



The following report gives feedback to assist assessors with general issues and trends that have been identified during external moderation of the internally assessed standards in 2025. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for English. Please note this report does not introduce new criteria, change the requirements of the standard, or change what we expect from assessment.

Insights

91924: Demonstrate understanding of how context shapes verbal language use

Performance overview:

Students selected a wide range of contexts and supporting source material (a text). This included speeches, songs, podcasts, fiction, historical, and non-fiction texts. There was some use of live texts such as sports commentaries and spoken word poems. Successful responses often described contemporary contexts that aligned with student interests. Popular contexts included social issues such as:

- Black Lives Matter and institutional racism (in government, sport, or society).
- Social media, social pressures on teens, technology.
- Gender and sexuality.

Current and historical political speeches from New Zealand and overseas were frequently selected as texts for this standard.

At all levels, describing the context in the introduction ensured the response stayed focused on context influencing and shaping verbal language. Achieved responses described typical usage and characteristics of language. Merit and Excellence responses demonstrated nuanced understandings of the specific context and explained how these shaped verbal language choices.

Responses that accurately identified and described a variety of verbal language features, syntax, and style were successful. Detailed explanations of patterns or atypical usage often positioned students to achieve at higher levels.

Practices that need strengthening:

Describing the context

Further focus on accurately understanding, describing, or explaining the context was needed across samples seen in moderation. Issues relating to establishing the context included:

- Factually inaccurate information about time, place, participants, and/or purpose.
- Irrelevant biographical information about the speaker/writer that wasn't linked to the selected context.
- Students not understanding the significance of the context they had selected and/or its wider relevance.
- Covering more than one context. For example, the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s as well as Barack Obama's presidency.

- Confusion with the identified context. This included not understanding the difference between factual and fictional source texts.

If the source text is a modern dramatisation of a historical event, care needs to be taken to ensure that students understand which context they are explaining, e.g. the historical context vs modern context.

Achieved to Merit

The Merit criterion involves “explaining connections between specific examples of verbal language use and how the verbal language is influenced by the context.”

The step-up is from **Describe** (Achieve) to **Explain** (Merit), rather than a focus on the combined effect of the verbal language features. At Merit, the evidence should provide a clear description of the context and explain the connections between context and verbal language. This can include giving a specific and detailed outline of verbal language that is common within the context. Providing specific examples of how the context may shape verbal language use is also needed.

Context influences and shapes language

Across samples seen in moderation, further focus on how the context influences and shapes verbal language is needed. Evidence that focused on how language revealed context/ideas did not meet the standard.

Some responses included a description of non-verbal language use. Some examples included tone of voice, pitch, and body language. Description of these features did not contribute towards the grade awarded.

Additional samples for the Assessor Practice Tool (APT) will be available from February 2026.

91926: Develop ideas in writing using stylistic and written conventions

Performance overview:

The transition from external to internal assessment of this standard was effective. Across most moderated evidence, assessors demonstrated a secure understanding of the requirements of the standard. Both non-fiction and fiction writing were evidenced, with students demonstrating a good understanding of writing for a specific audience and purpose using a range of stylistic conventions.

Many schools contacted NZQA for further clarification of the standard on the areas below.

Conditions of Assessment

The assessment of standard 91926 should take place within an identified assessment period and teacher involvement should be ‘hands off’. The identified assessment period does not need to be exam conditions, but should be determined by the school and based on the school’s assessment policy. This helps to ensure the authenticity of the evidence produced during summative assessment.

Once the assessment period begins, students should complete the assessment independently. Unpacking or explaining the task, reading the task aloud or brainstorming ideas would not be 'hands off', and therefore these are not suitable activities to include during a summative assessment opportunity.

Development of assessment activities and prompts

Assessors can develop their own assessment materials and are not required to use the Ministry of Education's assessment activities. Assessment opportunities with successful written text types appropriate to New Zealand Curriculum level 6 include:

- Game, book, album, or film reviews.
- Opinion or editorial writing.
- Short stories and opening chapters.
- Poetry or narratives with sufficient development of ideas at NZC level 6.

To meet the standard, identifying an appropriate audience and purpose is needed. For example, students may choose to write a game review for a general teen audience.

Assessment tasks and activities can include prompts, ideas, and specific details that provide guidance for students. Providing a range of options is encouraged. The English TKI tasks are a good example of the level of detail that can be included in an internal assessment activity without compromising the authenticity of the student evidence.

Students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their unique knowledge and skills regardless of the task or activity. In some instances, students may choose to write about a different topic or idea to that suggested by the teacher.

Preparing for summative assessment

Students can unpack and analyse the stylistic conventions in their selected text type to better understand the different stylistic conventions that can be included in their own written text. This process will enable students to understand how to select and apply appropriate stylistic conventions when developing their own writing for assessment.

Providing students with multiple, formative opportunities to develop their writing skills demonstrates effective assessment practice. A range of different types of writing that expose students to different structures, stylistic conventions, and ideas will help prepare them effectively for summative assessment.

It is important that the selected topic and ideas are sufficiently different to ensure that the student is undertaking the writing independently. Using a similar structure (e.g. Then vs Now, Game Review) for both formative and summative assessment is unlikely to compromise the authenticity of the summative assessment.

Providing feedback

Teachers can only provide generalised feedback once summative assessment begins. The 'hands on, hands off' distinction describes how teacher practice changes between everyday teaching and learning ('hands on') and a formal, summative assessment opportunity ('hands off'):

- 'Hands on' – where a teacher indicates in detail the areas students should work on and may provide scaffolding or support to do so. This approach is intended to

address specific aspects of the student's writing and support development of particular knowledge and skills. This work is not suitable for summative assessment.

- 'Hands off' – a student is ready for assessment and can plan, draft, and edit their submission independently. No scaffolding or direct support is offered. Assessor feedback is limited to general observations directly linked to the achievement criteria in the standard, without reference to examples or specific details. For example, "The language features are used for effect but they do not command attention", "There are intrusive error patterns", "The ideas are insightful".

Assessment should only take place when the student is ready to be assessed and is capable of working independently.

Authenticity

For summative assessment, students need to work independently. This means that they cannot use any form of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support drafting, writing, or editing their writing.

Basic editing tools (such as the Editor function in Word or Google or the free version of Grammarly) require the student to actively review suggestions and accept them. These are acceptable tools to use during summative assessment.

The paid version of Grammarly provides too much support, as it generates content. Programmes such as Quillbot can generate content and therefore provide the same level of support as the paid version of Grammarly. The use of this type of AI would invalidate the assessment.

Teachers and schools are best placed to monitor new programmes, online editor functions, or other forms of AI to ensure they are aligned with the guidance in the [Conditions of Assessment](#) and the 'Collecting Evidence' section of the [Unpacking the Standard](#) document.

A bite-sized module on this topic will be available on NZQA's learning management system, Pūtake, in 2026.

Practices that need strengthening:

For Achieved, the standard requires students to use written conventions without intrusive error patterns that impede meaning. This can be defined as a pattern of errors that impact on the reader's ability to understand or follow the development of ideas. Examples could include:

- Error patterns such as incomplete or run-on sentences, where the meaning of a sentence changes because of incorrect punctuation or verb use.
- Multiple unintentional switches in tense throughout the piece of writing.
- Patterns of incorrect speech punctuation which impede meaning, as the reader cannot discern who is speaking, to whom they are speaking, or when the writing shifts from speech to narrative/description.
- Patterns in spelling and/or punctuation errors, e.g. misspelling of homophones, multiple instances of missing or inaccurate punctuation, or the misuse or lack of capital letters.
- Consistent and ongoing issues with structure, including not using paragraphs accurately throughout the writing.

For Merit, responses should have evidence of the accurate use of written conventions, so that the writing contains only minor errors. Minor errors include occasional errors with

spelling, punctuation, and grammar and can be characterised as one-off or infrequent instances, such as one or two grammatically inaccurate sentences, an occasional missing capital letter or piece of punctuation. Minor errors should not impede meaning for the audience (not the teacher).

For Excellence, responses should have evidence of the controlled use of written conventions. Writing with control at level 6 of the curriculum means that the piece is grammatically correct, has accurate spelling and punctuation and is structured appropriately. There are likely to be few, or no errors in the writing.

Exemplars, along with additional samples in the Assessor Practice Tool (APT), will be available from February 2026.

To give feedback on this report click on [this link](#).

Assessor Support

NZQA offers free online support for teachers as assessors of NZC achievement standards. These include:

- Exemplars of student work for most standards.
- National Moderator Reports.
- Online learning modules (generic and subject-specific).
- Clarifications for some standards.
- Assessor Practice Tool for many standards.
- Webcasts.

Exemplars, National Moderator Reports, clarifications, and webcasts are hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

[Subject Pages](#)

Online learning modules and the Assessor Practice Tool are hosted on Pūtake, NZQA's learning management system. You can access these through the Education Sector Logon.

[Log in to Pūtake](#)

We also may provide a speaker to present at national conferences on requests from national subject associations. At the regional or local level, we may be able to provide online support.

Please contact assessorsupport@nzqa.govt.nz for more information or to lodge a request for support.