He aratohu mā te kaiako
Teacher guide

PAT Tuhituhi
PAT Writing

This guide is intended to assist kaiako in the use of the PAT Tuhituhi | PAT Writing online assessments

The PAT Tuhituhi is available online through NZCER Assist (https://www.nzcerassist.org.nz/login)

For questions or advice

E-mail assessmentservices@nzcer.org.nz or call Assessment Services on (04) 802 1630

For support with school-wide data

E-mail educationadviser@nzcer.org.nz or call Education Advisers on (04) 802 1386

Kupu whakataki | Introduction

The Progressive Achievement Tests of Writing (PAT Tuhituhi | PAT Writing, referred to throughout this guide as PAT Tuhituhi) are a series of online writing assessments designed specifically for use by ākonga in Years 5–10 in Aotearoa New Zealand. The assessments have been developed to provide ākonga with opportunities to write using digital tools and provide kaiako with meaningful data and feedback showing where ākonga are (their position) and how far they have come (their progress) in their journey to becoming competent and confident writers. When used in conjunction with other forms of writing evidence and properly interpreted, PAT Tuhituhi can provide a comprehensive picture of learners' writing capabilities. The information can help identify strengths and areas for improvement, enabling kaiako to tailor teaching programmes to better support ākonga.

The development of PAT Tuhituhi is aligned with NZCER's commitment to provide assessments that support the kinds of learning and teaching that lead to equitable outcomes for all ākonga. It is vital that individual ākonga who sit PAT Tuhituhi are supported to engage in the assessments and that the results are used to guide and enhance their learning, affirm their identities, and uphold their wellbeing.

This guide begins with a short explanation of equity and assessment and describes the background to the development. It provides information about the purpose of the PAT Tuhituhi assessment and includes guidelines and advice about how to use the tests.

We hope that the newly developed assessments are useful for all your ākonga and that they can assist you to promote rich teaching and learning.

Ngā whakamoemiti | Acknowledgements

He whakamārama mō te whakamahinga kupu i roto | A note about use of vocabulary

This Aratohu kaiako | Teacher guide uses the terms *ākonga* and *learner*, *kaiako* and *teacher*, and *kura* and *school*, interchangeably. *Whānau* refers to all parents, caregivers, and extended family members. Writing tasks in PAT Tuhituhi may include kupu Māori, where their use is genuine to the task and purpose for writing. This practice aligns with NZCER's commitment to advocating for and promoting the revitalisation of te reo Māori. If you are unsure of any kupu Māori, please consult a Māori dictionary such as *Te Aka Māori Dictionary* https://maoridictionary.co.nz

Ngā kai o roto | Contents

1. Te ōritetanga me te aromatawai | Equity and assessment

The development of PAT Tuhituhi is guided by NZCER's vision for providing assessments that reflect the diverse identities, experiences, and knowledge systems of our learners, and providing all ākonga with fair and meaningful assessment opportunities to succeed. This journey to equity is ongoing.

An equitable education system recognises that some ākonga are advantaged compared with others, and focuses on providing appropriate resourcing and pathways that allow those without the same advantages to succeed. It also recognises that they can succeed. The OECD describes an equitable education system as one that is fair and inclusive (OECD, 2008).[1] When assessment is equitable, no particular group has an advantage over another, and achievement cannot be predicted by the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds of learners. In the Aotearoa New Zealand schooling system, a disproportionate number of ākonga Māori, Pacific learners, ākonga from low socio-economic backgrounds, and ākonga with additional needs achieve at lower levels than their peers in literacy. Assessment practices and differences in opportunities for learning have contributed to these inequitable outcomes.

PATs are carefully designed with this in mind—meaning all tasks are thoroughly assessed for biases or the potential to exacerbate inequities. The assessments are well matched to the curriculum and the educational context of Aotearoa New Zealand. They are carefully developed to be relevant, accessible, and meaningful for kaiako and ākonga in this country. NZCER also strongly believes in kaiako critically engaging with multiple sources of assessment data and providing ākonga with opportunities, within assessments, to draw on their languages, cultures, and identities as strengths. By doing so, kaiako empower ākonga to reach their full potential as learners, and, in this context, as writers.

2. Te whāinga o ngā aromatawai | Purpose of the assessments

PATs (Progressive Achievement Tests) in pāngarau (mathematics), pānui (reading comprehension), reading vocabulary, listening comprehension, and punctuation and grammar have been offered by NZCER for many years. Throughout this time, their purpose has remained consistent: to offer to kaiako and schools a standardised tool for formative assessment that supports teaching and learning in Years 3–10. The development of PAT Tuhituhi complements the existing suite of tests. It offers a formative, curriculum-aligned writing tool that provides kaiako with instant scoring and feedback. This tool will assist the Government's plan for more consistency in our literacy and numeracy teaching, assessment, and reporting on achievement.

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1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development | OECD. (2008). *Ten steps to equity in education: Policy brief*. https://www.oecd.org/edcuation/school/39989494.pdf

Ka taea te PAT Tuhituhi te whakamahi hei aha? | What can PAT Tuhituhi be used for?

The PAT Tuhituhi assessment is intended to be used as a low-stakes, formative assessment of writing. Low-stakes formative assessment can significantly support ākonga learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Lee et al., 2020; Ruiz-Primo & Brookhart, 2017) by supporting kaiako to tailor instruction to the needs of their ākonga and by empowering ākonga to understand and act on their strengths and areas of potential development (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989). Individual assessment results provide one source of evidence from a snapshot in time. In the case of PAT Tuhituhi, these results can be used to:

- indicate the writing skills and capabilities ākonga can demonstrate in a specific writing context
- indicate how ākonga feel about writing
- identify patterns of strengths and areas of need for individual ākonga, and for classes and groups
- share information with ākonga about their writing achievement
- share information about ākonga writing achievement with whānau and caregivers.

Ultimately, results from this assessment should be used to inform decisions made on the teaching, methods, and resources that will be most suitable for ākonga.

Kāore i whakahāngaitia a PAT Tuhituhi ki te tautoko i te roma | PAT Tuhituhi is not intended to support streaming

Research shows that streaming practices, including ability grouping, can be both harmful and perpetuate inequities within our education system (Tokona Te Raki, 2023). PAT Tuhituhi assessments are not designed to be used for the purposes of streaming or ability grouping; instead, their key purpose is to provide evidence about ākonga progress. They can be used formatively and summatively, thus contributing to an overall picture of position and progress.

3. Ngā kai o roto i ngā aromatawai | Content of the assessments

PAT Tuhituhi are online-only assessments, designed to be used with ākonga from Years 5–10. Currently there are 12 writing tasks available, with further assessments to be developed. These tasks span the four genres of writing specified in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2025): narrative, recount, persuasive, and explanation writing. Assessments can be used with classes, small groups, or individuals.

Ministry of Education writing sources were evaluated for their description of these genres:

Narrate: Ākonga write creative, fictional stories. Writing uses narrative techniques to describe imagined experiences and includes characters, settings, and plot.

Recount: Ākonga retell real events or experiences from their lives. Writing is personal, descriptive, sequential, and reflective.

Explain: Ākonga write to provide information about a particular topic. Writing guides the reader through subject matter, often explaining "how" and "why" something happens.

Persuade: Ākonga write to convince a reader of an opinion or argument, using reasoning, facts and details, and emotive language,

The NZCER Assist platform (https://www.nzcerassist.org.nz/login) is used to manage the administration, marking, and reporting of the PAT Tuhituhi assessments.

Ākonga are presented with an opportunity to respond to a prompt in three stages

1. introduction to the task
2. planning their writing
3. writing and editing.

The tool also provides ākonga with an opportunity to reflect on how they feel about writing.

Once an assessment is finished, NZCER Assist displays the writing completed by ākonga, and scoring and feedback about their writing.

Note that PAT Tuhituhi provides ākonga with an opportunity to use a spelling and grammar checker whilst they are writing and editing. PAT Tuhituhi is an assessment of online writing. It is important that ākonga are supported to use the same sorts of online tools in this assessment, that they would use in other online writing experiences.

4. Te whakamahi i ngā aromatawai | Using the assessments

To complete a PAT Tuhituhi assessment, ākonga will need access to a fully-charged, internet-connected device, preferably with a hard-wired keyboard. It is not recommended that ākonga complete the assessment on a device with an on-screen keyboard (e.g., a tablet), as this is likely to diminish the speed at which ākonga are able to type, and the quantity of writing they can produce in the given timeframe.

Te kōwhiri i te aromatawai tika | Choosing the right assessment

The PAT Tuhituhi assessment includes 12 writing tasks that span Years 5–10 of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The table below indicates the recommended tasks for each year level.

Table 1: Recommended PAT Tuhituhi assessments for each year level

Year levels	Recommended assessments	Writing genre
5, 6	Feeling proud	Recount
5, 6	Day as a bird	Narrate
5, 6	Kaitiakitanga: Looking after our world	Explain
5, 6	Favourite place	Persuade
7, 8	Whānau and friends	Recount
7, 8	Getting home from the middle of nowhere	Narrate
7, 8	A role model	Explain
7, 8	Recycling in the community	Persuade
9, 10	A special day	Recount
9, 10	Time machine	Narrate
9, 10	Family traditions	Explain
9, 10	Cell phones in schools	Persuade

As with other PATs, it is possible to use an assessment at a year level other than that which is recommended. Whilst assessment tasks were developed with specific year levels in mind, they were trialled across a range of year levels. Kaiako should consider the age and knowledge of their ākonga, and how appropriate the context represented in the task will be for them at a specific moment in time. We recommend that kaiako preview any PAT Tuhituhi assessment task before using it with ākonga.

The PAT Tuhituhi scoring rubrics use a continuum to recognise and score the writing skills ākonga have demonstrated in an assessment task. This scoring does not take age into account, meaning that any ākonga who participates in this assessment can have their score represented on a common scale. This means progress is shown for all ākonga, regardless of their age.

Supporting ākonga to access the assessment

Te tōtika o te aromatawai tuihono | Suitability of online assessment

The PAT Tuhituhi assessment is a fully online tool. It may not be suitable for ākonga who are unfamiliar with using a keyboard to write or writing in an online environment. Ultimately the mode of assessment should reflect the classroom learning situation and be responsive to the needs of the individual ākonga.

Te whakaaro ki ngā ākonga reo tuarua | Considering second-language learners

The PAT Tuhituhi assessment is designed to be used in English-medium settings. The autoscoring utilises a New Zealand English dictionary to comprehend what ākonga have written and provide feedback. When deciding whether to use this tool with second-language learners, it is important to recognise the limitations of what can be evaluated and scored by the automated marking system, and how this meets the needs of your ākonga, and your needs as their kaiako. It is possible to supplement the automated marking with your own manual marking.

Ngā āhuahira urutanga | Accessibility features

The PAT Tuhituhi assessment is delivered on NZCER Assist. Clicking the menu button [≡] on the assessment portal opens an accessibility feature menu. From this, ākonga can adjust the font size and style and can change the contrast of the assessment display. If your ākonga are familiar with the online PAT Pānui or PAT Pāngarau assessments, they will recognise these accessibility features.

Ākonga should not use word lists, graphic organisers, dictionaries, or other online writing support tools or websites during the assessment.
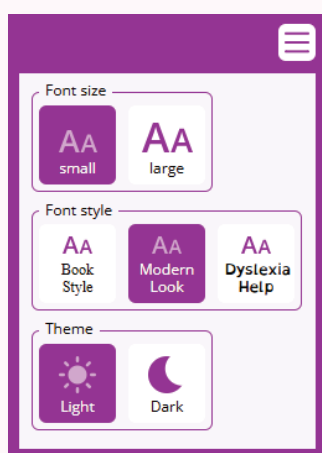
Providing direct support to ākonga during the assessment

It is appropriate to read the assessment instructions aloud to ākonga, if it is needed to support their understanding of the task.

Reading written work back to ākonga, using text-to-speech technology, or typing for ākonga might be useful in some contexts. However, with text-to-speech assistance, results may not necessarily reflect learners' ability to independently complete this kind of writing task. The inflection and tone used when reading written text to ākonga could also make a difference to how ākonga hear and think about their writing. Moreover, any normative comparisons from the results of this assessment will be with ākonga who did not have these types of assistance. Kaiako should consider this when interpreting and sharing test results with ākonga and whānau.

The whole assessment, including administration, is designed to take no more than 60 minutes to complete. It may take some ākonga 40 minutes or less. The assessment does not include a built-in timer. Kaiako should use their discretion if ākonga need more time to finish their test.

5. Te whakahaere i ngā aromatawai tuihono | Administering the online assessments

The PAT Tuhituhi assessments are managed using the online NZCER Assist platform (https://www.nzcerassist.org.nz/login). The platform allows kaiako to set up the online assessments and generate the tokens needed to access them. The instructions below are designed to guide kaiako through setting up and administering the tests.

Generating tokens

To generate a set of unique token codes for your ākonga, go to the NZCER Assist platform and select the PAT Tuhituhi assessment from your dashboard. Select the Manage Learners icon next to the assessment name. Your tokens will open in a new window. These can be printed as a PDF, cut into individual strips, and then distributed to learners.

Running the assessment

1. Give the URL https://www.nzcerassist.org.nz/login to ākonga (this can also be found on the tokens) and wait until everyone has found the site.
2. Ask ākonga to enter their tokens and click sign in. They will see a welcome screen that asks them to confirm their name. If the name on the screen is correct, ākonga should click the "Yes" button. If the name on the screen is incorrect, check that they are using the correct token.
3. Ask ākonga to open the menu [see Accessibility features, above] and explore the available font and contrast options. Tell ākonga that they should use the arrow buttons within the assessment task, instead of the arrows in their browser toolbar, to move through the task.
4. Read through the online tools and assessment statement screens with ākonga.
5. Make sure ākonga know how to use the scrolling function. When it is necessary to scroll to see a text, a grey bar appears at the edge of the screen. Moving the cursor onto the bar will make it appear darker and more noticeable. You may also need to help ākonga resize their browser window if they are using a smaller screen.

Introducing the writing assessment

Ensure all ākonga are looking at the screen with the title **Planning | Whakamahere**. Read the text on the screen and talk about the writing task and images with your ākonga. This can involve ākonga talking in different groups and as a whole class. You can make links between learners' lives, the task and images, and to your classroom experiences of writing. The

images are illustrative only—encourage ākonga to write to the task. Please do not make a written record of the discussion, and do not let ākonga type in the planning screen until you have finished talking about the prompt.

Supporting ākonga to complete the writing assessment

Provide ākonga with up to 45 minutes to complete their planning, writing, and editing. Emphasise to ākonga:

- this assessment is all about their current writing skills
- they should try their best to write at least a paragraph
- they should use only the tools provided in the platform.

6. Te hoatu kaute me te whakamārama i ngā kitenga | Scoring and interpreting results

Te kaute | Scoring

All assessments are marked automatically through the WriteSHIFT API (application programming interface). Once responses are marked, they will appear on individual and list reports on NZCER Assist.

Once ākonga have submitted their writing, it is marked automatically via the WriteSHIFT API. This API is provided by Vantage—an educational measurement company with experience in creating educational measurement tools for different jurisdictions, including working with ACER to develop scoring systems for writing assessments, and current work with NZQA. Upon receiving a learner's written response, the API generates a set of scores and holistic feedback. This feeds through to NZCER Assist, which then shows the feedback and scoring in individual and class-level PAT Tuhituhi reports.

Data privacy

Responses are processed and stored in the United States. Learners' personal data is not attached to responses when they are sent for processing and scoring. Response content is never reviewed by anyone outside of the PAT Tuhituhi development and administration team at NZCER, unless a response violates the Vantage Terms and Conditions. Vantage does not share with, sell, or disclose any information to third parties.

Rubrics

Scoring in PAT Tuhituhi uses a set of four genre-specific rubrics that are adapted from rubrics created by Vantage. Each rubric contains five distinct elements

- focus and purpose
- content development and elaboration
- organisation
- language use, voice, and style
- mechanics and conventions.

Each of these elements is connected to a specific genre, except for the mechanics and conventions element which is generic for all genres.

- **Focus and purpose:** how well a response demonstrates overall focus of the topic, awareness of audience and purpose, and meets the demands of the task
- **Content development and elaboration:** how well a response develops and supports main ideas or content and provides elaboration with genre-specific elements and details
- **Organisation:** how well a response demonstrates a cohesive, appropriate, and logical structure, and uses paragraphing and appropriate transitional strategies to link ideas and content
- **Language use, voice, and style:** how well a response establishes and consistently maintains a style and tone appropriate to the audience, demonstrates control of language, uses language that is appropriate to the task, and uses varied sentence structures
- **Mechanics and conventions:** how well a response demonstrates control of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. When interpreting this score, consider how your ākonga used the provided spelling and grammar checker.

For each element, there are six score categories. These do not relate to specific curriculum levels or ages—they represent a progression of writing development for each element. Within each element, each score category is further illustrated by a descriptor.

7. Te Whakamahi i PAT Tuhituhi hei whakapiki i te pai o te whakaako me te ako | Using PAT Tuhituhi to improve teaching and learning

Te whakamahere mō te whakaako me te ako | Planning for teaching and learning

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning. Assessment, teaching, and learning are tightly interwoven.

PAT Tuhituhi reports can support kaiako to understand the progress of ākonga in writing and make informed judgements about how to support them. This is directly in line with the importance the English learning area of *The New Zealand Curriculum* places on "purposefully designed, formative assessment tasks" being used by teachers to understand learners' "strengths and responses along with potential opportunities for further consolidation" (p. 25). This approach to assessment is intended to allow kaiako to provide "timely feedback" and address "misconceptions as they arise" (p. 25).

Assessment for the purpose of improving learning involves the focused and timely gathering, analysis, interpretation, and use of ākonga assessment information. This information can provide evidence of what ākonga understand, know, and can do and inform next steps for teaching and learning. Assessment data can be collected using a range of approaches, and at multiple points in time. These approaches might include:

- observations
- learning conversations
- collecting ākonga work samples
- ākonga self and peer assessments
- using assessment tools created by kaiako.

More formal, standardised assessments such as Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) have an important role to play alongside informal and in-the-moment formative assessment approaches. The most important consideration is that they are used purposefully with the ultimate aim of improving teaching and learning.

Using data and reports from PAT Tuhituhi assessments supports kaiako to reflect on their teaching practice and to gain insight into the impact of their teaching.

Reflective questions about the data include:
- What patterns can you see—for example, across different writing elements such as focus and purpose, or organisation?
- What patterns can you see within elements such as style and tone, word choice, grammar, or spelling and punctuation?
- Which aspects of writing are your ākonga demonstrating strengths in?
- Which aspects of writing are proving challenging for your ākonga?
- Are there common themes among groups of ākonga who are excelling or struggling in particular writing skills?
- Are there surprises in the data that challenge your assumptions about particular ākonga or groups?

Reflective questions for classroom practice include:
- What cultural, linguistic or contextual factors might be influencing ākonga performance in writing assessments?
- How might classroom writing tasks, feedback practices, or opportunities for writing have influenced ākonga outcomes?
- What shifts could you make in your writing programme to support improved writing outcomes and more equitable achievement for all ākonga?
- How can you adapt your teaching to be more responsive to the needs of ākonga Māori and Pacific learners or other priority learners, based on this data?
- How do you provide feedback on writing and how do you know it's making a difference?
- How do current writing practices and tasks give ākonga enough opportunities to practise and demonstrate the skills and elements addressed in PAT Tuhituhi?

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