Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Assessment design

Robust, authentic senior secondary assessment activities

Effective assessment activity design can promote deeper learning, encourage academic integrity, and reduce misuse of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools. These assessment design principles are intended to complement — not replace — active supervision of authenticity and appropriate assessment conditions.

Design Principles

1. Consider the whole assessment process

The teacher–student relationship is central to teaching, learning, and assessment. Teachers must know their students and know their work.

Observing students' thinking in their formative work helps teachers to see how student ideas develop and helps teachers to ensure authenticity of assessment evidence. Authenticity - NZQA

Examples of assessment processes that build teacher familiarity include:

- Regular checks for understanding. *Short, formative activities such as frequent, low stakes quizzes, help to monitor individual understanding over time.*
- Incorporating checkpoints and milestones into assessment processes. *Structured checkpoints where teachers observe student processes, confirm progress, and verify engagement with key skills, or methods.*
- Progress discussions. *Short feedback opportunities where students explain their work-in-progress, articulate decisions, and respond to questions.*

2. Define if, when, and how students can use GenAI

Transparent use of GenAI is the responsibility of both teachers and students.

An assessment activity needs to clearly communicate **if, when, and how** GenAI can be used. If GenAI use is permitted in any way, all outputs should be referenced in line with school assessment policies. Examples of this can be found here: GenAI in NCEA assessment: FAQs

This includes:

- **IF GenAI tools can be used.** Clearly state if use is permitted, restricted, or prohibited for the task.
- **WHEN GenAI tools can be used.** Specify the stages of the assessment process where Gen AI use is acceptable or not acceptable.
- **HOW GenAI tools can be used.** Define the permitted types of GenAI tools and the ways in which they may be used to support student work.

Create a culture of clear expectations and academic integrity that normalises showing why, when, and how GenAI is used. This transparency establishes shared expectations, supports ethical use, and reduces the risk of unintentional misconduct.

3. Design human-centred tasks

Tasks that involve interpretation, evaluation, contextual decision-making, or ethical reasoning place each individual student at the centre of the assessment process.

Examples of human-centred assessment tasks include:

- Reflecting on learning through social interaction. *Students discuss how class activities shaped or challenged their understanding of key concepts.*
- Analysing an ethical dilemma. *Students examine an authentic ethical dilemma relevant to the discipline and justify their responses.*
- Using a relevant critical thinking tool to reflect on and evaluate their new knowledge and understanding. *Students use an appropriate critical thinking framework to reflect on, evaluate, and articulate their understanding.*

4. Provide authentic, meaningful tasks

Design assessment based on learning experiences from the curriculum, that are relevant to student interest and connected to the real world.

Examples of authentic assessment tasks include:

- Realistic or hypothetical case studies. *Students apply disciplinary knowledge to analyse and respond to complex, real-world scenarios.*
- Engagement with stakeholders, users, or experts. *Students seek, interpret, or respond to input from relevant audiences beyond the classroom.*
- Analysis of contemporary local or global events. *Students use subject specific frameworks or tools to interpret and evaluate real-world issues.*

5. Preserve student voice

Assessment design which includes personal experience or reflection helps to highlight **how** the student knows something, not just what they know.

Examples of assessment practices that preserve student voice include:

- Journals or process logs. *Students document their thinking, learning decisions, challenges, and progress over time*.
- Audio or video reflections. *Students articulate their understanding, reasoning, and learning journey in their own words.*
- Integration of personal experience or context. *Students connect disciplinary knowledge to their lived experience, professional context, or local setting.*