

## Cabinet Paper material Proactive release

Minister & portfolio Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister of Education  
Name of package Delivery of the NCEA and Curriculum Change Programmes  
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### These documents have been proactively released:

**Cabinet Paper: Delivery of the NCEA and Curriculum Change Programmes**

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Author: Social Wellbeing Committee

### Material redacted

Some deletions have been made from the documents in line with withholding grounds under the Official Information Act 1982. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

The applicable withholding grounds under the Act are as follows:

Section 9(2)(f)(iv) to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials

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Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Chair

## Delivery of the NCEA and Curriculum Change Programmes

### Proposal

1. The proposals in this paper will enable a stronger focus on the new maths and literacy curriculum by seeking approval to refocus the Government's work plan for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and Curriculum Change Programmes. This refocusing will enable the education sector to prioritise implementing and embedding improvements in the delivery of teaching and learning in literacy and communication, maths te reo matatini and pāngarau as foundational learning.
2. The proposals in this paper will also better align NCEA with planned curriculum changes, and further ensure positive education experiences and outcomes for all students. Specifically, your agreement is sought to:
  - 2.1. extend the timeline for the NCEA Programme for Level 2 and 3 by one year to help alleviate pressure on the education workforce and better align curriculum and NCEA changes. Level 1 will still be fully implemented in 2024 as planned, with Level 2 in 2026 and Level 3 in 2027 (instead of 2025 and 2026)
  - 2.2. change the assessment style for the new mandatory NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite assessment from the piloted Common Assessment Activity (test environment) to instead using a smaller selection of essential maths, english, Te reo Māori and pāngarau standards to credential student literacy and numeracy for NCEA ;
  - 2.3. prioritise the refresh of our Maths, English, Te reo Māori and Pāngarau areas of our national schooling curricula by deferring the requirement for schools to implement the other areas by one year (with the exception of Aotearoa New Zealand Histories and Te Takanga o Te Wā, which are already required). Work will continue on the wider refresh of all learning areas in the *New Zealand Curriculum* and on the redesign of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*. Schools and kura will be able to use all the other refreshed or newly designed learning and focus areas in the two curricula by 2025 if they are ready, but these areas will not be a requirement until 2026. All work to strengthen literacy and numeracy outcomes for students will continue as planned.

### Relation to government priorities

3. The NCEA Change Programme ('the NCEA Programme') and the Curriculum Change Programme are components of the Education Work Programme as agreed by the Cabinet in 2021, for this term of Government [SWC-21-MIN-0015 refers].

### Executive Summary

4. The Government has an ambitious education work programme aimed at lifting attainment levels, supporting the profession in quality teaching and delivering world-class inclusive

education for all students. This Government has a legacy of strong investment into evidenced-based curriculum development after the previous Government left abandoned a curriculum that was introduced in 2007 but lacked a focus on implementation, fostering a practice of over-assessment leading to poor educational outcomes. To date, we have made substantial progress through the curriculum and assessment work programme despite the disruption caused by COVID-19 (whereby the Ministry was required to ‘flip’ to support the education sector with their distance learning).

5. For instance, the Government has:

- 5.1. Fully refreshed the Social Sciences learning area of the *New Zealand Curriculum*, including adding new Aotearoa New Zealand Histories content and Te Takanga o Te Wā into *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.
  - 5.2. Made significant progress on the refresh of the Maths and English learning areas of the *New Zealand Curriculum* and Pāngarau and Te Reo Māori focus areas of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and developed with experts the *Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy* and *Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna*.
  - 5.3. Developed a new Online Curriculum Hub, which will provide a modern online repository of curriculum supports for teachers and kaiako, to be launched later this year.
  - 5.4. Conducted three NCEA Level 1 pilots across more than 160 schools and commenced development for 67 NCEA Level 2 subjects – 11 subjects for *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and 56 for the *New Zealand Curriculum*.
6. There is widespread agreement across the education sector that improvements to our schooling curriculum and NCEA are needed with maths and literacy as the priority areas. While the education sector is supportive of the Government’s change programmes in Curriculum and NCEA, they have indicated to me that they are unlikely to be able to cope with the level of change currently on the Government’s education work plan. This relates to the impact that COVID-19 has had on student engagement and learning, and the need for the sector to focus on supporting them to catch-up on any lost learning from lockdowns and illnesses.
7. There is a risk that asking the sector to focus on too many directions at once could mean important changes we are making to support teaching and learning are not maximised for the benefit of students. At this time, I am wanting the sector to focus on lifting quality numeracy, literacy, pāngarau and te reo matatini teaching. However, given the volume of curriculum and NCEA material the Government is consulting the sector on, it is unlikely the sector will have the bandwidth to focus on all these areas at this time.
8. I am also concerned about the sequencing of curriculum and assessment changes, with an extant risk that the NCEA Programme gets ahead of curriculum changes. This sequencing could result in educational outcomes being driven by assessment rather than curriculum for many students, which could lead to adverse teaching and learning outcomes. These risks, combined with recent North Island weather events and the demands on teacher workload raised through collective bargaining, have prompted me to consider a range of options within the education work programme.

*NCEA Programme*

9. The NCEA Programme seeks to maintain NCEA as a credible qualification by ensuring students are being assessed on a coherent set of learning. It also aims to improve equity of NCEA outcomes for Māori, Pasifika and those with additional learning needs, and to reduce the practice of over-assessment and “teaching to the test.” While there is wide support for the purpose of the NCEA Programme, the sector has repeatedly raised concerns about the implementation timeframe as it relates to workload, sequencing with the Curriculum Change Programme, the required urgency needed to lift numeracy, literacy, pāngarau and te reo matatini outcomes for students, and the need to recover post-COVID-19.
10. Given the issues outlined in paragraphs 7-8, I am proposing to extend the timeline for the implementation of NCEA Level 2 and 3 by one year to help alleviate pressure on the education workforce and better align curriculum and NCEA changes. The new NCEA Level 1 is near completion and will be implemented as planned in 2024. Level 2 will be fully implemented in 2026 instead of 2025 and Level 3 will be fully implemented in 2027 instead of 2026.
11. This approach will allow for important new Level 1 NCEA foundations to be put in place, while allowing for the changes to the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa to be embedded before making changes to the higher-stakes Level 2 and 3 achievement standards. This approach will not affect the cohesion of NCEA standards between year levels, as Level 1 is currently optional (and will remain optional) and is designed to set broad foundations before further subject specialisation rather than the specificity seen in Level 2 and 3 NCEA standards. These changes will also let the sector get used to the new approach to NCEA achievement standards and avoid the ‘tail wagging the dog’ by having most changes to NCEA assessments coming ahead of curriculum changes. The curriculum changes will set the direction for student learning and provide clearer guidance for teachers on what they need to be teaching, so that important learning is not left to chance.

*NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite*

12. The Government is currently piloting a new Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite (“the co-requisite”). Introducing the co-requisite is intended to ensure that students with an NCEA qualification have achieved a level of literacy and numeracy that will enable them to engage with the world, particularly for post-secondary employment, education and training. To achieve the co-requisite, students would have to pass an additional assessment (the Common Assessment Activities) which is based on an external test-type model for English-medium (Māori-medium have the choice to use a portfolio approach). The Ministry started piloting the co-requisite in 2021.
13. In 2022, Cabinet agreed to delay the mandatory implementation of the co-requisite by one year, until 2024, due to the impact of COVID-19 and sector readiness [CAB-22-MIN-0241 refers]. The Ministry has continued to pilot the co-requisite in over 200 schools during this time and have the pilots evaluated. These evaluations have continued to raise concerns about sector readiness to use the Common Assessment Activities as intended, as well as raising some other implementation issues that need resolving. The evaluation from the most recent pilot has continued to find that schools involved were using the assessment for summative and normative purposes, which has varied the results. There is also evidence that whole cohorts of students are being put through the assessment, whether they were

ready or not – this is not the intent of the Common Assessment Activities design. In addition the evaluation also found that some schools weren't prepared to offer digital assessment, which also disadvantaged the students.

14. For these reasons, my NCEA Professional Advisory Group and I are concerned that schools are not prepared to implement the new Common Assessment Activities for the benefit of students at the same time as improving teaching practices that will be required for the refreshed maths and literacy curriculum areas and engaging in the wider NCEA changes. If the Government were to go ahead with implementing the co-requisite as planned and on the current timeframes there is a risk that students will be unfairly penalised. I have considered a number of options for addressing this issue while also taking a significant step to strengthen the credentialing of literacy and numeracy in NCEA.
15. The option I am proposing is that a strengthened mandatory co-requisite is introduced next year but that instead of the Common Assessment Activities a small list of essential literacy and numeracy rich standards are used. I intend for these settings to remain in place for two years from 2024-2026. I will consider advice on whether this alternate arrangement would be reviewed by the end of 2026 to ascertain if it should continue in any form or if we should move back towards the Common Assessment Activities from 2026 by taking the lessons learnt from the pilots and evaluations. If Cabinet agrees this alternate approach, the Ministry will provide me with advice on the final list of essential standards, which will include new Level 1 standards, before implementation.

*Curriculum Change Programme and prioritising focus on literacy and numeracy*

16. I have carefully considered how to provide schools with space to recover lost teaching and learning post COVID-19, and prioritise an uplift in literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini and pāngarau outcomes for students within the Curriculum Change Programme. Our two schooling curricula provide the overarching direction for teaching and learning in New Zealand but are currently too vague on the most important learning that needs to occur at different stages.
17. I am seeking your agreement to defer the requirement for schools and kura to implement the refreshed *New Zealand Curriculum* and the redesigned *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* – shifting this from the beginning of 2026 to the beginning of 2027.
18. The exception to this timeline will be for the Maths and English learning areas in the *New Zealand Curriculum* and Te Reo Māori and Pāngarau focus areas in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*. The refresh and redesign of these areas will be completed this year. These areas will contain clear Learner Progression Frameworks which, for the earlier years of schooling, will be broken down further into more detailed Progress Steps. Alongside this will be a Common Practice Model which, combined with the curriculum changes, will provide a clearer guide on what needs to be taught (and when) for literacy, maths, te reo matatini and pāngarau effectively. 9(2)(f)(iv)
19. All other learning and focus areas will still be available for teaching in 2026, but they won't become mandatory until 2027.

## Background

20. The Government has invested in an extensive work plan to develop a quality, evidenced based curriculum and NCEA qualification framework. While the education sector is supportive of the Government's change programme in Curriculum and NCEA they have indicated to me that they are unlikely to be able to cope with the level of change currently on the Government's education work plan. This relates to the impact that COVID-19 has had on student engagement and learning, and the need for the sector to focus on supporting them to catch-up any lost learning. There is a risk that asking the sector to focus on too many directions at once could mean important changes to teaching and learning are not maximised for the benefit of students. In addition, I am concerned about the sequencing of curriculum and assessment changes, with an extant risk that the NCEA Programme gets ahead of curriculum changes and the improvements underway in supports for quality literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini and pāngarau teaching. These risks, combined with, recent North Island weather events and workload issues raised through collective bargaining, have prompted me to consider a range of options within the education work programme.
21. Literacy, maths, te reo matatini and pāngarau are a priority for the Government given the well-documented decline in student progress and achievement between Years 4 and 8 over the last 30 years, and the importance of these foundational skills to access other areas of learning. It is my view that the Government needs to prioritise changes in expectations of, and supports for, the effective teaching and learning of literacy, maths, te reo matatini and pāngarau with urgency and that the best way to do this is to focus our and the sector's attention firmly on changes in these spaces by deferring other aspects of our curriculum and assessment work programme.

### *NCEA Programme - background*

22. Approved by Cabinet in May 2019, the NCEA Programme was designed so that NCEA would remain credible, while improving equity and access and promoting balanced, meaningful, and coherent, personalised pathways through the qualification for every young New Zealander [SWC-19-MIN-0045 refers].
23. This is the largest change and update to NCEA since it was implemented in 2002 and reflects the feedback that was received through the review work and wide public consultation that change is needed.<sup>1</sup> The NCEA Programme was launched with a clear mandate and support for change from the education sector, students, parents, whānau and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. The timeline for implementation has, however, been challenged by the education sector, particularly as it relates to sector change capacity following COVID-19 and significant weather events, and sequencing vis a vis the Curriculum Change Programme.
24. Extensive work has gone into the NCEA Programme since 2019, with new Level 1 achievement standards and assessments currently being piloted in around 30% of NCEA offering schools and kura this year.<sup>2</sup> Early indications from a smaller sample of schools and kura who piloted some of the Level 1 changes in 2022 are largely positive. However, it is

<sup>1</sup> More than 16,000 New Zealanders from a diverse range of backgrounds contributed their views on what worked well with NCEA, and what aspects of NCEA could be strengthened. The feedback was used to guide significant proposed changes to NCEA.

<sup>2</sup> Schools piloting this year include some in the Cook Islands and Niue.

clear that schools and kura are not ready to implement this level of change next year, as intended (and currently scheduled).

25. The NCEA Programme was funded in Budget 2021 to a total value of \$92.6 million in operating funding over four years. In addition, the Ministry committed to contribute \$36 million from baseline (and \$4.2 million from NZQA baselines) to fund the Programme over the four years. A further \$32 million from Ministry baselines had already been spent in 2019/20 through programme initiation. Overall, at that time, this gave an estimated whole of life programme cost of approximately \$172.9 million.
26. Through the Budget 2021 process, Ministers and Cabinet were alerted to fiscal sustainability issues relating to the NCEA Programme, requiring an additional \$95 million between 2022/23 and 2025/26. As part of Budget 2022, Cabinet agreed to establish a tagged contingency of \$73.130 million to complete delivery of the Programme, with the Ministry to find the needed balance [CAB-22-MIN-0129 refers].<sup>3</sup> The NCEA Programme has now drawn-down the tagged contingency to fund activity through to completion.
27. By the end of the 2022/23 financial year the NCEA Programme will have spent a total of \$128.916 million (including the NCEA review period).

#### *Curriculum Programme - background*

28. The *New Zealand Curriculum* is being refreshed to support every child to experience success in their learning, and so that their progress and achievement across the full educational pathway from Years 1-13, is responded to. The refreshed curriculum content is being developed and released in phases. It is based on the Understand, Know, Do progression framework that provides clarity on what needs to be taught and when within the curriculum. It will include clear Learner Progression Frameworks and, where necessary, more detailed Progress Steps to indicate essential, time sensitive aspects at each phase of learning to ensure the most important learning is not 'left to chance'. The fully refreshed *New Zealand Curriculum* will be available by mid-2025, with the intention that it be gazetted for all schools to implement from the beginning of 2026. The refreshed English and Maths learning areas will be completed this year.
29. *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* redesign (Māori Medium curriculum) will support students in years 1-13 to experience success across their learning pathway, shifting the framing to Te Tamaiti Hei Raukura conceptual framework that is students-centred, holistic, future-focused, and more authentically indigenous. Content for Tīrewa Ako (similar to Learner Progression Frameworks) is also being developed and released in phases, with the intention that kura and Māori medium settings would be using the redesigned *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* from the beginning of 2026.
30. A rephrasing of curriculum timelines was previously announced by the Minister of Education in 2021 in response to the impact of COVID-19.<sup>4</sup> Despite the interruption caused by COVID-19 the Government has made progress through the extensive and comprehensive refresh of the curriculum. For example, the Government has:

<sup>3</sup> \$21.908 million was to be funded from Ministry baselines, adding a total additional investment of \$95.038 million to the original budget.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/schools-kura-and-early-learning-given-space-build-back-covid-19>

- 30.1. Fully refreshed the Social Sciences learning area of the *New Zealand Curriculum*, including adding new Aotearoa New Zealand Histories content and Te Takanga o Te Wā into *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*
  - 30.2. Made significant progress on the refresh of the Maths and English learning areas of the *New Zealand Curriculum* and Pāngarau and Te Reo Māori focus areas of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and developed, with experts, the *Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy* and *Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna*
  - 30.3. Developed a new Online Curriculum Hub, which will provide a modern online repository of curriculum supports for teachers and kaiako, to be launched later this year
31. Throughout the process it has been critical to engage the sector in the design of each learning and progression area as the ultimate practitioners of the curriculum. This is why the Ministry has engaged a wide range of academics and experts, including those with mātauranga Māori expertise, a broad range of practitioners as well as students.<sup>5</sup>
32. Alongside the Curriculum Change Programme, the Government is implementing the *Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy* and *Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna*. One of the key actions in these strategies is the introduction of a Common Practice Model for the effective teaching of maths and literacy and pāngarau and te reo matitini. The Common Practice Model contains the “how to” alongside the clear “what to” in the refreshed and redesigned curriculum content.

### Analysis: NCEA Programme

33. I am proposing that the timeline for the NCEA Programme for Level 2 and 3 is extended by one year to help alleviate pressure on the education workforce and better align curriculum and NCEA changes. This extension would mean new Level 1 achievement standards would still be fully implemented in 2024, but Level 2 in 2026 and Level 3 in 2027.
34. Alignment with the curriculum changes is important as I am particularly concerned to have curriculum drive teaching programmes, not assessment. The evidence supports a shift away from “teaching to the test”. There is a risk that making NCEA changes ahead of curriculum changes could exacerbate “teaching to the test” and create additional work and confusion for teachers trying to adapt to both new curriculum content and NCEA assessments at the same time. Neither of these scenarios would be in the best interests of students.
35. My proposed approach will allow for important new Level 1 NCEA foundations to be put in place, while allowing for the changes to the *New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* to be embedded before making changes to the higher-stakes Level 2 and 3 achievement standards. This will not affect the cohesion of NCEA standards between year levels, as Level 1 is currently optional (and will remain optional) and is designed to set broad foundations before further subject specialisation rather than the specificity seen in Level 2 and 3 NCEA standards. These changes will also let the sector get used to the new approach to NCEA achievement standards and avoid the ‘tail wagging the dog’ by having most changes to NCEA assessments coming ahead of curriculum

<sup>5</sup> See who is involved: <https://curriculumrefresh.education.govt.nz/get-involved>



changes. The curriculum changes will set the direction for student learning and provide clearer guidance for teachers on what they need to be teaching, so that important learning is not left to chance. The evidence supports a shift away from “teaching to the test”.

36. Adding a year to the Level 2 and 3 NCEA Programme balances the current pressures on the education system, driven largely by the impacts of COVID-19, alongside the scale and sequencing across the NCEA and Curriculum Change Programmes, and the urgency needed around prioritising numeracy, literacy, pāngarau and te reo matatini. It also responds to some of the workload issues being raised through collective bargaining. Advice I have received from my NCEA Professional Advisory Group is that a delay in the NCEA Programme is needed.
37. For students that experienced a disproportionate level of lost learning during COVID-19, the Government has made available free tutoring through the \$24 million lost learning package. This included targeting culturally responsive programmes for Maori and Pacific students. These investments, combined with the ongoing efforts of teachers and leaders, are getting results. I want teachers to be able to focus on the needs of these young people and important changes to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy. Extending the Programme gives this much-needed breathing room.
38. There is some risk that a one-year delay may be insufficient to address the totality of the implementation concerns from the sector and may result in the Government facing the same dilemma we have now in a year’s time as we continue to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 on learning.
39. Nevertheless, my proposal strikes an appropriate balance between granting the sector breathing room while continuing to deliver meaningful change to NCEA for the benefit of students. I am therefore seeking approval to extend the implementation timeframe for the Level 2 and 3 NCEA Programme by one year.

#### **Analysis: NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite**

40. The Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite (“the co-requisite”) is intended to ensure that students with an NCEA qualification have achieved a level of literacy and numeracy that will enable them to engage with the world, particularly when it comes to employment and further education. We started piloting the co-requisite in 2021.
41. The Ministry has continued to pilot the co-requisite in over 200 schools during this time and have the pilots evaluated. These evaluations have continued to raise concerns about sector readiness to use the Common Assessment Activities as intended, as well as raising some other implementation issues that need resolving. The evaluation from the most recent pilot has continued to find that schools involved were using the assessment for summative and normative purposes, which has varied the results. There is also evidence that whole cohorts of students are being put through the assessment, whether they were ready or not – this is not the intent of the Common Assessment Activities design. In addition, the evaluation also found that some schools weren’t prepared to offer digital assessment, which also disadvantaged the students.

42. Sector representatives have raised concerns with me that schools will not be ready to implement the new co-requisite next year as the evaluations have shown that assessment practice of the pilots lack consistency across the country leading to the variation of results. I also have concerns that this is too much change being implemented on teaching practice at the same time as new learning progression frameworks for the maths and literacy curriculum. This will unfairly disadvantage students at a time when we need to be ensuring consistent and quality teaching practice, especially for maths and literacy.
43. I am still of the view that the rationale for a co-requisite remains sound and we need to ensure students are gaining a NCEA qualification with foundational maths and literacy knowledge. Therefore I am proposing we proceed with the mandatory implementation of the co-requisite in 2024, but instead of the piloted Common Assessment Activities (test environment) we assess foundational knowledge based on the new Level 1 maths and literacy standards.

*Essential standards option as an alternative to Common Assessment Activities*

44. The alternative to the Common Assessment Activities (the test environment for English-medium), which I am seeking agreement to, involves offering an essential package of new NCEA Level 1 standards that are closely connected with foundational literacy and numeracy skills and that can be used to credential the co-requisite from 2024. I intend for these settings to remain in place for two years from 2024-2026. I will consider advice on whether this alternate arrangement would be reviewed by the end of 2026 to ascertain if it should continue in any form or if we should move back towards the Common Assessment Activities from 2026 by taking the lessons learnt from the pilots and evaluations.
45. In addition to the issues already outlined around lost learning and equity, the rationale for offering this transitional option include:
- 45.1. there will be students who are in the first cohorts experiencing the mandatory co-requisite and may be unfairly penalised as the sector transitions to supporting students with the co-requisite, including the new test environment; and
  - 45.2. work that is now underway to improve the teaching and learning of important foundational skills prior to Year 9 of schooling through the *Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy* and *Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna*, which students will not yet have benefited from and that secondary schools might also use to support students.
46. Providing an essential list of foundational assessment standards as a transitional measure is a coherent step towards strengthening literacy and numeracy standards in NCEA. Currently students can gain their required literacy and numeracy credits from over 500 literacy rich standards and over 100 numeracy rich standards. Most of the available standards do not directly assess literacy and numeracy skills nor have a strong conceptual link to those skills which impacts the credibility of the qualification. A smaller list of assessment standards will be selected that more directly indicate the level of foundational literacy and numeracy which students will need to complete to gain the additional co-requisite qualification. It will require candidates to demonstrate literacy and numeracy or te reo matatini and/or te pāngarau skills at level 4/5 (or higher). My NCEA Professional Advisory Group are supportive of this option. If this transitional approach is agreed, the

Ministry of Education will provide me with advice on the final list of essential standards, which will include new Level 1 standards, before implementation.

### Analysis: Curriculum Change Programme

47. I have also considered how to prioritise the teaching and learning of the new maths and literacy curriculum (available from Term 3 this year) while also reducing the change pressure on the sector in light of the impacts of COVID-19 and recent weather events. I am seeking your agreement to prioritise the delivery of maths and literacy by deferring the requirement for schools and kura to implement the other subjects in the refreshed *New Zealand Curriculum* and the redesigned *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* from the beginning of 2026 to the beginning of 2027.
48. The exception to this timeline will be for the Maths and English learning areas in the *New Zealand Curriculum* and Te Reo Māori and Pāngarau focus areas in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.<sup>6</sup> The refresh and redesign of these areas will be completed this year. These areas will contain clear Learner Progression Frameworks (or Tirewa Ako), which, for the earlier years of schooling, will be broken down further into more detailed Progress Steps. This will give students, parents and teachers more clarity on where learning is at, what the next steps are in progression and guidance on the types of learning strategies to achieve this. Alongside this will be a Common Practice Model which, combined with the curriculum changes, will provide a clearer guide on what needs to be taught (and when) for literacy, maths, te reo matatini and pāngarau.
49. 9(2)(f)(iv)
50. Curriculum development work continuing on its current planned timeline means schools and kura can start using new material before it becomes an expectation that all schools and kura will have the refreshed and redesigned curricula. It would also mean that schools and kura will have additional time to plan and progress their implementation activities if needed, such as engaging in professional learning and updating their school curriculum or marau ā-kura. This process was followed in 2021 to defer the Aotearoa New Zealand's histories and Te Takanga o Te Wā from 2022 to 2023 to provide schools and kura with the time and space to manage the changes more effectively.
51. If your agreement is secured to this deferral, I want to be clear that schools and kura can still engage in the refreshed curriculum content and plan and progress their implementation

<sup>6</sup> It will also not impact the expected use of Aotearoa New Zealand Histories and Te Takanga o Te Wā content, which is already in place.

as soon as they are ready, including participating in professional learning as they identify where they need to grow their capabilities.

### Population Impacts

52. In consultation, Te Puni Kōkiri have noted that the introduction of the co-requisite following the pilot should be given careful consideration to avoid unintended consequences for Māori in low equity areas. This comment was also made by the Ministry of Pacific Peoples in relation to Pacific students and it would also apply to students with additional learning needs. Providing an alternate to the Common Assessment Activities will be helpful in this regard. I also want to be clear about this change – this does not mean we are lowering expectations or standards, instead this reflects the need to make assessments truly equitable and accessible, and the Ministry is focussing closely on the experiences of ākonga Māori, Pacific students and those with additional learning needs to make it work for all learners.

### Financial Implications

53. As above, the Ministry of Education has now drawn down \$73.130 million from the Programme's tagged contingency to carry out the full scope of the Programme over an extended timeframe.
54. There are no direct financial costs of the co-requisite option proposed in this paper. The NCEA Programme is also funded to provide additional literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini, and pāngarau support for schools and kura until the end of June 2024. Beyond this, any implementation support will need to come from wider professional supports as a result of the *Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy* and *Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna*.
55. Deferring the requirement for the refreshed *New Zealand Curriculum* and redesigned *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* to the beginning of 2027 does not increase any funding needed but means expenditure will be spread over the longer timeframe.

### Consultation

56. The Treasury, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Te Puni Kōkiri | Ministry of Māori Development, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People have been consulted on earlier versions of this paper. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet have been informed of the contents of this paper.

### Communications

57. Should Cabinet agree to these changes to NCEA and Curriculum Programmes, communications will need to be carefully managed to ensure the sector understands what is, and is not, changing. Communications will also need to be clear that we will be focusing clearly and with urgency on lifting literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini and pāngarau, and that there will be no delay in the progression steps being developed for the curricula or the Common Practice Model.
58. I am seeking agreement to the immediate announcement of the extension of the NCEA Programme by one-year, as well as decisions made about the treatment of the co-requisite, and the deferral to aspects of the Curriculum Change Programme.

## Proactive Release

59. This paper will be released and any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

## Recommendations

The Minister of Education recommends that the Cabinet:

- 1 **note** that, given pressures on the education system, the scale and sequence of NCEA and Curriculum Programmes, COVID-19 impact on students, and the need to focus firmly on improvements to the teaching of literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini and pāngarau, the Minister of Education has considered a range of options for responding through the education work programme;
- 2 **note** that the NCEA Professional Advisory Group has advised that a delay to the NCEA Programme is needed and would be beneficial for students;

### *Recommendations relating to the NCEA Programme*

- 3 **note** that, in 2019, Cabinet approved the NCEA Change Programme so that NCEA remains credible, while improving equity and access and promoting balanced, meaningful, and coherent, personalised pathways through the qualification for every young New Zealander [SWC-19-MIN-0045 refers];
- 4 **note** that, while there is wide support for the NCEA Change Programme, the sector has raised concerns about the implementation timeframe, including sequencing with important curriculum changes;
- 5 **agree** to extend the timeline for the NCEA Programme by adding a year to the implementation timeframe for Level 2 and 3, meaning Level 1 achievement standards would still be fully implemented in 2024, but Level 2 in 2026 and Level 3 in 2027;

### *Recommendations relating to the NCEA co-requisite*

- 6 **agree** to continue with a new mandatory NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite in 2024 by replacing the Common Assessment Activities with an essential package of literacy and numeracy rich-standards for two-years (2024-2026)
- 7 **note** the Ministry of Education will provide the Minister of Education with advice on the final list of essential standards, before implementation
- 8 **note** the Minister of Education will consider advice on whether this alternate arrangement would be reviewed by the end of 2026 to ascertain if it should continue in any form or if we should move back towards the Common Assessment Activities from 2026

### *Recommendations relating to the Curriculum Programme*

- 9 **note** that, as part of the response to the report of the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement Ministerial Advisory Group, Cabinet agreed a small number of specific

next steps for Curriculum Programme, including work on the scope and process for future updates to *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and the *New Zealand Curriculum* [SWC-19-MIN-0101]

- 10 **agree** to defer the requirement for schools and kura to implement the refreshed *New Zealand Curriculum* and the redesigned *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* from the beginning of 2026 to the beginning of 2027, with:
- 10.1 the exception of the refreshed learning areas of English and Maths in the *New Zealand Curriculum* and the redesigned focus areas of Te Reo Māori and Pāngarau focus areas in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*; and
- 10.2 with no impact on the implementation of the actions from the *Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy* and *Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna*;
- 11 9(2)(f)(iv)
- 12 **note** that changes to NCEA and Curriculum Programmes agreed by Cabinet will be carefully communicated to be clear about what is, and is not, changing, and that we will be focusing with urgency on lifting literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini and pāngarau outcomes with no delay in the new progression steps being developed for the curricula or the Common Practice Model for literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini and pāngarau.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Jan Tinetti

Minister of Education



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

*This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.*

### Delivery of the NCEA and Curriculum Change Programmes

Portfolio                      Education

On 11 April 2023, following reference from the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee, Cabinet:

- 1            **noted** the contents of the submission *Delivery of the NCEA and Curriculum Change Programme* [CAB-23-SUB-0141];
- 2            **authorised** the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education to have Power to Act to take decisions on the paper.

Rachel Hayward  
Secretary of the Cabinet



# Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

## Minute of Decision

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### Delivery of the NCEA and Curriculum Change Programmes

#### Portfolio

#### Education

On 5 April 2023, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee **referred** the submission under SWC-23-SUB-0033 to Cabinet on 11 April 2023, revised as appropriate given discussion at the meeting and in consultation with the Prime Minister.

Rachel Clarke  
Committee Secretary

#### Present:

Rt Hon Chris Hipkins  
Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Chair)  
Hon Kelvin Davis  
Hon Grant Robertson  
Hon Dr Megan Woods  
Hon Jan Tinetti  
Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall  
Hon Willie Jackson  
Hon Kiri Allan  
Hon Peeni Henare  
Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan  
Hon Kieran McAnulty  
Hon Ginny Andersen  
Hon Barbara Edmonds  
Hon Willow-Jean Prime  
Hon Rino Tirikatene  
Jo Luxton, MP

#### Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister  
Office of the Chair  
Officials' Committee for SWC