Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

SMART

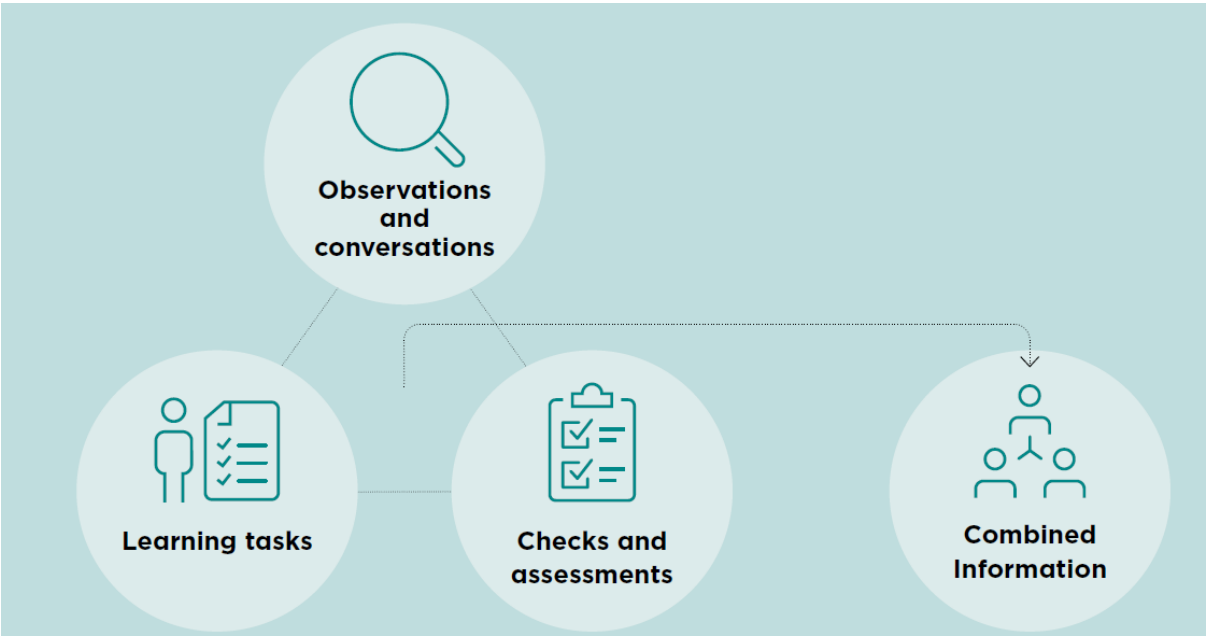
Supporting Students with Additional Needs to use SMART

SMART is a new assessment tool for Years 3-10. It is one of three tools that can be used to administer twice-yearly assessments.

SMART provides teachers | kaiako with reliable progress information to help identify the next steps of learning, and to support reporting to parents and whānau.

SMART is designed to support low-stakes assessment that fits naturally into everyday learning and be part of a balanced assessment eco-system for teachers | kaiako to build an accurate picture of a student's | ākonga progress and achievement. The balanced eco-system includes using a range of sources of assessment evidence such as observations, conversations, learning tasks and checks and assessments.

Sources of Assessment Evidence



For more information about sources of assessment evidence and how to use it visit Reporting to parents and whānau.

SMART is developing over time

SMART is being rolled out from the end of Term 1, 2026 with functionality, and accessibility functions, increasing over time.

Two key developments will improve the appropriateness of SMART for more students | ākonga over the upcoming year:

1. Moving from static to adaptive assessments
2. Including audio so students | ākonga will be able to hear questions in mathematics and writing assessments

Adaptive assessment

When fully adaptive, SMART assessment will be appropriate for most students | ākonga, including those with complex needs. Work is underway to ensure the volume of assessment items needed for adaptive assessments will be available to enable adaptive assessment from 2027.

However, in Assessment Windows 1 and 2, SMART assessments will be the same for every student | ākonga in a year group. This means, for some students, it may not be in their best interests to include them in the SMART Assessment Windows in 2026.

The intention is that SMART will be available for all

For some students, schools | kura may need to address barriers associated with the environment, equipment, or engagement to enable them to successfully participate in and demonstrate their knowledge during assessments.

A low stress assessment experience is essential

Participation in SMART assessment is intended to be calm, routine and familiar. A consistent, low-stress assessment experience is essential to making results meaningful and comparable, especially for learners who experience anxiety, fatigue, or sensory overload.

Paper or online assessment

SMART assessments can be completed on paper or online. Schools | kura decide which format to use for a whole class, or for individual students | ākonga where needed. It is possible for a class to use a mix of online and paper assessments, for example to meet specific accessibility needs.

Accessibility adjustments

Accessibility adjustments within the online tool are an important part of ensuring online assessments are as accessible as possible – please find more information about Accessibility Adjustments within SMART on Tāhūrangi.

Accommodations

Teachers | kaiako should provide the accommodations which a student normally uses to support them to undertake SMART assessments (e.g. reader / writer support, quiet room, teacher aide, or other accommodations). All SAC provisions currently available to students are applicable for the SMART assessment.

A decision to exempt from SMART assessment

For a small number of students | ākonga it may not be appropriate to use SMART. An exemption would apply in cases where:

- a SMART assessment is unlikely to:
    - meet the individual learning needs of the student | ākonga, or
    - provide meaningful information or
- the accessibility adaptations within SMART and accommodations are not sufficient.

Exemption does not mean exclusion. Exemption would be used when the teacher and teaching teams decide that other sources of assessment information (e.g. day-to-day observation, classroom tasks and student work samples) will give a more accurate and agentic picture of a student's | ākonga progress.

Exemption decisions should be made in consultation and should be documented

The decision to exempt should be made and documented by the classroom teacher in consultation with the school's | kura leaders and teaching team and working in partnership with families, whānau and other specialists.

The teaching team may comprise classroom teachers, support staff and roles such as special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and learning support coordinators.

Each school | kura is encouraged to develop policy / procedures which describes who the team will be and expectations for each role in relation to an exemption and ensures documentation about exemptions is maintained.

Reporting to parents and whānau

In reporting to parents and whānau:

- Student's | ākonga progress and achievement in relation to their curriculum year level should be clear.
- For students | ākonga who have individualised progress goals in their Individual Education Plans, assessments and reporting should reflect progress toward those personalised goals.
- Teachers should draw from other sources of information so that they can highlight strengths, celebrate growth, and explain how supports enable equitable access to learning, rather than viewing them as a barrier to proficiency, alongside areas needing focus.
- More guidance for reporting to parents and whānau for all students | ākonga including those with complex learning needs can be found at: Reporting to parents and whānau

Further guidance

The Ministry will be undertaking further work this year with all interested parties (such as Disability Groups and specialist schools) to develop an ongoing exemption policy for SMART assessments and further guidance.