PPTA Policy- The Future of AI Marking Includes the Teacher



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Recommendations

1. That the paper be received.
2. That PPTA Te Wehengarua advocates for human centred, Te Tiriti-led and principled use of AI for marking – based on ethical governance, transparency, continuous bias monitoring, strong data and privacy protections, equity and human oversight.
3. That PPTA Te Wehengarua does not support full automation of high-stakes marking, that effectively removes the teacher from the process.
4. That PPTA Te Wehengarua is open to a transparent hybrid marking model, where AI assists, but teachers retain control.
5. That PPTA Te Wehengarua advocates for a Te Tiriti-led approach to educational AI, ensuring that automated marking tools do not compromise Māori data sovereignty, misinterpret Te Reo Māori, or entrench inequitable biases against ākonga Māori.
6. That PPTA Te Wehengarua demands that NZQA's use of AI in marking has clear, accessible processes for students and teachers, with guaranteed human review of AI-influenced marks and union involvement in review processes.
7. That PPTA Te Wehengarua demands funded professional development for teachers on AI in assessment, including how to interpret AI-generated results, identify limitations, protect student rights and support learners.
8. That PPTA Te Wehengarua demands the establishment of an independent National AI Risk body to monitor, test, and advise the government on the capabilities and risks of advanced AI.

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1 Background

"There are a lot of things I used to have to think about - memorising phone numbers, driving without relying on a navigation app, etc. - that I now offload to an app on my smartphone. This is all surface-level convenience and arguably gives me a bit of cognitive 'space' for other stuff. I certainly don't miss driving with a map on my knee at night. But what about using digital tools for things that are key fundamentals for our jobs, like marking and providing effective feedback to our students"[1] Executive member, Lawrence Mikkelsen, 2025

1.1 PPTA Executive accepted the alert from Mikkelsen's 2025 executive paper of the need for PPTA Te Wehengarua to develop a position on the use of AI marking of student work. Is marking and providing effective feedback to students a key fundamental of the teacher's role, and if so, should it be outsourced to AI?

1.2 These questions arise from the change to our national qualifications and the proposed rollout of artificial intelligence (AI) for marking student work. Minister Stanford is an enthusiastic devotee of the idea and has said that she has directed NZQA, by 2028, to "be in a position where every single assessment, internal or external, is marked by you externally." Further, the Minister touts this as "taking that load off teachers. It's one of the single biggest time sucks for them."[2]

1.3 Over the years, members have indeed identified marking as a major time consumer.[3] They do, however, have questions about AI doing the marking for them - is it possible to mark all assessments this way, and how accurate is it [AI] actually?

1.4 PPTA's 2023 policy on Teaching with Digital Tools and Technologies[4] accepts that there are potential opportunities and risks of teaching with digital technologies and we should continue to question the purpose of digital technologies in education. When considering the push to have AI marking all 'internal and external assessments' in our national qualifications, there are opportunities but also risks, and there is certainly a need to question the purpose of this push.

1.5 This paper argues that AI may have a limited role in supporting assessment marking, but it must not replace teacher judgment in high-stakes assessment. The key policy question is not whether AI can reduce workload, but how any use of AI can protect validity, equity, professional expertise, student rights and public confidence in the qualification system.

2 An agreed approach to AI in education – a human at the centre

2.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming our world and changing the way we live, work and learn. There is certainly plenty of advice that needs to be considered. Education Internation (EI) believes that "unions have a crucial role to play in identifying, tracking and negotiating the introduction of AI systems in education, as well as monitoring on-going use."[5]

[1] HX25-095 - I've seen the Terminator films and I know how this ends.docx

[2] Erica Stanford: Teachers will no longer mark student work

[3] NCEA Internal Assessment: A harder job than professional marking!

[4] A policy on Teaching with Digital Technologies

[5] 20260625_094539_Draft AI and Collective Bargaining report120626.docx

2.2 The NZ Government has released a framework to support public sector agencies in their use of artificial intelligence.[6] It sits within the National AI Strategy, which is currently in development and is aligned to the Cabinet's commitment to enabling safe AI innovation within the public sector.[7] The Public Service AI Framework sets out principles for responsible AI adoption, including human-centred values, transparency, safety, accountability and governance.

2.3 New Zealand Qualifications Authority offers Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence policy. This policy is guided by the 5 principles of the Public Service AI Framework.

2.4 There are other sources of advice, for example the UNESCO AI competency… | New Zealand National Commission of UNESCO. UNESCO's promotes a human-centred approach to AI that aims to shift the conversation to include AI's role in addressing current inequalities regarding access to knowledge, research and the diversity of cultural expressions and to ensure AI does not widen the technological divides within and between countries.[8] Other researchers also call for a Human-Centered Learning in the Age of AI and Baron (2025) highlights the World Bank's People-centered AI in education

2.5 Existing government sector and international frameworks all point to the same core requirements: AI in education must be human-centre, transparent, explainable, safe, accountable and subject to strong privacy and bias protections. PPTA's position is that these principles must be translated into binding, education-specific expectations for assessment, developed with the profession rather than imposed on it.

3 The future of marking – should it include a teacher?

3.1 The 2008 conference paper NCEA Internal Assessment: A harder job than professional marking! stated that "marking and giving feedback as part of teaching is the professional responsibility of every teacher. No suggestion is being made that this will ever change."[9] However, in 2026, Michael Johnston, the man behind the government's education policy[10] asked the independent Tirotiro Anō panel investigating the new secondary qualification: "Who should mark student assessments?" and "Is there any advantage to the teacher to do summative marking?[11]

3.2 Both of these questions are important to consider, particularly in the context of a push toward AI marking 'every single assessment, internal [and] external'.12 Such a move would remove the teacher from the summative marking of our national qualifications, and thoughts as to the advantages or disadvantages of such a decision are varied.

4 Good educational practice – the teacher as marker

4.1 PPTA members consider exam marking an opportunity for valuable PLD, and losing this is not desirable. An over-reliance on technology could reduce the opportunities for teachers and markers to gain insights from student work.

[6] Public Service Artificial Intelligence Framework
[7] Approach to work on Artificial Intelligence
[8] Artificial intelligence in education - AI | UNESCO
[9] NCEA Internal Assessment: A harder job than professional marking!
[10] Meet the man behind the Government's education policy
[11] Tirotiro Anō panel meeting notes, June 2026
[12] Erica Stanford: Teachers will no longer mark student work

4.2 Williamson advises in Principles of AI use in marking that the use of AI in marking has the potential for negative consequences, and these "must be investigated, monitored, and, if necessary, mitigated." Potential risks highlighted are the loss of assessment expertise due to reduced human marking and a narrowing or stagnation of assessment constructs.[13] These are certainly concerns for NZ teachers.

4.3 Teachers who mark external assessments consistently describe the work as valuable professional learning because it deepens their understanding of standards, student responses, assessment design and examiner expectations. Reducing human marking would therefore remove not only paid assessment work, but also a significant professional development pathway that supports teaching and assessment quality.

4.4 Reinertsen (2020) cautions that marking exams is good PD, but not all teachers can access it. He highlights that teachers can miss out on this valuable PD opportunity, as markers tend to be limited to experienced, confident, with the time to do it in addition to their work and family commitments.[14] It is possible that there would be similar findings in NZQA's cadre of markers. Given the value ascribed to marking of summative external assessments, it is important to ensure the experience is open to as many teachers as possible. A move to AI marking 'all' assessments is likely to reduce opportunities.

4.5 Student feedback plays a critical role in learning outcomes. Wang (2022) found that students receiving teacher feedback show better revision quality and higher perceived usefulness.[15] Smith (2025) says that teacher feedback provides contextual understanding, interpretation, and relational support.[16] Deepshikha 2025) suggests that AI feedback can support learning, but evidence indicates it is most effective when combined with teacher input, not used in isolation.[17]

4.6 Currently moderation plays an important role in the internal assessments. Darr and Hipkins (2020) highlight moderation practices. They argue for the importance of social moderation with "teachers working together to discuss and explore what standards mean, what appropriate evidence looks like, and how much evidence is sufficient" (p.50). Further, they say that making a valid judgment involves being able to defend a claim that the judgment is accurate.[18]

4.7 The new national qualification will retain some form of internal component. If, as suggested by the Minister and questioned by Johnston, teachers are not required to mark summative assessments, how do teachers defend the validity of AI's marking judgment?

4.8 Marking is valuable because it strengthens teachers' professional judgement and helps them to understand standards and interpret student work. Teacher involvement in marking is not just about allocating grades — for many, it is how they 'know' their students. Marking is how the profession learns, maintains standards, and ensures fairness.

5 Risks in removing the teacher from summative marking

5.1 Our current qualification system relies on marking by skilled teachers and subject experts. The automation of marking risks devaluing this expertise, undermining conditions and reducing career pathways. PPTA believes that there should be no job loss due to the employment of AI, rather investment in training and capability building of teachers in assessment marking. Teacher expertise is essential, not optional, and AI should augment, not replace, professional judgement.

[13] Principles of AI use in marking

[14] Marking exams is good PD, but not all teachers can access it

[15] The Effects of Teacher Feedback and Automated Feedback

[16] How Does AI-Driven Feedback Differ From Traditional Teacher Feedback? - Apporto

[17] A systematic review on the future of educational assessment: AI-driven grading

[18] Set 2020_2_049.pdf

5.2 NZQA, the independent authority established under the Education and Training Act 2020 to oversee assessment design, moderation and marking processes, has provided advice to the Minister on the use of AI for assessment marking.

5.3 NZQA's work with AI assessment marking risks devaluing this expertise of skilled teachers and subject experts in the process of summative marking. In 2024, NZQA piloted Automated Text Scoring for aspects of the Common Assessment Activities (CAAs). In November 2024, the ICT committee heard that NZQA would retain a team of human check markers, but machine marking could significantly reduce the need for markers, currently 100.[19] By May 2025, NZQA reported employing 43 experienced human markers.[20] In 2026, the number was further reduced to approximately 34, highlighting the reduced input of teachers (humans) into the marking process.

5.4 NZQA has proudly shared that "AI marking has achieved an agreement range of 80+% with human markers."[21] This is as good, if not better than, human to human marking agreement. NZQA has received positive feedback on the quicker return of CAA results. They acknowledge there is still a risk that AI may not always interpret student responses as intended, especially for responses near achievement boundaries. NZQA says it uses AI to augment, not replace, human judgment.[22]

5.5 Other jurisdictions are pondering the value of AI marking. The UK's Principles of AI use in marking working paper explored the principles and implications of using AI in high-stakes marking. Its position was that "the use of AI as the sole mechanism for awarding marks did not comply with current regulations and it did not meet their requirement for a human-based judgement to be used in marking decisions." (p.9)[23]

5.6 Auckland Principals Warn of Risks as AI Marking Expands in Schools and are cautious about relying on AI to mark most students, while Amos suggests the Government should match enthusiasm for AI with investment in teachers. Amos is concerned that a move to AI marking all student work risks disempowering students and teachers.[24] She considers that we should be using the technologies and tools to support teachers to make good judgements, not replacing them in the process.

6 What do the teachers say about AI doing the marking?

6.1 Members' views vary, but several themes are consistent. Many see some use of AI marking as inevitable and want PPTA to shape it early. They support limited, carefully moderated use where it reduces administrative burden, but they oppose wholesale adoption without human oversight. Across member groups, the strongest concerns are transparency, data privacy, professional development, subject differences, and protecting the role and expertise of teachers.

6.2 Many members are neutral on this topic, considering that "we need to be pragmatic about it" and should not create stigma or boundaries. However, there is certainly a view that 'it' [AI marking] needs to be used with caution. For many, the answer "depends on the subject". There is a view that AI marking would be more successful in some areas, e.g., assessing numerical calculations rather than assessments that require opinion and creativity. It could be helpful, but in a very limited way.

6.3 Members with a positive view on AI for assessment marking are "all for it" and think that, given parameters, AI marking will save teachers' administrative time. These members consider that AI can be a tool to support

[19] HC24-093 Minutes of ICT Advisory Committee meeting 11 Nov 2024.pdf
[20] AI-marking-OC02039-PR-Redacted.pdf
[21] HI Digital and AI post conference update
[22] HI Digital and AI post conference update
[23] Principles of AI use in marking - GOV.UK
[24] Government should match enthusiasm for AI with investment in teachers - principal | RNZ News

teachers' marking, but a human teacher must be 'responsible' for the marking, with teachers reviewing results and ensuring the accuracy of the system.

6.4 Principal members echo the 'sense of inevitability' and would like to see a balanced approach with the 'human in the loop' as a given requirement. They have particular concerns about the safety of data and want assurance that any increase in the use of AI marking for internal and external assessments complies with the Privacy Act.

6.5 Principal members do, however, question whether it will reduce teacher work, given that they still have to understand and know what the student has written. They also question whether you start to streamline the assessment, so it is marked more easily by AI; what happens to the out-of-the-box answers that are often excellent?

6.6 Principal members want to know what resourcing and support will go into the classroom. Despite advice to the contrary, they believe that there are always cost ramifications for schools with changes to education. Principal members would like to see the development of an AI in Education code, similar to Teaching Standards, developed in consultation with the profession.

6.7 All members share common concerns about moving to AI marking of assessments. Members consider transparency in any move to use AI for marking to be paramount, with the 'human' central, and AI marking used only if it is safe, and in a teacher-enhancing way. Our members want to "safeguard our intellectual worth" and do not want the teaching profession diminished.

7 Trust and integrity – the case for caution

7.1 NZQA has moved beyond AI marking only the CAAs and is exploring, through its phased approach, the marking of some NCEA Level 1 assessments. 25 For NZQA, the benefits are fast results, scalability, and managing increasing assessment volumes without overburdening the teacher workforce. The work is a response to government and ministerial priorities, including the potential to increase the use of AI in marking secondary school assessments. 25

7.2 Public trust and the credibility of the qualifications are essential. NZQA wants to assure the sector that humans are still at the centre of the work they do and has advised PPTA that any expansion of this work would be a cautious rollout. It understands that sector engagement is important.[26] However, public confidence in the qualification system depends on clear communication, robust safeguards and evidence that AI marking is valid, fair and reviewable. Rapid expansion without these protections could undermine trust in assessment outcomes.

7.3 There needs to be transparency of the limitations of AI marking. Currently, AI marking is only used for tightly defined standards. NZQA advises that "AI systems have not seen enough work by young people in the context of New Zealand's national curriculum to have a good understanding of what is expected and may be unfair or discriminatory."[27] It acknowledges the risk that premature expansion could lead to unfair or inaccurate results in high-stakes exams.[28]

[25] HI Digital and AI post conference update

[26] PPTA and NZQA External meeting report minutes 2024 - 2026

[27] AI-marking-OC02039-PR-Redacted.pdf

[28] External meeting reports PPTA and NZQA 2025 and 2026

7.4 AI marking creates equity risks because models can reflect or amplify bias in their training data, particularly if they have not been tested on NZ learner work and curriculum contexts. PPTA therefore calls for independent bias auditing using NZ learner data before any expansion of AI marking, with findings and remedial actions reported transparently to educators and the public.

7.5 Security, privacy and data sovereignty are significant concerns. NZQA has developed policies with national guidance but acknowledges that ongoing investment and vigilance are required to manage these risks.[29]

7.6 Validity and reliability are also concerns, and research indicates limitations. Zacharis and Papdakis (2025) asked Can AI grade like a human? They found that AI–human agreement in grading complex work is significantly weaker than human inter-rater reliability. AI may inflate or compress grades, reducing its ability to distinguish levels of performance and these limitations make current AI tools unsuitable for high-stakes summative assessment without human oversight.[30]

7.7 Hanford et al (2026) caution that using AI in marking varies significantly across different contexts and that current evidence, for the English system, does not support an overall or general case for using AI in marking. They point out that AI systems risk weakening the ability to meaningfully challenge results.[31] Learners, whānau, and kaiako must be able to understand how decisions are made and must have the right to an explanation for any AI-influenced grade, with full transparency on data used, system limitations and how marks/credits are derived.

7.8 NZ has a unique qualification system that features a mix of internal/external assessment as well as literacy and numeracy requirements and currently has diverse assessment formats. PPTA believes that trust and integrity of our national qualification must be strengthened. NZQA must ensure the new qualification system has review and reconsideration processes that encompass AI marking. All AI-supported decisions must be reviewable by human markers and backed by clear evidence.

8 Upskilling the profession

8.1 EI (2026) points out that "Those working in education need to have a sophisticated understanding of AI as a technology if they are to not only make informed judgements about the effective use of AI but have the agency to resist its implementation when it is considered appropriate to do so."[32]

8.2 PPTA members and principal members continue to reiterate the immediate need for professional development and support for teachers. There is a strong demand for upskilling of teachers in the use of AI, even before work is done on AI marking of assessments. Teachers do need to be able to interpret AI-generated results and also support students understanding.

8.3 Critical AI Literacy is essential to support workers' collective agency and is certainly needed by teachers to ensure marking remains human-centred. One of the key messages of the MOE's current guidance is that teachers and the school are responsible for final decisions on learners' work.[33] Amos rightly points out that "the ministry's guidance was very high-level and fell well short of the centralised training, advice and resources that teachers needed." [34]

[29] AI-marking-OC02039-PR-Redacted.pdf

[30] EDUPIJ_970_article_6932a16338b70.pdf

[31] Using AI in marking: why technical capability, fairness, and transparency all matter – The Ofqual blog

[32] 20260625_094539_Executive SummaryFinal.docx

[33] AI-marking-OC02039-PR-Redacted.pdf

[34] Government should match enthusiasm for AI with investment in teachers - principal | RNZ

8.4 Teachers are being asked to make increasingly complex judgements about AI, but the current level of central support does not match that expectation. PPTA continues to call for professional development and practical guidance on AI in assessment, including how to interpret AI-generated results, identify limitations, protect student rights and support learners.

9 A skilled profession- includes the teacher as marker

9.1 Research and sector commentary point to the same conclusion: AI may assist with routine or tightly defined marking, but teacher judgement remains essential for moderation, interpretation, feedback and professional learning. If AI completes all summative marking, teachers lose opportunities to build shared standards, defend assessment judgements and learn from student work. These are not incidental benefits; they are part of the integrity of the assessment system.

9.2 PPTA does not support full automation of high-stakes marking, which effectively removes the teacher from the process. AI should assist teachers, not replace them, and accountability for assessment decisions must remain with human professionals who can interpret evidence, explain judgements and uphold the credibility of the qualification.

9.3 PPTA insists that any use of AI for marking is to support, and not replace, teachers and that there is a 'human in the loop' approach to any AI marking. Robust human oversight and final decision-making power are essential. Transparency and communication about how AI marking works, its limitations and how results are determined is crucial.

9.4 Assessment marking is a core pedagogical function, not just a technical task. Removing the teacher from that role is an integrity risk for the entire assessment system. Research supports a hybrid model, where AI assists, but teachers retain control.[35] Marking is essential professional work that develops judgement — the question is how to support it, not remove it.

[35] A systematic review on the future of educational assessment: AI-driven grading