

## Briefing Note: NCEA accessibility for students with additional learning support needs, students in alternative education, and transient students

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	22 July 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Routine
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- **Note** the work underway within the NCEA Change Programme to make NCEA more accessible

Noted

### Summary

On Monday 12 July we verbally briefed you on access to NCEA achievement standards for transient students and those transitioning between settings (including Alternative Education). This briefing note provides further information on work underway within the NCEA Change Programme to make NCEA more accessible for these students and students with additional learning needs.

Framed as Change 1 within the NCEA Change Programme, the goal of the NCEA accessibility work is to remove barriers to NCEA and make it an inclusive and accessible qualification. The main priorities we are progressing over the next 18 months include:

- Designing the new Achievement Standards inclusively and removing barriers for students to succeed.
- Identifying and delivering change and implementation supports for teachers to deliver NCEA more inclusively.
- Working with NZQA to develop a new Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) Action Plan.

Particular focus is being applied to ensuring the new Te Reo Matatini me Te Pangarau and Literacy and Numeracy requirements within NCEA will be accessible by design.

For example, we are currently piloting the new standards with two alternative education settings – Kingslea school and the Connected Learning Centre. Through this process we are identifying barriers that we can address through changes to the design of the assessments, and piloting additional SAC provision specific to these new standards.

We will provide you with an update by October 2021, which will include further information on the outcomes of our joint planning with NZQA.



Ellen MacGregor-Reid  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Early Learning and Student**  
**Achievement**



Hon Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of Education**

22/07/2021

25/07/2021

## Background

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1. Following our verbal update to you (on Monday 12 July) about access to NCEA achievement standards we have prepared further information on work underway within the NCEA Change Programme to make NCEA more accessible.
2. A key component of the NCEA Change Programme is to make NCEA more accessible (Change 1 of the 7 changes agreed by Cabinet in 2019). The overall goal of the accessibility work is to remove barriers to NCEA and make NCEA an inclusive and accessible qualification.
3. The key changes announced within Change 1, were:
  - a. Remove NCEA fees, including NZ Scholarship (done in 2019)
  - b. Design achievement standards and associated resources that are accessible and inclusive so that everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve, and the need to apply for Special Assessment Conditions (SACs) is reduced.
  - c. Where possible, make some existing SACs such as large-text papers available for anyone who needs them.
  - d. Simplify the application and evaluation process for SACs.

## Accessibility and NCEA

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4. In November 2019 we provided the Minister of Education Hon Chris Hipkins and the then Associate Minister of Education Hon Tracey Martin with an Education Report: *Aligning the Learning Support Action Plan and the NCEA Change Package* [METIS 1210548]. The purpose of this report was for Ministers to note how the Learning Support Action Plan 2019-2025 and the NCEA Package mutually support each other in improving outcomes for disabled students and students with learning support needs.
5. The Education Report was followed up by a briefing note to Hon Tracey Martin in May 2020: *Special Assessment Conditions and Computer Use in Examinations* [METIS 1222942]. This was a response to a request for further information on the content of the Education Report.
6. Since our previous advice to the Hon Tracey Martin on Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)<sup>1</sup> and supporting schools, the approach we're taking to this work has continued to evolve.
7. We are working with experts to design new assessment standards inclusively (utilising frameworks like Universal Design for Learning), and will also be developing resources to improve and support teacher capability around inclusion and access in NCEA, including resources for learning support staff.
8. These changes are also intended to better support students who are transitional in Alternative Education contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) address barriers to students accessing NCEA assessments. Examples of SAC include special papers for vision-impaired students; writers or readers for students with additional learning needs, such as dyslexia; rest breaks for students with diabetes; and separate accommodation for students with anxiety disorders.

9. With NZQA we will develop a new SAC Action Plan that will cover:
  - a. Improving access to SAC
  - b. Ensuring that SAC is fit for purpose for the new NCEA
  - c. Supporting a shift to more inclusive teaching, learning and assessment in NCEA overall
10. In our previous advice we indicated that we were exploring potentially funding diagnostic testing tools in schools (e.g., Lucid, a tool for diagnosing dyslexia, visual stress etc.). We no longer consider this to be an appropriate response following engagement with learning support and disability experts, and changes in the vendor market that make this uneconomic. Instead, we will achieve the intended aim (improved teacher practice and usage of existing tools) via curriculum-aligned practice frameworks and resources.

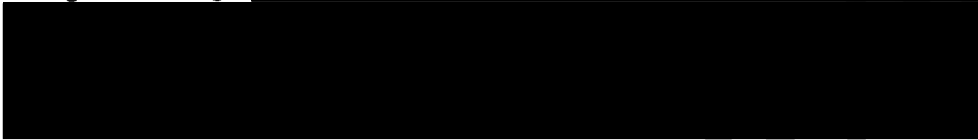
### NCEA and transient students

11. The overall goal of the accessibility work programme in NCEA is to remove barriers to NCEA and make NCEA an inclusive and accessible qualification. NCEA is uniquely well-placed to support transitional students, compared to the highly examination-focused systems of most jurisdictions. This is due to students being able to take their Record of Achievement with them to any school, alternative education setting, or foundation tertiary education organisation. The school or provider can then pick up where the learner left off and continue their qualification. Internal assessments and external portfolios are also widely available and are often more appropriate forms of assessment for students who are transient.
12. The Review of Achievement Standards (RAS) will also have an impact on transient and transitional learner's experiences of NCEA:
  - a. New curriculum-focused products like learning matrices and descriptions of 'significant learning' will raise consistency across schools in what is taught.
  - b. Fewer, larger standards mean student's assessment programmes are also less fragmented and they can work towards bigger, more meaningful outcomes over time
  - c. With mid-year externals and more portfolios and alternative (non-examined) modes of assessment available, transient students have more chances to get externally assessed credits.
  - d. We have quality criteria related to supporting transient students in the design of standards and assessments.
13. Overall, we think that if students are making progress in their learning, the new standards will help with ensuring this learning is appropriately credentialled.

### Literacy and numeracy

14. New standards will be implemented to credential NCEA literacy and numeracy from 2023. In 2021 we are piloting these standards with a select number of schools, kura and tertiary institutions to ensure that these standards and

assessment are accessible to all students. We are piloting one common assessment activity as the assessment method for English-medium settings.

15. The literacy and numeracy standards will be a mandatory co-requisite and will therefore be high stakes for students. These standards and the common assessment activity have been created using Universal Design for Learning approaches. We are also working with NZQA to offer the assessment multiple times per year and to remove time limit as a condition of assessment. This was done with the intention of making the standards and assessment more accessible.
16. As part of the 2021 pilot we have two Alternative Education organisations; Kingslea school, which is a school with students who are in the care of Oranga Tamariki and Connected Learning Centre, which is a teen parent unit at Tangaroa College. 9(2)(g)(i)  

17. We are therefore exploring with Kingslea what portfolio assessment might look like to inform decisions on what the final available modes of assessment, and available SAC will be for this assessment when it is implemented in 2023, and for our extended trials in 2022.

#### Next steps

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18. We will provide you with an update on our work on making NCEA more accessible by October 2021, which will include further information on the outcomes of our joint planning with NZQA.

#### Proactive Release

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19. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.