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Tēnā koe Tyler

OIA: GEMS- 48260- Student Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Tool (SMART), Assessment Content Review and Validation Processes

Thank you for your email of 20 May 2026 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

"I am writing to request information under the Official Information Act 1982 regarding the development, review, validation, and approval of assessment content used within the Student Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Tool (SMART).

Specifically, I request:

- 1. A description of the processes used to develop, review, quality assure, validate, and approve the assessment tasks, questions, texts, prompts, and student response items used within SMART.*
- 2. Confirmation of whether practising educators, curriculum specialists, assessment experts, psychometricians, literacy specialists, cultural advisers, accessibility specialists, or other subject matter experts were involved in the review, validation, or approval of SMART assessment content.*
 - a. For any such reviewers or contributors, please provide: their role or area of expertise; whether they were Ministry staff, contractors, vendor staff, or external advisers; and whether they were based in New Zealand or overseas.*
- 3. Confirmation of whether SMART assessment content was reviewed specifically for: alignment with the New Zealand Curriculum or Te Marautanga o Aotearoa; curriculum level appropriateness; reading level appropriateness; cultural or contextual suitability for New Zealand learners; moderation consistency; accessibility considerations; or bias and fairness considerations.*

4. *Confirmation of whether any pilot testing, trialling, calibration, readability analysis, or validation processes were undertaken before assessment content was used in schools.*
5. *A description of how assessment content approval decisions were made, including whether there were defined criteria or sign-off processes prior to use in the 2025 trial phase or 2026 national rollout.*

This request relates to system-level assessment development and review processes only and does not seek any individual student information or copies of secure assessment item banks”.

On 18 June 2026 you were notified of an extension of the timeframe for our response due to the consultations necessary to take a decision on your request. I am now in a position to respond.

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

1. A description of the processes used to develop, review, quality assure, validate, and approve the assessment tasks, questions, texts, prompts, and student response items used within SMART.

We have interpreted your request to mean a description of the process used to develop, review, quality assure, and approve the assessment items within SMART.

SMART items are subject to a rigorous quality assurance (QA) process before being approved and made available to schools and kura.

SMART assessment items are developed within a comprehensive, lifecycle-based QA framework.

1. Content development
2. Assessment assembly
3. Piloting and trialling (including psychometric analysis)
4. Assessment delivery
5. Marking and reporting
6. Continuous improvement.

Review of assessment quality is provided through QA Panels. QA panels are involved at various stages as required during the item's lifecycle. The QA panel is supported by Ministry staff and contracted subject matter expertise.

Please see below a high-level table of the item development, QA and approval process:

Assessment items are developed in alignment with the New Zealand 2025 Curriculum (NZC) or Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMoA).

Item development stages	Activities	QA processes	Approval
Design & Specifications	Item requirements and criteria setting	- Develop and agree the quality criteria & requirements - QA panels review item requirements and quality criteria.	QA panel & Business Owner
Development	- Item development - Source/create stimuli for reading - Create booklets for trials - Create assessment items	Internal (Ministry) QA processes carried out against requirements & criteria by the QA panel and business workstream. - Review of stimuli for reading - Review items for reading, writing, maths, pānui, tuhituhi and pāngarau - Review whole assessments and trial booklets. External quality assurance - Internally approved items are submitted for external specialist for reviews against requirements & criteria. - Sector trials take place to gather performance data to inform improvements.	QA panel & Business Owner
Pre-delivery validation	Quality assurance processes to analyse and validate	- Analyse trial data and insights - Psychometric analysis of item performance - item difficulty confirmed - some poor performing items are removed - scaling, equating and standard setting is completed with sector standard setting panels - Any adjustments or further QA reviews/ approvals completed if required	Business Owner
Delivery event	Monitor delivery performance	- Monitor performance and feedback to implement quick fixes or backlog items - Informs future improvements	Business Owner
Post-delivery	Feedback and data & insight analysis	- QA panels analyse item performance data and feedback - Feed forward to inform design specifications and future improvements. - Following assessment windows, an external psychometric analysis of items is completed.	QA panel Business Owner

2. Confirmation of whether practising educators, curriculum specialists, assessment experts, psychometricians, literacy specialists, cultural advisers, accessibility specialists, or other subject matter experts were involved in the review, validation, or approval of SMART assessment content.

- a. *For any such reviewers or contributors, please provide: their role or area of expertise; whether they were Ministry staff, contractors, vendor staff, or external advisers; and whether they were based in New Zealand or overseas.*

Ministry staff possess a diverse range of knowledge, skills, and experience. Where specific skills are needed, relevant staff will be consulted if the Ministry holds the expertise required.

The table below identifies providers that the Ministry have contracted to augment its internal capability and capacity with regard to practising educators, curriculum specialists, assessment experts, psychometricians, literacy specialists, cultural advisers, accessibility specialists, or other subject matter experts involved in the review, validation or approval of SMART assessment items.

Supplier Name	Role in relation to SMART and area of expertise	Based in:
Haemata Tapui Ltd	Role: SMART item development and assessment build to align to Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. Expertise: • Assessment experts • Cultural advisors • Literacy specialists • Curriculum specialists	New Zealand
Takapaukura	Role: SMART Te Reo Māori rendering/translation services. On the QA Panel for item development. Expertise: • Translation Services • Cultural advisors	New Zealand
Te Ihuwaka Limited	Role: SMART Te Reo rendering and translation Expertise: • Translation Services	New Zealand

Kōtare Enterprises Ltd	Role: Quality assurance for SMART items and assessments Expertise: • Assessment experts • Cultural advisors • Literacy specialists • Curriculum specialists	New Zealand
National Foundation For Educational Research (NFER)	Role: Psychometric Services for SMART and Item development / assessment build for New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) Expertise: • Assessment experts • Psychometricians • Literacy specialists • Assessment content alignment to curriculum	England
EdMetric LLC	Role: Psychometric services for SMART Expertise: • Psychometricians	United States
TupuOra	Role: Te Reo Rangatira and linguistics quality assurance services Expertise: • Cultural advisors	New Zealand
Evaluation Associates	Role: Quality assurance for SMART Reading items & SMART guidance writing Expertise: • Assessment experts • Cultural advisors • Literacy specialists • Curriculum specialists	New Zealand

3. Confirmation of whether SMART assessment content was reviewed specifically for: alignment with the New Zealand Curriculum or Te Marautanga o Aotearoa; curriculum level appropriateness; reading level appropriateness; cultural or contextual suitability for New Zealand learners; moderation consistency; accessibility considerations; or bias and fairness considerations.

In response to **part three** of your request, please refer to the response to **part one** above. We note that SMART assessment items are specifically designed, and quality

assured through the QA process to measure student progress against the 2025 New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.

SMART items are reviewed specifically for:

- Curriculum level appropriateness.
- Reading level appropriateness.
- Cultural Sustainability (e.g., affirms and reflects learners' cultural identities, connects to students lived experiences).
- Linguistic Representation (e.g., Māori language is represented appropriately, language is age level appropriate)
- Accessibility criteria (e.g., Cognitive load matches the developmental stage of the child, Question types and expectation of tool use is appropriate for the developmental stage of the child, readability considerations are considered)
- Fairness and Bias (e.g., cultural content, imagery and language affirms a range of personal identity markers and eliminates negative stereotypes, the item ensures various groups are equally represented).

4. Confirmation of whether any pilot testing, trialling, calibration, readability analysis, or validation processes were undertaken before assessment content was used in schools.

In response to **part four** of your request, please refer to the response to **part one** above. Piloting and trialling is included in the Quality Assurance process. The first SMART assessment item trial occurred in Term 4, 2025. The primary purpose of this SMART trial was to test assessment items and evaluate how well they performed in practice. Following this trial, an external psychometric analysis of trial items and QA process was completed before assessment items went live in 2026. Further trialling and psychometric analysis will occur ahead of future assessment windows.

5. A description of how assessment content approval decisions were made, including whether there were defined criteria or sign-off processes prior to use in the 2025 trial phase or 2026 national rollout.

All items were subject to the QA process (please refer to **part one** of your request). Items used for the 2025 trial and subsequently used in the 2026 SMART go-live date (23 March 2026) were:

- Designed (once requirements / criteria were set and reviewed)
- Quality assured via internal/external and panel review
- Trialled in Term 4 2025 - after this, a further round of adjustments were made, and further psychometric tests and QA were completed
- Approved to go into production and therefore made available to schools and kura.

Please note, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Thank you again for your email. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at xxxxx.xxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxxx.xx

Nāku noa, nā



Antony Harvey

Acting Hautū | Deputy Secretary
Te Poutāhū | Curriculum Centre