

Demonstration of the HSC minimum standard

ACE 4060

Last Updated: 11 October 2021

This rule is affected by changes made to RoSA and HSC rules and requirements in 2021.

Find these amendments in our COVID Changes for 2021.

From 2020, students must demonstrate a minimum standard of literacy and numeracy to be eligible for the award of the Higher School Certificate (see ACE 8004).

Students must demonstrate the minimum standard in each domain of reading, writing and numeracy.

The HSC minimum standard is set at the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) Level 3. ACSF Level 3 describes the functional literacy and numeracy skills required for life after school, for work and further education.

Students in Years 10 to 12 may demonstrate the HSC minimum standard by achieving Level 3 or above in the NESA minimum standard online reading, writing and numeracy tests.

Year 9 students who achieved Band 8 or above in a NAPLAN reading, writing and/or numeracy test in 2017 (only), are recognised as having demonstrated the HSC minimum standard in that domain, and do not need to sit a corresponding NESA minimum standard online test. The 2017 NAPLAN tests must have been undertaken under school (not home) supervision for the results to be used for this purpose.

For students undertaking a 'pathways' HSC, the NESA minimum standard online tests can be sat at any time during the five-year accumulation period (see ACE 8036) in order for students to gain eligibility for the HSC.

Students who leave school and have not met HSC eligibility requirements will (if eligible, see ACE 4001) receive a Record of School Achievement (RoSA), or a Transcript of Study. Students who subsequently (in the five-year accumulation period) become eligible for the HSC by demonstrating the HSC minimum standard will be issued with a Higher School Certificate testamur and have their results re-issued on a Record of Achievement.

School leavers in Years 10 to 12 may sit the NESA minimum standard online tests and use the test results to demonstrate their levels of reading, writing and numeracy to employers and/or further education and training providers.

Demonstration of the HSC minimum standard using alternative evidence

In the exceptional circumstance where a student who has the required literacy and/or numeracy skills is unable to demonstrate these skills in a NESA minimum standard online test, a principal may submit an application to NESA to demonstrate the HSC minimum standard using alternative evidence.

Applications to NESA must provide:

- evidence that the student is unable to demonstrate the minimum standard by sitting the online tests.
- evidence that the student has the required literacy and numeracy skills. School-observed or school-verified evidence must be clearly annotated to demonstrate alignment to ACSF Level 3 or above. Unannotated material will not be accepted.

Applications must be made for each domain of reading, writing and numeracy. Applications can only be submitted to NESA once the student is enrolled in Year 12, ie from Term 4 in Year 11. Applications should be forwarded to studentsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

Minimum Standard Exemptions

ACE 4061

Last Updated: 2 April 2019

Students undertaking Stage 6 Life Skills courses are eligible for an exemption from the HSC minimum standard under the following conditions:

- Students taking an English Life Skills course in Year 12 are exempt from demonstrating the HSC minimum literacy standard.
- Students taking a Mathematics Life Skills course in Year 12 are exempt from demonstrating the HSC minimum numeracy standard.
- Students who do not take a Mathematics Stage 6 course but who are enrolled in four or more Life Skills courses are exempt from demonstrating the HSC minimum numeracy standard.

To be exempt, students need to undertake Life Skills courses to the completion of Year 12.

Exceptional exemption from the HSC minimum standard

A principal may apply to NESAs for an exemption from meeting the HSC minimum standard for a student based on exceptional circumstances. Applications should be forwarded to studentsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

Credentialed exemptions

Students exempt from demonstrating the literacy and/or numeracy minimum standard will receive an HSC Record of Achievement with a footnote indicating that they were exempt.

Students exempt from demonstrating the HSC minimum standard may sit for the minimum standard online tests. Students who demonstrate the Level 3 or above in the minimum standard tests will not have their exemption included on their HSC Record of Achievement. Students who do not demonstrate Level 3 in the minimum standard tests will continue to be exempt.

Information about exemptions from the HSC minimum standard is available on the NESAs website.

Minimum standard online tests

ACE 4062

Last Updated: 31 March 2023

Students in Years 10 to 12 may demonstrate the HSC minimum standard by achieving Level 3 or above in the NESA minimum standard online reading, writing and numeracy tests.

Principals must nominate a test coordinator to administer the minimum standard tests.

Student entries for the minimum standard tests

Students who are in Years 10 and 11 may sit for each minimum standard test no more than four times per calendar year (i.e. four reading test attempts per year, four writing test attempts per year and four numeracy test attempts per year).

Students who are in Year 12 may sit for each minimum standard test no more than six times (i.e. six reading test attempts in Year 12, six writing test attempts in Year 12 and six numeracy test attempts in Year 12).

All students reattempting a test in the same domain must wait at least 30 calendar days after their previous attempt at that test.

Students may not sit for a minimum standard reading, writing or numeracy test if they have already demonstrated the HSC minimum standard (ACSF Level 3) in that test domain, unless they are leaving school.

Minimum standard test conduct, equipment and rules

Students must be supervised while sitting the minimum standard tests. Test Coordinators will work with principals and other teaching staff to arrange appropriate supervision.

The minimum standard tests are delivered via a lockdown browser, which must be installed on the device used to undertake the tests. Schools can decide whether the tests will be taken using school computer equipment or student laptop/tablet devices.

Students may take a pen/pencil and a ruler into the minimum standard tests, and may use blank paper for working out. The paper must be checked by a test supervisor or NESA representative before the test begins to ensure it is blank.

The following other items are not permitted to be used:

- calculators (where a numeracy question requires the use of a calculator, an online calculator will appear with the question)
- mobile phones, smart watches or programmable watches and other electronic devices, such as but not limited to: tablets, gaming devices, music players
- dictionaries or translation apps/devices
- notes
- headphones.

Students are not permitted to leave the test window, view any other websites during a test or access notes or unauthorised materials during the test. All work in a minimum standard test must be the student's own work.

Malpractice and breaches of minimum standard test rules

Malpractice is defined as behaving dishonestly to gain an unfair advantage in assessments. It includes, but is not limited to:

- copying part or all of someone else's work and presenting it as the student's own
- using material directly from books, journals, or the internet
- building on the ideas of another person without reference to the source
- buying, stealing or borrowing another person's work and presenting it as the student's own
- submitting work to which another person, such as a parent, coach or subject expert, has contributed substantially
- paying someone to write or prepare material or undertake an exam on the student's behalf
- breaching school examination rules
- using non-approved aids
- assisting another student to engage in malpractice.

Schools must notify NESAs of any instance of suspected malpractice or breaches of test rules as soon as possible after the test has been completed by completing the form *HSC Minimum Standard Literacy and Numeracy Tests: Suspected Breach of Test Rules or Malpractice*. Notifications must be forwarded to studentsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

Results from a test where a student has been found guilty of malpractice or a breach of test rules may not be used to demonstrate achievement of the HSC minimum standard. In addition, students found to have engaged in malpractice, breach of test rules or have written a response considered offensive may not be permitted to re-sit the test for a period of up to 12 months. In some cases, penalties may be extended to other HSC exam results.

Illness/misadventure for the minimum standard tests

Where a student is prevented from a reasonable attempt at a test due to school-verified illness or misadventure, the student may re-sit the test at another time.

If an incident occurs before a test starts, the school can arrange for the student to sit the test at another time.

If the incident occurs during a test, the school may:

- arrange for the student to sit another test at another time, and
- request that NESAs cancel the test so it does not count as a test attempt.

Illness/misadventure enquiries should be forwarded to LNsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

NESA makes no provision for school-based assessment or estimated marks to be substituted for minimum standard online test results.

For more information

More information about the minimum standard tests, including advice for test coordinators and supervisors, and technical specifications for operating the tests, is available on the NESAs website and on *Schools Online*. On *Schools Online*, navigate to: **Downloads > Memos and Documents > Minimum Standard Tests**.

Disability provisions for the minimum standard online tests

ACE 4063

Last Updated: 29 March 2019

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth) and the *Disability Standards for Education* (2005) require NESAs to ensure that students with disability are able to access and respond to an examination or test.

Students may require disability provisions for:

- a permanent condition, such as vision or hearing loss
- a temporary condition, such as a broken arm
- an intermittent condition, such as lower back pain when sitting for long periods

Disability provisions are based on the functional impact of a diagnosis, not the diagnosis itself. The provisions apply only where the disability requires a practical arrangement to provide a student access to read and/or respond in a test situation and are solely determined on how the disability affects the student's performance.

When determining if disability provisions are required, the online platform of the minimum standard tests should be considered, as features such as manipulation of font/image size, font colour and background colour are available to all students.

The purpose and nature of the minimum standard online tests is different to the HSC examinations and principals have been given greater authority to approve disability provisions that can be implemented for the minimum standard online tests.

There is no guarantee that NESAs will grant the same disability provisions for the HSC examinations as those approved for the minimum standard online tests.

Principal approved disability provisions for the minimum standard online tests

Principals can approve the following standard provisions:

- rest breaks (standard is 5 minutes per half hour but principals may approve up to 30 minutes per half hour)
- additional time (standard is 2.5 minutes per half hour but principals may approve up to 30 minutes per half hour)
- reader
- writer (for the writing test only)
- modifications to the environment eg special furniture, lighting
- access to medication and/or food

Evidence used to determine disability provisions, such as health reports, reading test scores or teacher comments, must be retained in the school for three years after the tests as this evidence may need to be reviewed by NESAs.

NESA approved disability provisions for the minimum standard online tests

Non-standard disability provisions for the minimum standard online tests require approval from NESAs. Schools must submit an application to NESAs for non-standard disability provisions, such as:

- modified paper eg modifying questions that contain visual stimulus
- Braille
- additional time or rest breaks greater than 30 minutes per half hour

Other provisions that are required to provide access and participation on the same basis as a student without a disability may be applied for. Applications should be forwarded to studentsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

NESA approved disability provisions are valid for 12 months from the date of approval.

Credentialed disability provisions taken

Where students use a reader to access the online reading test, the reading test report will include the following footnote:

- This test was completed with the assistance of a reader. The reader provided no assistance in the interpretation of the meaning of words or the text.

Information about disability provisions for the minimum standard online tests is available on the NESA website.

Results services and appeals

ACE 4064

Last Updated: 11 October 2021

This rule is affected by changes made to RoSA and HSC rules and requirements in 2021.

Find these amendments in our COVID Changes for 2021.

Schools will receive some information on each student's performance in the tests. This information is available via the Results Analysis Package (RAP).

Principals may request a review of their student's results where the performance is below expectations. This service is not an avenue of appeal and does not involve the re-marking of any test.

Review requests must be supported by the principal's reason for expecting a different result. The student name and NESA student number should be included.

Requests should be forwarded to msr@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

Minimum standard online tests: Candidates sitting the tests after school

ACE 4065

Last Updated: 1 June 2021

Students demonstrate the HSC minimum standard by achieving Level 3 or above in the NESA minimum standard online reading, writing and numeracy tests.

Students who did not meet the HSC minimum standard while at school may apply to NESA to sit one or more minimum standard online tests. To be eligible, candidates must have fulfilled all other HSC requirements.

Applying to sit the minimum standard tests

Candidates who have left school may apply to NESA to sit the tests by submitting an application. The application must be submitted at least 21 days prior to the desired test date. NESA will contact candidates to schedule a test

Candidates may apply no more than four times per calendar year to sit for each minimum standard test (ie four reading test attempts per year, four writing test attempts per year and four numeracy test attempts per year).

Candidates reattempting a test in the same domain must wait at least 30 calendar days after their previous attempt at that test.

Candidates may not sit for a minimum standard reading, writing or numeracy test if they have already demonstrated the HSC minimum standard (ACSF Level 3) in that test domain.

Cancelling or re-scheduling a test

Candidates have up to 24 hours prior to a scheduled test to cancel or re-schedule the test. If a student does not attend a scheduled test attempt, and no evidence of illness or misadventure is provided (see below), NESA will consider that a real attempt, and candidates will be required to wait the requisite 30 calendar days before making another attempt.

Minimum standard test conduct, equipment and rules

Candidates must have appropriate supervision while sitting the minimum standard tests. NESA will make suitable arrangements directly with test candidates.

The minimum standard tests are delivered via a lockdown browser, which must be installed on the device used to undertake the tests. This may be the candidate's own device, or a device provided by a testing venue. Tests must be undertaken using equipment approved by NESA.

Candidates may take a pen/pencil and a ruler into the minimum standard tests, and may use blank paper for working out. The paper must be checked by a test supervisor or NESA representative to ensure it is blank.

The following items are not permitted to be used:

- calculators (where a numeracy question requires the use of a calculator, an online calculator will appear with the question)
- mobile phones, smart watches or programmable watches and other electronic devices, such as but not limited to: tablets, gaming devices, music players
- dictionaries or translation apps/devices
- notes
- headphones.

Students are not permitted to leave the test window, view any other websites during a test or access notes or use unauthorised materials during the test. All work in a minimum standard test must be the student's own work.

Malpractice and breaches of minimum standard test rules

NESA will review any instances of suspected malpractice or breaches of test rules.

Malpractice is defined as behaving dishonestly to gain an unfair advantage in assessments. It includes, but is not limited to:

- copying part or all of someone else's work and presenting it as the candidate's own
- using material directly from books, journals, or the internet
- building on the ideas of another person without reference to the source
- buying, stealing or borrowing another person's work and presenting it as the candidate's own
- submitting work to which another person, such as a parent, coach or subject expert, has contributed substantially
- paying someone to write or prepare material or undertake an exam on the candidate's behalf
- breaching school examination rules
- using non-approved aids
- assisting another student to engage in malpractice.

Results from a test where a candidate has been found guilty of malpractice or a breach of test rules may not be used to demonstrate achievement of the HSC minimum standard. In addition, candidates found to have engaged in malpractice, breach of test rules or have written a response considered offensive may not be permitted to re-sit the test for a period of up to 12 months.

Illness/misadventure for the minimum standard tests

Where a student is prevented from attending a test or making a reasonable attempt due to a verified illness or misadventure, the student may re-sit the test at another time.

If an incident occurs before a test starts, NESAs can arrange for the student to sit the test later.

If the incident occurs during a test, the student may request that NESAs cancel the test, so that it does not count as a test attempt, and arrange another test time.

Illness/misadventure enquiries should be forwarded to LNsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

NESA makes no provision for marks from any other test or assessment to be substituted for minimum standard online test results.

For more information

More information about the minimum standard tests is available on the NESAs website.