

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

To:	Rt Hon Chris Hipkins, Prime Minister Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister of Education		
Date:	13 April 2023	Priority:	High
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Purpose of Report

- The purpose of this paper is to seek joint 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.
- This paper closely follows discussion at the Cabinet meeting of 11 April 2023 where Cabinet delegated a series of decisions to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education for joint approval [CAB-23-MIN-0141]. These are:
 - 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;
 - prioritise the refresh of our mathematics, 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 (except for Aotearoa New Zealand Histories and Te Takanga o Te Wā, which are already required); and
 - change the assessment style for the new mandatory NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite assessment by pausing implementation of the Common Assessment Activities for two years (2024-2025) and implementing, instead, a curated set of mathematics, English, te reo Māori and


pāngarau standards that can be used to credential literacy and numeracy within NCEA over this transitional period.

Summary

- The National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) were introduced in New Zealand between 2002 and 2004 as New Zealand's principal school-leaving qualifications. The NCEA change package is the first major change to NCEA since it was introduced and is designed to ensure 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. The changes reflect the feedback that was received through the sector consultation and review work in 2018 and 2019 and the clear message that change is needed.
- 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. Within the curriculum there are clear Learner Progression Frameworks, which for the earlier years of schooling, will be broken down further into more detailed progress steps. These are set to be fully adopted in 2026. *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 *Tirewa 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.
- There has also been widespread agreement across the education sector that improvements to our schooling curriculum and NCEA are needed with maths and literacy as priority areas.
- While the education sector is supportive of the Government's change programmes in curriculum and NCEA, they have indicated that they are unlikely to be able to cope with the level of change currently planned. Furthermore, we are asking the education sector to focus on lifting quality numeracy, literacy, pāngarau and te reo matatini teaching as a system priority and, 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.
- Cabinet has delegated a series of decisions to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education for joint approval to alleviate pressure on the sector, allow teachers and kaiako time and space to focus on numeracy, literacy, pāngarau and te reo matatini [CAB-23-MIN-0141 refers]. We understand that, following Cabinet meeting of 11 April, you are both supportive of the following decisions, which we now seek formal approval to:

- a. extend the timeline for the NCEA Programme for Levels 2 and 3 by one year; and

b. 9(2)(f)(iv)



- However, we also understand that you intend to have further discussions about the treatment of the NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite (“the co-requisite”). Accordingly, we have been asked to provide you, via this Education Report, with an outline of the advice we have given on the co-requisite, which informed the recommendation in the Cabinet paper to “agree to continue with a new mandatory 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)”. The bulk of this paper addresses this request.


The Co-requisite

- Following policy decisions by Cabinet on the NCEA Change Programme, since 2021 the Ministry has been piloting the new co-requisite, which is scheduled to become mandatory in 2024. The purpose of the co-requisite is 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 will have to pass an additional assessment (the Common Assessment Activities) which is based on an external, digital test-type model for English-medium (Māori-medium have the choice to use a portfolio approach).
- Evaluations of the pilots have continued to raise concerns about sector readiness to use the Common Assessment Activities as intended. Similar concerns were raised by the NCEA Professional Advisory Group (PAG) that schools and kura were not prepared to implement the new Common Assessment Activities at the same time as improving teaching practices that will be required for the refreshed maths and literacy curriculum areas (and for wider NCEA changes).
- To address these concerns, and concerns about students with additional learning needs, at the end of 2022 the then Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Education (with delegations for NCEA), requested advice on possible transition options for the co-requisite, while still improving the credentialing of foundational literacy and numeracy. This advice was provided to the Minister of Education in March 2023 [METIS 1299451 and 1304740 refers]. Specifically, this advice addressed the following options:
 - a. delay mandatory implementation of the co-requisite by a further year (2025);
 - b. increase opportunities for students to meet literacy and numeracy requirements by expanding implementation of the co-requisite to include the option to undertake either the new co-requisite unit standards (via the ‘Common Assessment

Activities') or a restricted list of existing standards ('curated set') for two years – an 'either/or' approach; and¹

- c. remove the mandated co-requisite and instead offer them as a 'badged' option that is credentialed distinctly in addition to NCEA.
- In addition, this advice covered the supports that would be made available through the Common Assessment Activities for students with additional learning needs.
- We advised the Minister of Education that delaying implementation by a year was possible, but we would need to maintain momentum for national shifts by strongly encouraging schools and kura to use the new standards as the primary method of attaining the literacy and numeracy requirements for NCEA for most of their students. Delaying a year also might not fundamentally shift the concerns being raised. We also advised the Minister not to proceed with a badging option because separating out foundation literacy and numeracy from qualification requirements would likely reduce the credibility of NCEA overall and diminish the value of the qualification for learners who do not meet the corequisite.
- We advised the Minister that a viable and recommended option was for the co-requisite to be introduced with a transition option for one-to-two years. The transition option, which would be available alongside the Common Assessment Activities, would be when on a restricted list of standards that can count towards the co-requisite (an 'either/or' approach). This option was supported by the Minister's NCEA Professional Advisory Group. The benefits of this option are:
 - a. 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
 - b. work that is now underway to improve the teaching and learning of these important foundation skills prior to Year 9 of schooling through the Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy and Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna
 - c. to provide the opportunity to test and work-through scenarios where there might be good reasons for some students to be offered a robust and credible alternate to the Common Assessment Activities.

• 9(2)(f)(iv)



¹ i.e. offering a small package of standards that are closely connected with foundational literacy and numeracy skills that can be used to credential literacy and numeracy within NCEA instead of the Common Assessment Activities (the test environment for English-medium).

- To avoid any confusion or concern about making the co-requisite easier, and maintain momentum, we advised that it would need to be clearly communicated from the outset that this option (the curated set of standards alongside the Common Assessment Activities) is timebound for the proposed two-year period only and that, if it continues to be offered, its use may be restricted. This clear signal would mean that schools and kura are incentivised to continue to build their readiness for the implementation of the Common Assessment Activities. In addition, messaging would need to be clear about the rationale for offering the transition option.
- We did, however, outline some risks inherent in this 'either/or' approach in which schools and kura independently choose between the curated set of standards and Common Assessment Activities, especially relating to an increased risk of inequitable outcomes for students. Specific risks include:
 - a. that the flexibility of an 'either/or' approach may incentivise negative school and kura behaviours in relation to streaming students – an aspect which has already been identified in the pilot evaluation process.²
 - b. that students are expected to engage with Common Assessment Standards, whether they're ready or not. 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
- While the Minister's NCEA Professional Advisory Group support the proposed two-year transition timeline and the 'either/or' approach to implementing the co-requisite using both the curated list and Common Assessment Activities, the Chair has indicated that they would not support the exclusive implementation of a curated set of existing standards (i.e., to the exclusion of the Common Assessment Activities). The Chair has advised that offering only a curated set of standards may detract from the overall intent of strengthening literacy and numeracy capability and change momentum would be lost.
- Balancing the trade-offs of different approaches and given the risks of the 'either/or' approach for fair treatment of students, the Minister of Education sought agreement from Cabinet for a transitional approach where the strengthened mandatory co-requisite would continue to be introduced in 2024 but that, instead of the Common Assessment Activities, a small list of essential literacy and numeracy rich achievement standards are used (exclusively). It was proposed that these settings remain in place for two years (from 2024-2025), with a planned review by the end of 2025 to ascertain if it should continue in any form or if we should move back towards the Common Assessment Activities from 2026.

² The NCEA PAG have noted that, in many secondary schools, streaming practices already exist. Therefore, there is a possibility that schools and kura may look at special classes to support literacy and numeracy development (especially in the interim).

- As above, Cabinet have delegated decision-making authority to the Prime Minister and Minister of Education, and your joint approval is now sought to continue introducing the co-requisite next year and either:
 - a. pause implementation of the Common Assessment Activities for two years (2024-2025) and implement, instead, a curated set of standards that are closely connected with foundational literacy and numeracy skills that can be used to credential literacy and numeracy within NCEA over this transitional period; or
 - b. increase opportunities for students to meet literacy and numeracy requirements by expanding implementation of the co-requisite to include the option to undertake either the new co-requisite unit standards (via the 'Common Assessment Activities') or a restricted list of existing standards ('curated set') for two years - an 'either/or' approach.
- We have set out an analysis of the different options that have been considered below, noting that we have previously discounted the Common Assessment Activity being introduced as the only option and badging options. We note that under each of these options we will continue work underway as part of implementation to assess whether there alternative means of assessment are required for small numbers of students, as agreed to by Cabinet [Cab-23-SUB-0141 refers]. For example, Realm nation students, and English Language Learners.

Table 1: Evaluation of options

	CAA Only	Curated list of standards only	And/ or (both CAA and curated list of standards)	Badging
Robustness of credentialing literacy and numeracy	High level of robustness, draws on recognised standards of foundational literacy and numeracy.	Risk of reduced robustness as any curated list would potentially not as directly assess foundational literacy and numeracy.	Potential for reduced robustness, depending on the uptake of CAA.	Low level of robustness as NCEA could potentially be achieved without attaining literacy and numeracy credentials.
Equity/ fairness for ākonga	Lowest level of fairness/ equity at present as ākonga would potentially be sitting CAAs without experiencing the necessary teaching and learning shifts required for attainment. Along with being put through CAA when not ready.	Moderate level of equity/ fairness and ākonga would not experience a new assessment mechanism they have not had opportunities to be prepared for. Primarily based upon new Level 1 achievement standards.	Moderate level of equity/ fairness as ākonga would have the opportunity to be assessed in the way which best suits their readiness, however there is a risk of schools/ kura option for an option which does not best reflect readiness of ākonga. Risk of perception of robustness of ākonga	Low equity/ fairness as ākonga would potentially receive a NCEA which is considered to have a lower status.

			qualification depending on which method was used to credential literacy and numeracy.	
Potential impact on streaming	Potential to increase streaming as schools may revert to streaming/grouping methods until teaching and learning shifts have been made.	Low potential for streaming.	Moderate risk of streaming as ākonga may be streamed into CAA/ non-CAA groups.	High risk for streaming as ākonga may be streamed into NCEA badged/ NCEA non-badged classes.
Sector readiness	Low but growing levels of sector readiness, widespread teaching and learning shifts have not yet been made to support implementation of CAA.	Primarily based upon new Level 1 achievement standards most teachers have not used. However, many are preparing for these assessments and are familiar with this assessment approach.	This represents an option that reflects diverse levels of readiness as schools/ kura who have been preparing can still participate in CAA, those who need more time can take it.	This would require significant systems shifts, understanding and teaching and learning support to manage streaming and other potential inadvertent consequences/
Sector workload	High, at least initially.	Moderate – however workload will increase dramatically if the CAAs are introduced after a two year period with no previous trialling.	Moderate to High	Moderate to High

- The selected option would be monitored closely by the Ministry and NZQA for the two-year period to identify pathways taken to credentialing, trends and approaches schools/ kura are taking to inform further advice and recommendations to the Minister.
- We expect that the risk profile of each option might change over time. For example, readiness for the Common Assessment Activities will increase as schools and kura embed new Curriculum changes and supports and if they are able to trial the Common Assessment Activities.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- Note** that, given pressures on the education system, including the NCEA and Curriculum Change 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, on 11 April 2023, Cabinet delegated, for joint approval, a range of decisions

about the pace and sequencing of implementation for curriculum and NCEA changes [CAB-23-MIN-0141].

Noted

Noted

- b. **Note** that Cabinet has delegated authority to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education jointly to make decisions on the timeline for the NCEA Change Programme and the Curriculum Change Programme and the treatment of the NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite (“the co-requisite”).

Noted

Noted

- c. **Agree**, following discussion at Cabinet on 11 April 2023, 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;

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

- d. **Agree**, following discussion at Cabinet on 11 April 2023, 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:
- i. 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
 - ii. no impact on the implementation of the actions from the *Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy* and *Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna*;

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

- e. 9(2)(f)(iv)

Noted

Noted

- f. **Note** that we have been requested to provide you, via this Education Report, with an outline of the advice we have given on the co-requisite, which informed the recommendation in the Cabinet paper to “agree to continue with the new mandatory co-requisite in in 2024 by replacing the Common Assessment Activities with an essential package of literacy and numeracy rich-standards for two-years (2024-2026)”.

Noted

Noted

g. **Agree**, in light of the above, to one of the following options; EITHER

- i. pause implementation of the Common Assessment Activities for two years (2024-2025) and implement, instead, a curated set of standards that are closely connected with foundational literacy and numeracy skills that can be used to credential literacy and numeracy within NCEA over this transitional period;

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

OR

- ii. increase opportunities for students to meet literacy and numeracy requirements by expanding implementation of the co-requisite to include the option to undertake either the new co-requisite unit standards (via the 'Common Assessment Activities') or a restricted list of existing standards ('curated set') for two years - an 'either/or' approach.

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

AND, IF SO

- h. **Agree** that Ministry provide further advice to the Minister of Education about the recommended list of standards to comprise the curated set;

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

- i. **Agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing with appropriate redactions once it has been agreed by joint Ministers and any announcements made.

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

Rt Hon Chris Hipkins
Prime Minister

/ /



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

13/04/2023

Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education

15/04/2023

Background

1. The National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) were introduced in New Zealand between 2002 and 2004 as New Zealand's principal school-leaving qualifications. The NCEA change package is the first major change to NCEA since it was introduced and is designed to ensure 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. The changes reflect the feedback that was received through the sector consultation and review work in 2018 and 2019 and the clear message that change is needed. There has also been widespread agreement across the education sector that improvements to our schooling curriculum and NCEA are needed with maths and literacy as the priority areas.
2. 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. Within the curriculum there are clear Learner Progression Frameworks, which for the earlier years of schooling, will be broken down further into more detailed progress steps. These are set to be fully adopted in 2026. *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.
3. While the education sector is supportive of the Government's change programmes in curriculum and NCEA, they have indicated that they are unlikely to be able to cope with the level of change currently planned. Furthermore, we are asking the education sector to focus on lifting quality numeracy, literacy, pāngarau and te reo matatini teaching as a system priority and, 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.
4. Accordingly, a series of advice was provided to the Minister of Education in early 2023 seeking agreement to options for alleviating pressure on the sector, allowing teachers and kaiako time and space to focus on numeracy, literacy, pāngarau and te reo matatini.
 - a. Cabinet has delegated a series of decisions to the Prime Minister and Minister of Education for joint approval to alleviate pressure on the sector, allow teachers and kaiako time and space to focus on numeracy, literacy, pāngarau and te reo matatini. We understand that, following Cabinet meeting of 11 April, you are both supportive of the following decisions, which we now seek formal approval to extend the timeline for the NCEA Programme for Levels 2 and 3 by one year to help alleviate pressure on the education workforce and better align curriculum and NCEA changes; and
 - b. 9(2)(f)(iv)

5. However, we also understand that you intend to have further discussions about the treatment of the NCEA Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite (“the co-requisite”). Accordingly, we have been asked to provide you, via this Education Report, with an outline of the advice we have given on the co-requisite, which informed the recommendation in the Cabinet paper to “agree to continue with a new mandatory 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)”. The bulk of this paper addresses this request.

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

6. Following policy decisions by Cabinet on the NCEA Change Programme, since 2021, the Ministry has been piloting the new co-requisite, which is scheduled to become mandatory in 2024. The purpose of the co-requisite is 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 will have to pass an additional assessment (the Common Assessment Activities) which is based on an external, digital test-type model for English-medium (Māori-medium have the choice to use a portfolio approach).
7. 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.
8. For these reasons, in 2022 and early 2023, concerns were raised by the NCEA Professional Advisory Group (PAG) that schools and kura were not prepared to implement the new Common Assessment Activities at the same time as improving teaching practices that will be required for the refreshed maths and literacy curriculum areas (and for the wider NCEA changes). Their advice was that, if the Government goes ahead with implementing the co-requisite as planned (and in the current timeframes) there is a risk that students will be unfairly penalised.
9. To address these concerns, and concerns about students with additional learning needs, at the end of 2022 the then Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Education (with delegations for NCEA), requested advice on possible transition options

for the co-requisite, while still improving the credentialing of foundational literacy and numeracy. This advice was provided to the Minister of Education in March 2023 [METIS 1299451 and 1304740 refer]. Specifically, this advice addressed the following options:

- a. delay mandatory implementation of the co-requisite by a further year (2025);
 - b. increase opportunities for students to meet literacy and numeracy requirements by expanding implementation of the co-requisite to include the option to undertake either the new co-requisite unit standards (via the 'Common Assessment Activities') or a restricted list of existing standards ('curated set') for two years – an 'either/or' approach; and³
 - c. remove the mandated co-requisite and instead offer them as a 'badged' option that is credentialed distinctly in addition to NCEA.
10. In addition, the above advice covered the supports that would be made available through the Common Assessment Activities for students with additional learning needs
11. The rationale for, and benefits of, offering an alternative to the Common Assessment Activities for two-years is:
- a. that there will be students in the early cohorts engaging with the mandatory co-requisite who may be unfairly penalised as the sector transitions to supporting students with the co-requisite, including the new test environment
 - b. that work is now underway to improve the teaching and learning of important foundation 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.
 - c. to provide the opportunity to test and work-through scenarios where there might be good reasons for some students to be offered a robust and credible alternate to the Common Assessment Activities.

Offering an alternative to the Common Assessment Activities

12. We advised the Minister of Education that delaying implementation by a year was possible, but we would need to maintain momentum for national shifts by strongly encouraging schools and kura to use the new standards as the primary method of attaining the literacy and numeracy requirements for NCEA for most of their students. Delaying a year also might not fundamentally shift the concerns being raised. We also advised the Minister not to proceed with a badging option because separating out foundation literacy and numeracy from qualification requirements would likely reduce

³ i.e. offering a small package of standards that are closely connected with foundational literacy and numeracy skills that can be used to credential literacy and numeracy within NCEA instead of the Common Assessment Activities (the test environment for English-medium).

the credibility of NCEA overall and diminish the value of the qualification for learners who do not meet the corequisite.

13. We advised the Minister that a viable and recommended option was for the co-requisite to be introduced with a transition option for one-to-two years. The transition option, which would be available alongside the Common Assessment Activities, would be when on a restricted list of standards that can count towards the co-requisite (an 'either/or' approach). This option was supported by the Minister's NCEA Professional Advisory Group. The benefits of this option are
 - a. 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
 - b. work that is now underway to improve the teaching and learning of these important foundation skills prior to Year 9 of schooling through the Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy and Hei Raukura Mō Te Mokopuna
 - c. to provide the opportunity to test and work-through scenarios where there might be good reasons for some students to be offered a robust and credible alternate to the Common Assessment Activities.
14. As above, previous advice has proposed responding to this by implementing an 'either/or' approach whereby schools and kura could choose to use either a restricted list of existing standards ('curated list') or the new Common Assessment Activities (from 2024-2025, with a planned review by the end of 2025).
 - a. a curated list of standards will create greater robustness around literacy and numeracy achievement than the status quo where a wide range of standards can be used to meet the literacy and numeracy requirements. This means that a curated list of standards will meet the policy objectives of the change more effectively than the status quo. A curated list of standards also have a closer connection to the potential future state where Common Assessment Activities are the only means of assessing the literacy and numeracy standards. They are therefore a coherent step towards the potential future state and signal to the sector that literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini, me te pāngarau should continue to be a focus for students.
 - b. the shift in assessment during a transition period will allow for greater flexibility in the assessment method. This will allow for students who learn in a range of different ways and with additional needs to sit the assessment in a way that meets their needs. The additional time will also mean that further refinements can be made to the Common Assessment Activity format to ensure that it has further accessibility built into it, both in relation to assessment design and in relation to the opportunities of the online assessment platform.
15. We did, however, outline some risks inherent in an 'either/or' approach in which schools and kura independently choose between the curated set of standards and

Common Assessment Activities, especially relating to an increased risk of inequitable outcomes for students. Specific risks include:

- a. that the flexibility of an 'either/or' approach may incentivise negative school and kura behaviours in relation to streaming students – an aspect which has already been identified in the pilot evaluation process.⁴
 - b. that students are expected to engage with Common Assessment Standards, whether they're ready or not (also as noted in the pilot evaluation which indicated assessment readiness is not widely understood by the sector).
16. There is some risk that, by widening the co-requisite approach to include the curated list of standards (either in addition to Common Assessment Activities, or instead of), we create a perception that we are 'making NCEA easier'. There is a downstream risk that offering both the curated set of standards as well as Common Assessment Activities approach may incentivise poor behaviour in relation to streaming students.
17. To avoid any confusion or concern about making the corequisite easier, and maintain momentum, we advised that it would need to be clearly communicated from the outset that this option (the curated set of standards alongside the Common Assessment Activities) is timebound for the proposed two-year period only and that, if it continues to be offered, its use may be restricted. This clear signal would mean that schools and kura are incentivised to continue to build their readiness for the implementation of the Common Assessment Activities. In addition, messaging would need to be clear about the rationale for offering the transition option.
18. Offering a transition approach wherein both curated set of standards and Common Assessment Activities are available for schools and kura to implement may also result in students engaging with Common Assessment Standards, whether they're ready or not. 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
19. While the Minister's NCEA Professional Advisory Group support the proposed two-year transition timeline and the 'either/or' approach to implementing the co-requisite using both the curated list and Common Assessment Activities, the Chair has indicated that they would not support the exclusive implementation of a curated set of existing standards (i.e., to the exclusion of the Common Assessment Activities). The Chair has advised that offering only a curated set of standards may detract from the overall intent of strengthening literacy and numeracy capability and change momentum would be lost.
20. Balancing the trade-offs of different approaches and given the risks of the 'either/or' approach for fair treatment of students, the Minister of Education sought agreement from Cabinet for a transitional approach where the strengthened mandatory co-requisite would continue to be introduced in 2024 but that, instead of the Common

⁴ The NCEA PAG have noted that, in many secondary schools, streaming practices already exist. Therefore, there is a possibility that schools and kura may look at special classes to support literacy and numeracy development (especially in the interim).

Assessment Activities, a small list of essential literacy and numeracy rich achievement standards are used (exclusively). It was proposed that these settings remain in place for two years (from 2024-2025), with a planned review by the end of 2025 to ascertain if it should continue in any form or if we should move back towards the Common Assessment Activities from 2026.

Table 1: Evaluation of options

	CAA Only	Curated list of standards only	And/ or (both CAA and curated list of standards)	Badging
Robustness of credentialing literacy and numeracy	High level of robustness, draws on recognised standards of foundational literacy and numeracy.	Risk of reduced robustness as any curated list would potentially not as directly assess foundational literacy and numeracy.	Potential for reduced robustness, depending on the uptake of CAA.	Low level of robustness as NCEA could potentially be achieved without attaining literacy and numeracy credentials.
Equity/ fairness for ākonga	Lowest level of fairness/ equity at present as ākonga would potentially be sitting CAAs without experiencing the necessary teaching and learning shifts required for attainment. Along with being put through CAA when not ready.	Moderate level of equity/ fairness and ākonga would not experience a new assessment mechanism they have not had opportunities to be prepared for. Primarily based upon new Level 1 achievement standards.	Moderate level of equity/ fairness as ākonga would have the opportunity to be assessed in the way which best suits their readiness, however there is a risk of schools/ kura option for an option which does not best reflect readiness of ākonga. Risk of perception of robustness of ākonga qualification depending on which method was used to credential literacy and numeracy.	Low equity/ fairness as ākonga would potentially receive a NCEA which is considered to have a lower status.
Potential impact on streaming	Potential to increase streaming as schools may revert to streaming/grouping methods until teaching and learning shifts have been made.	Low potential for streaming.	Moderate risk of streaming as ākonga may be streamed into CAA/ non-CAA groups.	High risk for streaming as ākonga may be streamed into NCEA badged/ NCEA non-badged classes.
Sector readiness	Low but growing levels of sector readiness, widespread teaching and learning shifts have	Primarily based upon new Level 1 achievement standards most teachers have not used. However,	This represents an option that reflects diverse levels of readiness as schools/ kura who have been	This would require significant systems shifts, understanding and teaching and learning support to

	not yet been made to support implementation of CAA.	many are preparing for these assessments and are familiar with this assessment approach.	preparing can still participate in CAA, those who need more time can take it.	manage streaming and other potential inadvertent consequences/
Sector workload	High, at least initially.	Moderate – however workload will increase dramatically if the CAAs are introduced after a two year period with no previous trialling.	Moderate to High	Moderate to High

21. As above, Cabinet have delegated decision-making authority to the Prime Minister and Minister of Education, and joint approval is now sought to continue introducing the co-requisite next year and either:

- a. pause implementation of the Common Assessment Activities for two years (2024-2025) and implement, instead, a curated set of standards that are closely connected with foundational literacy and numeracy skills that can be used to credential literacy and numeracy within NCEA over this transitional period; or
- b. increase opportunities for students to meet literacy and numeracy requirements by expanding implementation of the co-requisite to include the option to undertake either the new co-requisite unit standards (via the 'Common Assessment Activities') or a restricted list of existing standards ('curated set') for two years - an 'either/or' approach.

22. It is proposed that these settings remain in place for two years (from 2024-2025), with a planned review by the end of 2025 to ascertain if it should continue in any form or if we should move back towards the Common Assessment Activities from 2026. This review will include consideration of the possible benefits delivered across the wider curriculum and NCEA changes, especially the *Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy* and *Hei Rāukura Mō te Mokopuna* (the strategy for te reo matatini and pāngarau) and associated supports and resources.

9(2)(f)(iv)

Communications

26. Should you agree these changes to NCEA and Curriculum Programmes, communications will be carefully managed to ensure the sector understands what is, and is not, changing.

Proactively Released