



Education Report: Implementation of NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
CC:	Minister Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	29 April 2022	Priority:	High
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Purpose of Report

New standards and assessments for NCEA literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau were scheduled to be implemented next year (2023) as part of the NCEA Change Programme, subject to a readiness decision in September this year.

The purpose of this paper is to seek a decision on whether to continue with the current timeline and make a decision in September, or to make a decision now and defer mandatory implementation of the co-requisite until 2024 (while still allowing schools to opt into the new assessments through a continuation of this year's open pilots in 2023).

Note that if you decide to make the decision to defer the co-requisite becoming mandatory until 2024, you will need to seek Cabinet approval. We will work with your office to prepare an oral item, or a short Cabinet paper, as required.

Summary

- 1 New standards to assess literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau as a co-requisite to the NCEA qualification are due to become mandatory from 2023, subject to a readiness decision in September this year.
- 2 You have previously informed Cabinet that you would regularly review the sector's readiness for the change to NCEA literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau and may seek Cabinet's approval to amend implementation timelines [SWC-20-MIN-0001 refers].
- 3 The new standards and assessments are being piloted this year in over 200 schools, kura, rumaki, and tertiary providers, following a smaller pilot last year. A decision from you on whether to make the new standards mandatory from next year was planned for September, so that your decision could be informed by the outcomes of the first of this

year's pilot assessment events. NZQA has advised that results for this event will be available from early August.

- 4 However, the sector is seeking certainty, as soon as possible, on the status of the co-requisite in 2023 – to support in-school planning and preparations – and has requested that the readiness decision be brought forward.
- 5 In particular, we have received advice from some sector representatives, including the PPTA, Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand (SPANZ), and Auckland Secondary Schools Principals' Association (ASSPA), that making the co-requisite mandatory in 2023 may be too soon, especially in light of COVID-19 pressures that the sector is facing this year. The sector has also noted a desire to have more time to align their in-school responses to the co-requisite to the recently released Literacy & Communications and Maths Strategy, and Hei Raukura mō te Mokopuna, which support the same foundational skills through common practice frameworks and supporting tools and resources.
- 6 The results from last year's pilot (while small and non-representative) also provide initial indications that the sector may not be ready for the changes to become mandatory in 2023.
- 7 There are good reasons to make the decision now (and not September), and to defer the mandatory implementation of the co-requisite in all schools and kura by one year, from 2023, to 2024. We do not however recommend any delays beyond 2024, as this is the year the new Achievement Standards at Level 1 will be in place and the old ones (which are currently used to credential literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau) are removed. During 2023 we recommend that the new assessments continue to be made available on an opt-in basis (as per our approach to pilots this year).
- 8 If you decide to make the decision to defer the co-requisite becoming mandatory until 2024, you will need to seek Cabinet approval for your decision. We will work with your office to prepare an oral item, or a short Cabinet paper, as required. We also will work with NZQA on the operational consequences of this decision, noting that these are minor.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- **Note** that some sector representatives are concerned about the timing of the new NCEA literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau co-requisite being implemented as a mandatory co-requisite to the qualification from 2023, especially in light of COVID-19 pressures that the sector is facing this year and the need to digest the recently released Literacy & Communications and Maths Strategy, and Hei Raukura mō te Mokopuna.

Noted

- **Agree** to defer the implementation of the literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau co-requisite as a mandatory component of NCEA until 2024.

Agree/Disagree

OR

- **Agree** to make a decision on the mandatory implementation of the NCEA co-requisite in September 2022.

Agree/Disagree

If you agree to make a decision now:

- **Note** that the Ministry will work with your office to prepare an item seeking Cabinet approval.

Noted

- **Agree** to not proactively release this Education Report at this time until the sector is advised of Cabinet's decision.

Agree/Disagree



Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Hautū | Deputy Secretary
Te Poutāhū | Curriculum Centre

29/04/2022



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

7 / 5 / 2022

Background

- 9 As part of the NCEA Change Programme, new standards to assess literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau will become a mandatory co-requisite to the qualification.
- 10 We have developed the new unit standards and supporting resources, and NZQA has built the infrastructure needed to deliver the assessments at scale – with two open pilots this year having more than 200 schools and kura agreeing to participate.
- 11 You informed the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee that you would regularly review the sector's readiness for the change to literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau and may seek Cabinet's approval to amend implementation timelines [SWC-20-MIN-0001 refers].
- 12 As reconfirmed by you in October last year [METIS 1274886 refers], the changes to literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau are due to be implemented as a mandatory co-requisite to the NCEA qualification from 2023, as long as the sector is ready. We have continued to encourage the sector to prepare for the changes regardless of this decision.
- 13 As part of preparing for the changes, we are:
- a. Supporting a pilot of over 200 schools, kura, rumaki, and tertiary providers who have the opportunity to use the new standards in either Term 2 or Term 3 this year. Pilot participants are supported through an NZQA and Ministry-led webinar series, and opportunities to connect and discuss the changes.
 - b. Providing funding to Ministry regional offices who are recruiting/contracting personnel to support schools and kura that require accelerated support with PLD.
 - c. Providing funding to Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa (Ngā Kura ā Iwi) and Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori (Te Rūnanga Nui) to support PLD initiatives for te reo matatini me te pāngarau.
 - d. Developing online resources for literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini, and pāngarau. Many of these have already been released on [NCEA.Education.govt.nz](https://www.ncea.govt.nz) and more will be released throughout 2022.
 - e. Providing resources and support throughout the Accord Teacher Only Days on the changes.

The timing of the requirements and options for deferral

- 14 We were planning to provide you with advice in early September on whether the sector might be deemed 'ready' for the changes. This advice would consider the results of the first of two 2022 pilot assessment events and canvass the steps that the sector is

taking to prepare for the changes. Following the outcome of that decision, schools and kura would have had from September through to December to prepare fully for the changes.

- 15 Sector representatives, including the PPTA, SPANZ, and ASSPA, remain supportive of the policy intent but have advised that the change requires a greater lead in time and that a decision now would provide greater clarity to the sector. This is largely due to the disruption caused by COVID-19 this year and the increasing pressure on schools and kura to deliver NCEA changes while focusing on the challenges of staff and student absences and blended learning delivery.
- 16 In recommending a deferral, senior stakeholders (including the PPTA, SPANZ, and ASSPA) cite:
 - a. Sector anxiety in the context of COVID-19 disruptions and associated workload concerns.
 - b. The need for more time to digest the Literacy & Communications and Maths Strategy, and Hei Raukura mō te Mokopuna.
 - c. Change management challenges within the sector, which are linked to COVID-19 distractions. For example, an insufficient understanding of how to implement the changes at the school- or provider-level, such as the total number of credits that learners will require to attain NCEA Level 1.
- 17 Both Ngā Kura ā Iwi and Te Rūnanga Nui agree that deferral would provide more time for kura to prepare. Your Professional Advisory Group also unanimously agree with deferral and making a decision on this now.
- 18 We have therefore set out the following options for implementation. You first have an option on the timing of the decision, and then a further option as to the substance of the decision itself.

Decision 1: timing of implementation decision

- 19 The first matter for you to consider is the timing of the readiness decision. You may either make a readiness decision now, or in September as planned.
- 20 The advice that we could provide you in September would offer a more thorough picture of sector readiness upon which to base your decision, including:
 - a. A summary of the results from the first assessment event of the 2022 pilot. Across literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini, and pāngarau, we are expecting over 30,000 entries. This will give us our widest understanding of student achievement against the standards to date.
 - b. Insights against readiness indicators from every region on the schools and kura that have been identified as requiring accelerated support. This follows the

implementation of targeted PLD support in each region, which has been provided from March this year.

- c. Sector insights from key groups such as your Professional Advisory Group, Te Runanga Nui, Ngā Kura ā Iwi, NCEA Panels, and a range of schools and kura through NCEA Change Hubs.

- 21 While the readiness picture would be fuller in September, we already have information available to us to inform a reasonable, holistic judgment about sector readiness. This can be inferred from the 2021 pilot results, which were mixed (although not representative), feedback we have received from the sector, and trends in studies such as NMSSA. Should you wish to do so, these sources would allow you to make a defensible decision now.
- 22 By making a decision earlier you will provide the sector with greater certainty as to the timing of the changes. This will reduce sector anxiety regarding how to plan for the change; maintain sector commitment; and help to strengthen the connection between the new co-requisite, and the Literacy & Communications and Maths Strategy and Hei Raukura mō te Mokopuna.

Decision 2: deferral/non-deferral

- 23 If you choose to make a readiness decision now, you may choose to defer any mandatory implementation of the co-requisite by schools, kura, and providers until 2024, noting that we would also advise you on readiness again in 2023. We would likewise continue to offer the assessments as an 'opt-in' pilot, allowing schools and kura who wish to adopt the new standards from 2023 to do so.
- 24 There are a number of possible benefits to a deferral of mandatory implementation. Firstly, schools and kura will have an additional year to prepare for, and to support their learners to prepare for, the change. Lifting achievement levels of literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau across the learning pathway will be a significant challenge for many schools, kura, and providers, and will require shifts in pedagogy and attitudes. An additional year to support this process will allow more time for these shifts to occur before the stakes are raised through mandatory assessment.
- 25 An indicator of the sector's need for more preparation time ahead of implementation is provided by the results from the 2021 mini-pilot. While small and non-representative (2313 entries drawn from a small number of schools and providers), these results, particularly those from the writing assessment for literacy, suggest that some work remains to be done to ensure that all NCEA learners are given an equitable opportunity to meet the new benchmark.
- 26 A further benefit from the point of view of schools, kura, and providers, is that delayed implementation of the co-requisite will mean that it aligns with full implementation of the new NCEA Level 1 achievement standards. While these components of the NCEA Change Programme can be implemented separately, we have heard concerns from

the sector that having to replan NCEA Level 1 programmes twice over consecutive years is a potential workload burden.

- 27 Such alignment of the co-requisite and Review of Achievement Standards would also make sense from the perspective of publishing and socialising the new NCEA Level 1 qualification listing. If we implement the co-requisite from 2023, an interim qualification listing will be required, without an updated graduate profile, which may cause some confusion in the sector.
- 28 Lastly, the additional year will also provide the sector with time to digest Hei Raukura mo te Mokopuna and the Literacy & Communications and Mathematics Strategy, which were released to the public on 25 March 2022, and whose implementation will support the development of the foundational skills the co-requisite assesses. Additional time will help ensure that school and kura activity to support readiness for the NCEA changes is aligned to the intended direction for the common practice frameworks envisaged by the strategies.
- 29 Hei Raukura Mō te Mokopuna is underpinned by three guiding principles *Ko te mokopuna kei te toi o ngā whakaaro, Te Reo Matatini and Mātauranga*, with the expectation that these are embedded across existing work programmes. Among its many objectives, the strategy seeks to reclaim the meaning of te reo matatini to reflect its original intent. We would use the deferral of the co-requisite by one year as an opportunity to embed this strategy. For example, Tīrewa Ako (progressions frameworks) for pānui, tuhituhi, reo-ā-waha and pāngarau have already been developed and will be released in due course. The co-requisite standards are aligned to these frameworks, and we would use 2023 to support kaiako in using and embedding this resource.
- 30 Similarly, the additional year will provide the sector with time to digest and consider the implications of the Literacy & Communications and Maths Strategy, which aims to shape the learning pathway to support the early learning and schooling system to deliver equity and excellence in literacy & communication and maths teaching and learning. As part of this Strategy, new progression frameworks for literacy & communication and numeracy will be developed that will support teachers, learners, and whānau to understand learning progression outcomes for literacy, communication, and numeracy in the Curriculum. Alongside this, the refresh of the New Zealand Curriculum will provide teachers with clearer guidance on the literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau requirements of each learning area.

Risks

- 31 Making a decision now may invite the sector to decrease its focus on supporting young people to progress their literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau skills this year, as deferral of the co-requisite may be misperceived as a signal to halt preparation activities. Therefore, if you choose to defer mandatory implementation, it

would be crucial for us to continue our messaging to schools, kura, and providers that they maintain their focus on student preparedness.

- 32 We also note that there is no quiet year for implementation on the horizon. Every year from now until at least 2026 will involve considerable implementation demands across curriculum and assessment.
- 33 To minimise any possible loss of momentum, as noted above, we would continue to allow schools and kura to be able to opt in to using the co-requisite standards and assessments from 2023. This would mean that schools and kura who would like to prepare for the changes by adopting them early are able to do so. This is similar to the approach taken in this year's pilot, where any school could choose to opt-in to the assessments.
- 34 We expect many schools and kura will opt into the changes from 2023. Depending on their school, kura, or provider, students would then be able to meet the NCEA literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau requirements through either the existing standards or the new co-requisite standards. Students aiming to meet the requirements through the new co-requisite standards would also have a 'backup' option of achieving literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau through the tagged NCEA achievement standards ('status quo').
- 35 While this might appear to create what is effectively a two-tier system for NCEA literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau for the duration of 2023, this is already occurring on a smaller scale through the ongoing pilots of the standards. Over the piloting and implementation years, some students will meet the requirements through the new standards, and others will do so through the existing path, which tends not to include the explicit assessment of literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau skills. On balance, therefore, we do not consider this a significant departure from our agreed approach.
- 36 There are some further operational matters that will arise from a deferral decision, which we will work through with NZQA. This includes the need to 'tag' Level 2 and 3 pilot achievement standards, re-timeline our work on qualification changes, and re-establish the terms of a 2023 pilot year. These consequences are minor.
- 37 Finally, we do not recommend any further deferrals beyond 2024, as that is the final year that the existing achievement standards (which are currently used to assess literacy and numeracy by proxy) will be available.

View of your Professional Advisory Group

- 38 We have consulted with your Professional Advisory Group (PAG) on the recommendations contained in this report. They are unanimous in their support of bringing the readiness decision forward and are also in favour of deferring mandatory implementation of the co-requisite. The PAG remain supportive of the policy direction and the changes overall.

- 39 The PAG agrees that a deferral will allow schools and kura a greater opportunity to prepare for the changes and to embed good practice to support teaching and learning. Given the impacts of COVID on learning and the size of the challenge ahead, they see a deferral as necessary, particularly to give more time for schools to put in support for learners who are currently below the necessary Curriculum Level.
- 40 The PAG also noted that there will be many schools and kura who are ready for the changes now. This supports the need to allow for schools and kura to use the new standards next year, prior to mandatory implementation in 2024.

Conclusion

- 41 The required work is underway for mandatory implementation of the NCEA literacy and numeracy | te reo matatini me te pāngarau co-requisite from next year. However, we understand that the sector is facing challenges as a result of COVID-19 disruptions.
- 42 Because of this, we recommend that you consider deferring mandatory implementation until 2024. The pressures on the sector, and the size of the teaching and learning shifts required, justify re-timelining mandatory implementation. Doing so will mean that all schools and kura who are ready for the changes are able to engage in a pilot in 2023, while those who are not will engage when the co-requisite becomes mandatory in 2024.
- 43 We will use the additional opt-in year to work with the sector to embed the Curriculum changes necessary to support implementation, and place a strong expectation on schools and kura that they use this time to prepare for the changes, including supporting actions from the Strategy.

Financial Implications

- 44 A deferral decision does not carry financial implications for the NCEA Change Programme. While the additional year will provide an opportunity for the sector to prepare for the changes, it will not impact the scale and resourcing of the planned support for the sector, which is already being implemented.

Timing and next steps

- 45 You will need to confirm your decision through Cabinet [SWC-20-MIN-0001 refers]. We will work with your office on whether this will be an oral item or a Cabinet paper.

Proactive Release

- 46 We recommend that this Education Report is not released until the sector is advised of Cabinet's decision.