



COMPASS Literacy and Numeracy Assessment

COMPASS is a unique new literacy and numeracy assessment resource developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), a world leader in educational research and assessment development.

Background

In 2009, the South Australian Innovative Community Action Network (ICAN) approached ACER seeking an online multiple choice assessment that would better enable them to gauge the literacy and numeracy skills of disengaged students as part of the Department of Education and Children's Services *Youth Engagement Strategy and School Retention Action Plan*.

Realising that a test to target this specific population of students was not available, ACER worked with ICAN and the Department to develop a specialised assessment that would suit students in South Australia who for a variety of reasons, had experienced limited or disrupted exposure to formal education, testing and assessment.

Who is COMPASS for?

Compass is specifically designed for young adults who have had limited or disrupted exposure to formal education, testing and assessment.

The program aims to counter educational disengagement and to **'engage the disengaged'** by offering an assessment of core numeracy and literacy skills relevant to young adults and their progression towards a formal learning environment.

Compass targets a range of different student populations including:

- ✓ those in Years 9-10 who are enrolled at school but with irregular attendance for **early intervention**
- ✓ those in Years 10-11 who are enrolled in school but have patchy attendance for **keeping on track**
- ✓ those from a variety of age groups who are enrolled in some school certificate subjects but who are not currently attending school for **re-engagement** and
- ✓ those from a variety of age groups in the community who are not currently attending any formal education for **keeping connected**.

Development and Test Content

Compass was developed by ACER in conjunction with ICAN. The key goal was to develop an accessible, meaningful assessment of student ability in the essential areas of literacy and numeracy for the target population.

The aim of the test is to support flexible learning options and provide information to help get young adults with disrupted formal education back into mainstream learning.

In order to ensure relevant test content for the target group, a series of literacy and numeracy focus groups were conducted in the early development phase of Compass. Sample groups from a similar target population (ICAN) participated in the trial of the draft questions as well as the online interface.

Mathematics (numeracy) number, measurement, space, chance and data

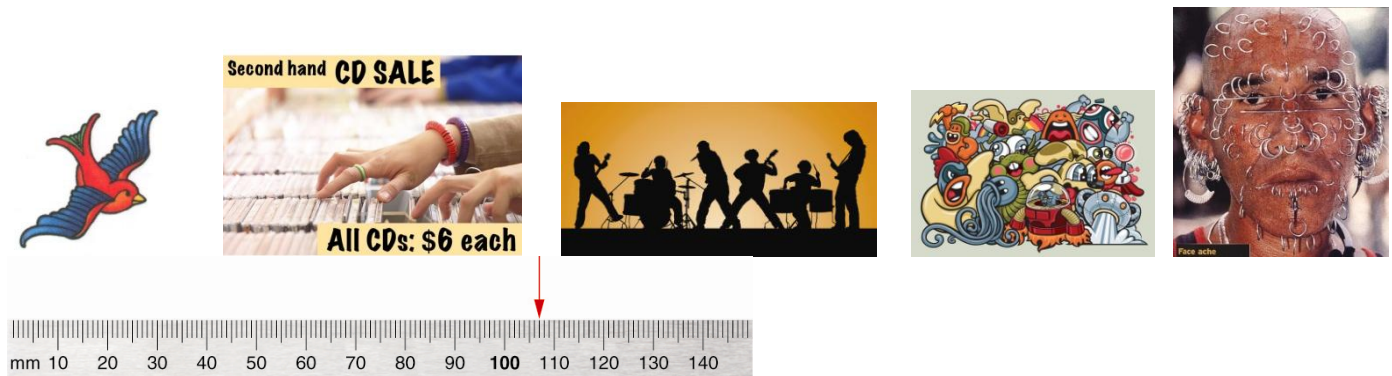
Reading (literacy) text location and interpretation, contextual understanding and text language and knowledge. Questions are spread across various text types including informative, imaginative and argumentative.

How is COMPASS different to other literacy and numeracy assessments?

Unlike mainstream testing, Compass has been specifically developed to target adolescents and young adults who have experienced varying levels of educational disengagement.

The program has been designed and tailored in recognition of the limited formal testing experience amongst this group.

Compass promotes test engagement by using age and ability appropriate question prompts and tasks that aim to reflect the experiences and interests of the young adults taking the test.



Delivery and Reporting

- On-demand, online delivery supporting flexible testing and learning options (administration requires only a computer with internet connection and can be conducted in either a school or non-school setting)
- Detailed test administrator guidelines
- In-depth individual reporting highlighting a student's strengths and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy that is instantly accessible once a student has completed the assessment. Reports are aligned to the Australian Core Skills Framework and various State and Territory learning outcomes (i.e. VELS). Reports are delivered **instantly** upon test completion
- All participants provided with a certificate of completion
- A variety of account options dependant on student numbers, ensuring an efficient use of funding resources
- ACER support services including IT support, data interpretation, professional development and assessment research and monitoring

Further Information

Further information about the COMPASS assessment is available at www.acer.edu.au/tests/compass or by contacting Education Consultant, John Morath at morath@acer.edu.au.

Additional information about ICAN is available at <http://www.decs.sa.gov.au>

Complimentary Login

Contact ACER to view a series of sample COMPASS tests at the three levels:

Blue = lower primary level test **Orange** = middle primary level test **Purple** = upper primary/lower secondary level test