using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Starting Points options;</li> <li>› a vocabulary assessment; or</li> <li>› a STA reading assessment.</li> </ul>

Foundation-level fund	Assessment areas for all learners	Assessment types for Initial Assessments	Assessment Types for Progress Assessments
Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN) Fund Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Targeted English for Speakers of Other Languages (ILN ESOL).	STA reading assessment. (Note. Entry requirement is now Step 3 or below on the Assessment Tool). Or Starting Points Listening and/or Reading options*	Online or paper-based snapshot STA reading assessment, or online Starting Points options.	Learners who are 'Undecided' or 'Above Threshold' in initial STA reading assessment can be reassessed using a Reading snapshot assessment with 'no threshold'.  Learners who are 'Below Threshold' in initial STA reading assessment may be reassessed using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Starting Points options;</li> <li>› a vocabulary assessment; or</li> <li>› a STA reading assessment.</li> </ul>

\*Specific guidance on how to use the Starting Points options with learners is on [the TEC website](#)

As part of good practice, TEOs should also consider assessing:

- learners in levels 1 to 3 courses that lead to the award of a qualification at level 3; and
- any learner, regardless of course or qualification level, where the educator or tutor considers that the learner is likely to have reading and numeracy needs.

## Appendix A: Background to the TEC assessment tools

Strong adult literacy and numeracy skills deliver significant economic and social benefits for the individual, for employers and ultimately for New Zealand. Literacy and numeracy is a priority in the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014 -19, particularly raising the skills of learners in levels one to three provision.

Since 2006 the TEC has engaged in a systemic approach to building the capability of the tertiary sector to strengthen the literacy and numeracy of learners at entry level tertiary education. The TEC has invested in both the development of a high quality national infrastructure to support educators and directly in delivery to learners through a range of funds and grants.

### **The Learning Progressions**

These have been in place since 2008 and they show what adult learners know and can do at successive points as they develop their skills in literacy and numeracy. The Learning Progressions are available for download and in hard copy from the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults website on the [Learning Progressions page](#).

The Learning Progressions are a set of continuums with each step along the continuum representing a significant learning development. Because of this, the steps are uneven and the scales for reading, writing and numeracy are independent of one another.

### **The Assessment Tool**

This predominantly online adaptive tool is primarily designed to provide robust and reliable information on the reading, writing, numeracy and vocabulary skills of adults to educators and tutors. This information informs the development of learning interventions appropriate for learners' needs. The Assessment Tool also allows learners to track their own progress over time and it enables educators and organisations to learn from the progress made by groups or cohorts of learners.

### **How the TEC is using Assessment Tool data**

Assessment Tool data enables the TEC to understand the impact of national literacy and numeracy policies as well as the performance of TEOs. The TEC is also sharing Assessment Tool data with the sector in 2016 to increase transparency and help improve literacy and numeracy performance. The TEC is also using Assessment Tool to understand the trends in learner progress and to develop benchmarks for statistically significant gain.

Full and effective Assessment Tool usage by TEOs and educators will be critical to informing future policy and funding decisions in 2016 and beyond. Accurate and comprehensive data from TEOs will ensure these decisions are robust and evidence-based.

The TEC's methodology for calculating Assessment Tool usage of the at each tertiary education organisation, as usage of the Assessment Tool is a condition of funding. This methodology takes into account sector feedback about previous versions, and is available under 'Methodology for calculating Assessment Tool usage' [on the Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool web page](#).

## Appendix B: Assessment Tool usage requirements in funding determinations 2014-16

For information, relevant extracts from past and present funding mechanisms are provided here. For full information, please refer to your funding confirmation letter if you are a TEO.

### Specialised literacy and numeracy funds

**Table 4: Assessment Tool usage requirements for specialised literacy and numeracy funds**

Fund	2014	2015	2016
<b>Workplace Literacy and Numeracy</b>	Para 23 “TEO must have in place an effective assessment process for identifying a learner's literacy and/or numeracy gains, including the use of the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool”	Para 21 “TEO must have in place an effective assessment process for identifying a learner's literacy, numeracy, or literacy and numeracy gains including use of the Tool”	Para 26 “must use the Assessment Tool to measure each learner’s initial literacy and numeracy skill levels, and to measure his or her literacy, numeracy, or literacy and numeracy progress (as appropriate)”
<b>Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN)</b>	Para 15b. “the TEO has in place has in place an effective assessment process for identifying a learner's literacy and/or numeracy gains, including the use of the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool”	Para 12b “TEO must have in place an effective assessment process for identifying a learner's literacy, numeracy, or literacy and numeracy gains including use of the Tool”	Para 15b and 15d. “uses the Assessment Tool to measure each learner’s initial literacy and numeracy skill levels, and to measure his or her literacy, numeracy, or literacy and numeracy progress (as appropriate); and... has adequate processes for reporting improvements of a learner’s literacy and numeracy skills.”
<b>Intensive Literacy and Numeracy ESOL</b>	Para 30a. “A TEO must have in place an effective assessment process for identifying a learner's literacy and/or numeracy gains agreed by the TEC, for example the use of the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (Starting Points)”	Para 28 “A TEO must have in place an effective process for identifying a learner's literacy and numeracy gains agreed by the TEC, for example use of the LNAAT (Starting points)”	
<b>Refugee English Fund</b>	No specific requirements		

## General foundation-level funds

**Table 5: Assessment Tool usage requirements for general foundation-level funds**

Fund	2014	2015	2016
<b>Student Achievement Component (SAC) 1-2 Competitive</b>	Para 12d “programmes must have an assessment process, under which students are assessed using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (except for qualifications in ESOL or Te Reo Maori)”	Paras 39d, 39e, and 49 “includes an assessment process, under which students are assessed using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (except for qualifications in ESOL or Te Reo Maori)” “must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of each student, and measure the student's progress (except for qualifications in ESOL or Te Reo Maori).”	
<b>SAC 1-2 Non-competitive</b>	Para 73. “A TEO must have an assessment process, under which students are assessed using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (except for qualifications in ESOL or Te Reo Maori).”	Paras 45d, 49e, and 57 “includes an assessment process, under which students are assessed using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (except for qualifications in ESOL or Te Reo Maori)” “must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of each student, and measure the student's progress (except for qualifications in ESOL or Te Reo Maori).”	
<b>Youth Guarantee</b>	Para 32e. “a TEO must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to identify the literacy and/or numeracy needs of students, and measure their progress”	Para 38c. “must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of students, and measure their progress”	
<b>Industry Training Fund</b>	Para 33. A TEO must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to identify the literacy and/or numeracy needs of each industry trainee enrolled in a programme at level 1 or 2 on the NZQF and to measure the industry trainee's progress	Para 33. “A TEO must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to identify the literacy and/or numeracy needs of each industry trainee enrolled in a programme at level 1 or 2 on the NZQF and to measure the industry trainee's progress.”	Para 33. “A TEO must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of each industry trainee enrolled in a programme at level 1 or 2 on the NZQF and to measure the industry trainee's progress.”
<b>Maori and Pasifika Trades Training</b>	N/A	Para 32. “must use the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (or the youth option of the Tool) to identify the literacy, numeracy, or literacy and numeracy needs of each learner, and measure his or her progress.”	Para 39c. “use the Assessment Tool (or the youth option of the Tool) to identify the literacy, numeracy, or literacy and numeracy needs of each learner, and measure his or her progress, as required by the TEC.”