

# ESSA 2010 OPC pilot teacher survey report

Participation in the ESSA 2010 OPC pilot test was voluntary. The test was completed by 31 753 students in 349 NSW schools. Teachers in participating schools were asked to complete a survey about their experiences and opinions about the OPC; 17% of schools responded to the survey.

The survey contained five items to which teachers responded using a four point Likert scale, and three open-ended items. A summary of teacher responses follows the list of survey items.

## Likert scale survey items

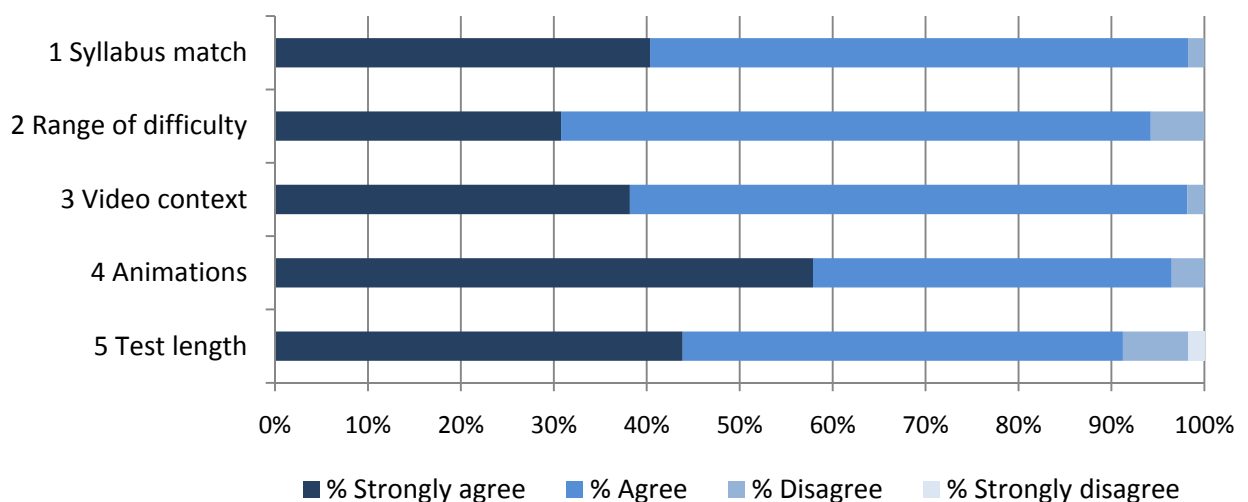
Please rate the statements below from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

- 1 The OPC related to Stage 4 of the *Science Years 7–10 Syllabus*.
- 2 The OPC covered a range of difficulty appropriate for Year 8 students.
- 3 The video provided a suitable context for Year 8 students.
- 4 The animations helped students engage in the investigation.
- 5 The test length of about 20 to 25 minutes was appropriate for Year 8 students to complete the tasks.

## Open-ended survey items

- 6 Did you experience any administrative and/or technical difficulties in preparing for and administering the test?
- 7 Were there students who required additional assistance to use the test?  
What special provisions should be provided for these students?
- 8 Any other comments?

Results for the first five survey items are shown in the graph below and in the table following. Note that more than 90% of respondents agreed with most statements.



Teachers in participating schools rated the following statements with reference to the 2010 OPC pilot test.

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %
1 The OPC related to Stage 4 of the <i>Science Years 7–10 Syllabus</i> .	40	58	2	0
2 The OPC covered a range of difficulty appropriate for Year 8 students.	31	53	6	0
3 The video provided a suitable context for Year 8 students.	38	60	2	0
4 The animations helped students engage in the investigation.	58	39	4	0
5 The test length of 20 to 25 minutes was appropriate for Year 8 students to complete the tasks.	44	47	7	2

The following pages contain summarised responses for the open-ended survey items together with ESSA's responses and/or solutions to the issues raised.

6 Did you experience any administrative and/or technical difficulties in preparing for and administering the test?

Summary of responses	ESSA's responses and/or solutions
<p><b>Organising the OPC test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many schools did not identify any issues.</li> <li>• Computer rooms usually do not have enough computers for an entire class of students.</li> <li>• Not all computers are fully functional.</li> <li>• Booking computer rooms for prolonged periods during the day requires cooperation from the whole school.</li> <li>• Cooperation from other school members and faculties was required.</li> <li>• Distance education students who do not have internet access could not sit for the test.</li> <li>• Considerable time was needed to administer the readiness test and the pilot test – reading all instructions, photocopying and sending letters to parents, booking computer rooms, checking computers, organising and rostering staff, creating new student accounts, printing and distributing user names and passwords, closing student tests and following up absences.</li> <li>• Paperwork and administration were reduced.</li> <li>• Organisation was different from the pencil-and-paper test but no easier or more difficult.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the introduction of DER laptops for Stage 5 students, it is expected that more school computers will be available for use by Stage 4 students.</li> <li>• As the use of computers for online testing becomes more commonplace (and given the NSW Board of Studies' plan to introduce more online testing), it is predicted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– school computers will become more reliable and their functionality more predictable for online testing</li> <li>– the requirements for online testing will become more familiar to teachers and therefore the organisation will be less burdensome.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• An online test will replace the ESSA pencil-and-paper test from 2011 so there will only be one ESSA test to organise and administer.</li> </ul>

Summary of responses	ESSA's responses and/or solutions
<p><b>Supervising the OPC test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school technology officer needs to be available during the test periods.</li> <li>• Extra staff were required to supervise students in some schools.</li> <li>• Most students needed minimal supervision. They quickly engaged with the test and completed it without fuss. Less able students in particular tended to be more focused than during a pencil-and-paper test.</li> <li>• Logistics of getting the full cohort through in a day</li> <li>• Preventing students from communicating, collaborating and looking at each other's screen during the test</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because students are accustomed to working collaboratively in a computer room, the role of supervising teachers in maintaining test conditions is particularly important. Note however that most students focus on the test once they begin using their headphones.</li> <li>• Tests are not identical and students' choices will further randomise their pathways through the test.</li> <li>• Students can log off, move to another computer and log on where they left the test. This means uncooperative students can readily be separated by supervising staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Computer/internet access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most schools experienced no difficulties.</li> <li>• In some schools, Adobe Flash Player: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– had problems running on some computers</li> <li>– prompted installation when it was already installed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Wireless internet connection was sometimes weak, unreliable or unavailable.</li> <li>• Some schools had problems with computers "freezing", running slowly or being slow to start up for various reasons, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– scripts running in the background</li> <li>– computers updating when turned on</li> <li>– insufficient bandwidth.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Some schools experienced error messages when trying to log on to the readiness test.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readiness testing enables schools to test and update all hardware, software and processes prior to the online test.</li> <li>• Readiness testing enables schools to identify bandwidth problems. Schools that experience bandwidth problems during readiness testing should contact the ESSA team as the test will not run with insufficient bandwidth. Alternatives are available.</li> <li>• Updating of computers during the ESSA test should be avoided wherever possible.</li> <li>• Readiness testing enables ESSA to monitor online activity on test servers so that problems can be avoided for the "real" test.</li> </ul>

Summary of responses	ESSA's responses and/or solutions
<p><b>Audio devices (ear/headphones)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough sets of earphones were available.</li> <li>• Some students forgot to bring earphones.</li> <li>• Some schools purchased earphones. Who should be responsible for supplying earphones – students, schools, ESSA?</li> <li>• Will schools be provided with contact details of preferred suppliers?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earphones are essential for the test.</li> <li>• Different schools have different requirements for earphones. For example, plugs differ for different computer brands.</li> <li>• Earphones vary considerably in price but are available very cheaply from a variety of suppliers.</li> <li>• As the integration of information and communication technology into teaching and learning increases, it is predicted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– students will use earphones on a day-to-day basis and will have their own as standard equipment (some schools have added them to their student “book packs”)</li> <li>– more schools will set up audio labs, which have class sets of headphones for day-to-day use.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>User names and passwords</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DET students required three user names and passwords to get to the test: (1) school network; (2) DET portal; and (3) ESSAonline portal.</li> <li>• The distribution of ESSA user names and passwords to students caused extra paperwork and time, and a small number of students were given someone else's ESSA user name and password.</li> <li>• ESSA passwords were hard to spell for some students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School network organisation and access varies between schools.</li> <li>• The DET requires that students access the internet through the DET portal. This also authenticates student access.</li> <li>• It is anticipated that school and DET user names and passwords will become more familiar as computer use in schools becomes more commonplace.</li> <li>• User names and passwords for the ESSAonline portal provide test security.</li> <li>• Readiness testing enables every student to check that all three user names and passwords are functional (and gives time for resetting, if required. Note that DET portal passwords can take several days to reset).</li> <li>• ESSA passwords are common Stage 4 words. They are randomly generated. Passwords can be changed by the school to better suit students.</li> </ul>

Summary of responses	ESSA's responses and/or solutions
<p><b>Administering the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small number of school test administrators had difficulty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– downloading the student password report</li> <li>– identifying students as absent, exempt or withdrawn</li> <li>– completing open tests.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Updating of information for the school test administrator was sometimes slow during the test. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– some student records were labelled “test not completed” despite completing open tests</li> <li>– some students were labelled “logged on” after finishing and closing the test.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Some school test administrators found the dropdown menus and side bar links in the administration portal awkward to use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed step-by-step instructions will be provided in the <i>Administrative manual</i>, which will arrive in schools in May/June. If at all possible, additional instructions downloaded from the DET internet will be avoided or minimal.</li> <li>• An interactive video presentation is being prepared as an alternative to the written administrative instructions.</li> <li>• The administrator interface has been improved based on experience and feedback from the 2010 OPC pilot.</li> <li>• Delays in updating of information are due to multiple transfers of data and the high demand of many thousands of users. These delays will be kept to a minimum. The data will always be checked by ESSA and resolved.</li> </ul>

7 Were there students who required additional assistance to use the test? What special provisions should be provided for these students?

Summary of responses	ESSA's responses and/or solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students required text-to-speech software (such as Read &amp; Write Gold).</li> <li>• Text within Flash elements cannot be highlighted and therefore cannot be read by text-to-speech software.</li> <li>• Some students, such as students with dyslexia, need test materials in a particular colour or in black and white.</li> <li>• Readers/writers and extra time are required by some students, such as those with needs related to literacy, lower ability and ESL.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ESSA program works collaboratively with Disability programs.</li> <li>• The online test has been built to be compatible with standard assistive computer technologies.</li> <li>• Additional materials will be provided for some students, such as students requiring Braille materials.</li> <li>• All students have the option to listen to any or all of the instructions and stimulus texts in the test.</li> <li>• Readers/writers and extra time are available for students who normally receive this support in the classroom.</li> </ul>

## 8 Any other comments?

Summary of responses	ESSA's responses and/or solutions
<p><b>Test content and design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were a small number of comments about the content and design of this OPC test. In summary, these related to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– layout and navigation</li> <li>– requirements of individual test items and the difficulty of some items for some students</li> <li>– control of audio.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There were also a few comments about:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– progress and time; the test clearly shows students where they are up to but not how long they have to complete the test</li> <li>– expectations for extended response tasks</li> <li>– access to the test for teachers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The layout, navigation and interactivity of the tests will continue to be improved.</li> <li>• The OPC has a linear structure because students are given the correct answer whenever they move forward. All other parts of online tests will allow students to revisit items to change responses and to choose their own pathways.</li> <li>• As a diagnostic test, supervising teachers can vary the time for the test by approximately five minutes for any student. Some students have additional time allocated as a special provision. Technical difficulties could mean that some students require compensatory time. For these reasons, the test is not timed by a “countdown clock”. Usual classroom processes are needed to inform students about time.</li> <li>• Students should be made aware that extended response tasks require one to two paragraphs in a response. Each response should be as detailed and complete as possible.</li> <li>• The test will be available to teachers. Information will be provided in the <i>Administrative manual</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Timing of the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning was made difficult by being at the end of the year (due to student absences).</li> <li>• Can the test be moved to the beginning of Year 9 (when students can use DER laptops)?</li> <li>• Some schools have sport on test day; therefore it is difficult for all students to complete the test in the morning only.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ESSA program will continue to review the timing of the test. Currently, the majority of schools prefer the test at the end of the Year 8 school year.</li> <li>• For validity of test data, the test needs to occur in all schools on the same day as much as is possible.</li> </ul>