

The Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool

A summary for Tertiary Education Organisations delivering programmes that include literacy and numeracy

Why assess literacy and numeracy?

Assessment seeks to answer the question, what are the learner's current literacy and numeracy skills? This question can be viewed as both assessment for learning and assessment of learning. Accordingly, any type of assessment tool can be useful for either summative or formative assessment.

Assessment that supports teaching and learning:

- includes assessment for specific purposes, with the adult learner and the educator both being clear about what those purposes are
- is an integral part of effective teaching programmes as the basis of decision-making about "next step" instruction
- frequently and consistently provides learners and educators with feedback to inform progress
- provides information that helps learners to develop metacognition, self-regulation and independence

(TEC, 2010. 'The role of assessment in strengthening literacy and numeracy of adults'. Strengthening literacy and numeracy through embedding: Theoretical framework. Retrieved 1 October 2010 from <http://literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/Educator-resources/The-Theoretical-Framework>.

About the Assessment Tool

The main purpose of the Assessment Tool is to inform teaching and learning. It has over 2,000 assessment items with New Zealand contexts, and is designed to be used either online or with pen and paper.

The Assessment Tool is linked to the Learning Progressions Framework and can be used to offer detailed reports on learners and groups of learners.

This document contains further details that may be of use to TEOs, and answers some questions that the TEC has been asked about the Assessment Tool.

Benefits of the Assessment Tool

The Assessment Tool has been developed to benefit learners, tertiary education organisations, and the TEC. Benefits include the following:

- For learners – to be aware of what they know and what they need to know to meet their purposes/goal. For most the immediate goal is passing the unit standard and completing the qualification. Literacy and numeracy are "tools" that you need to access most types of learning.
- For TEOs – What is the extent of the challenge in the level 1-3 programmes? How many learners have literacy and numeracy needs that put them at risk of not being able to understand the demands of the courses? Which programmes have the greatest needs? Do learners have access to teaching and learning to strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills within the vocational context?
- For the government - Are learners making progress in their literacy and numeracy? How much? Over how long? In what types of provision? Is the investment in improving literacy and numeracy working? What is working and where?



Use of the Assessment Tool from 2011

All TEOs will need to use the Assessment Tool to assess all new learners in embedded programmes (and all learners enrolling in new embedded programmes) from January 2011.

TEOs will also be expected to reassess all learners on completion of their programmes with the Assessment Tool. Assessing mid-programme is at the discretion of the TEO and may be appropriate for some longer programmes.

The aim is that from 2011 all NZQF level 1-3 provision that includes literacy and numeracy will use the Assessment Tool for those learners whose skills fall within the Learning Progressions.

At this stage, there are no funding implications linked to learner literacy and numeracy progress as reported in the Assessment Tool in 2011, however the data that is gathered will be used to make future decisions.

Monitoring and reporting on use of the Assessment Tool

The TEC will have access to all learners' assessment information in the Assessment Tool. Therefore TEOs do not need to report on learner progression once they are using the Assessment Tool. No learners can be individually identified by the TEC.

The TEC will be linking the assessment information in the Assessment Tool with your TEO's Investment Plan commitments that relate to enrolments in programmes with embedded literacy and numeracy.

Getting support to use the Assessment Tool

The Assessment Tool Service Desk provided by NZCER is able to answer queries about the operational aspects of the Assessment Tool. It can also provide training over the phone for individuals and groups. Contact them on 04 381 4576 Mon-Fri 8am-4:00pm or at assessforadults@nzcer.org.nz.

TEOs can contact their Investment Manager or the TEC Service Centre if they have specific questions about embedded literacy and numeracy funding.

Using the Assessment Tool information to inform teaching and learning

The Assessment Tool reports are mapped to the Learning Progressions and as such the teaching and learning resources that support this framework will be of increasing importance for educators.

The University of Waikato's National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults is able to help educators and organisations develop an understanding of how use the information generated by the Assessment Tool to inform teaching and learning.

The literacy and numeracy for adults website (www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com) has a wealth of information to support educators, including a number of online professional learning resources have been developed that educators can access if they are unable to attend workshops.

Regularly visit the website and register for the email updates so that you are kept informed of new resources as they become available.



Frequently Asked Questions

Do all learners have to be assessed at the end of their embedded programme?

From 2011 all learners will be assessed at the end of their embedded programme except where the first assessment in the Assessment Tool reports that the learner is:

- at Step 6 in the numeracy progressions
- at Step 5 or Step 6 of the reading progressions
- at Step 5 or Step 6 of the writing progressions

Assessing mid-programme is at the discretion of the TEO and may be appropriate for some longer programmes.

What about learners who are not yet at Step One of the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy?

It may be appropriate for some learners to be assessed with the Starting Points Assessment Guide, which was developed to provide information that can inform teaching and learning in the same way that the Assessment Tool does.

The new Vocabulary Assessments will be appropriate for some ESOL learners and other learners not yet working at Step One.

What are Snapshot assessments?

Snapshot assessments are shorter length online adaptive assessments for reading and numeracy. These assessments recognise that in some circumstances a shorter assessment will provide enough information for an educator's purposes, while minimising the amount of time needed for administration.

The Snapshot assessments use items from the same item banks as the other reading and numeracy assessments available in the Assessment Tool.

The Snapshot assessments meet the requirements for TEC funding.

One effective use of the Snapshot assessment is as an end of programme measure of learning progress. For example, if your organisation has used the full assessment at the start of the programme to get rich diagnostic information you could use the Snapshot assessment at the end of the programme. The margin of error should always be considered when comparing results from two assessments.

What is the purpose of the Vocabulary assessment?

The Vocabulary assessment is to assess the learner's ability to understand words regardless of whether they are read or heard. The Vocabulary assessment contributes to an educator's understanding of a learner's reading skills, particularly of those working at Starting Points or at the first Steps of the Learning Progression and we encourage educators to use this assessment with these learners.

It is not appropriate to use the Vocabulary assessment as a comprehensive assessment of the reading skills of learners.



Can TEOs share information from the Assessment Tool about learners?

Yes. When a TEO adds the learner to their environment in the Assessment Tool they are able to view past assessment history. This can be done within the Assessment Tool from the learner details page, and requires the learner's permission. There is no need to contact the other organisation.

The assessment information is unlikely to have changed within a 3 month period if the learner has not undertaken literacy and numeracy learning in that time.

Assessment information from other organisations within this 3 month period will count towards the pre-assessment requirement for reporting purposes.

Will learners assessed using the Assessment Tool and identified as not having reading or numeracy needs count towards the TEOs embedded literacy and numeracy Investment Plan commitments?

Learners enrolled in embedded qualifications who are identified by the Assessment Tool, including the Snapshot assessment, as having sufficient literacy and/or numeracy skills (i.e. Steps 5/6 as outlined above) will count towards the TEOs plan commitment targets.

What are the respective roles of the TEC, NZCER and the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults related to the Assessment Tool?

The Assessment Tool was developed for the TEC by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) who led a consortium involving NZCER, the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) and Fronde.

The TEC is responsible for future developments of the Assessment Tool and managing the contract with NZCER. The TEC works closely with NZCER to ensure that the Assessment Tool is fit for purpose and is informed by how it is being used by the tertiary sector.

NZCER is contracted by the TEC to provide support for users of the Assessment Tool in the form of the Service Desk. It also has responsibility for maintaining the Assessment Tool and working with the TEC, Fronde and ACER on functionality fixes and updates.

The University of Waikato's National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults has the capability contract for literacy and numeracy for adults. Its area of expertise is in helping educators and organisations use the information generated by the Assessment Tool to inform teaching and learning.