



## Education Report: Confirming the content structure for learning areas in *The New Zealand Curriculum*

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>CC:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	22 July 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1266499
<b>Drafter:</b>	Anya Pollock	<b>DDI:</b>	9(2)(a)
<b>Key Contact:</b>	Pauline Cleaver	<b>DDI:</b>	
<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	N/A	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to seek your agreement to a new consistent content structure for refreshed learning areas in *The New Zealand Curriculum* so that we can finalise the Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories content and progress the refresh of learning areas.

### Summary

1. In January 2021, you advised Cabinet [CBC-21-MIN-004 refers] that full updates of both *The New Zealand Curriculum* (the NZC) and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* are needed to ensure that they are clear and easy to use and fit for purpose for the unique learning contexts in English and Māori medium.
2. To provide clarity and make it easier for teachers to use the NZC, we recommend changing the approach to the learning areas to use a consistent content structure. The learning areas in the NZC are not currently clear about the learning that must be covered, and the inconsistent approach taken across the eight learning areas makes local curriculum design harder for teachers than it needs to be.
3. As part of preparing the draft Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories content for consultation, we developed and tested a new approach to describing learning expectations within learning areas of the NZC.
4. The approach tested used a content structure for each learning area which consisted of a Purpose and Pedagogical statements; an Understand, Know, Do content model; a Learning Progression Framework of progress outcomes, Learning Experiences, and Key Questions.
5. Feedback from teachers was generally positive, so we are now seeking your agreement to adopt this new approach as the consistent content structure for learning areas as we

refresh the NZC. This will enable us to finalise the Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories curriculum and progress the refresh of the Social Sciences learning area.

6. The new approach will achieve a better balance between national and local decision making, so that learning is not left to chance but there is still flexibility for teachers to make learning meaningful to their students and communities. It will also be easier for teachers to use when designing local curriculum.
7. Alongside this, we have been progressing other elements of the refresh with the Bicultural and Inclusive Framework working group. We are working towards drafts of a refreshed Vision for Young People, a new cultural narrative to weave together all parts of the curriculum, and a refreshed curriculum purpose statement.
8. Feedback on the new approach to the content structure of learning areas has indicated that teachers will need support to understand and use the new features as part of their local curriculum. Supports for iwi and communities as curriculum partners will also be important. We are working with the Curriculum Voices Group on what this could look like.
9. Co-design of the refresh of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* is continuing. We are planning to provide you and the Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education) Hon Kelvin Davis, with an update on our progress in a separate briefing in August.

## Recommended Actions

---

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **Note** that a new content structure for the learning areas of *The New Zealand Curriculum* has been tested through the draft Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories content and feedback from teachers has been generally positive.
- b. **Agree** that a consistent content structure is used for the refresh of all learning areas in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.  

**Agree** / Disagree
- c. **Agree** that the content structure for each learning area is to consist of a Purpose and Pedagogical statements; an Understand, Know, Do content model; a Learning Progression Framework of progress outcomes, Learning Experiences, and Key Questions.  

**Agree** / Disagree
- d. **Note** that we are working with the Curriculum Voices Group on what implementation supports could look like.
- e. **Note** that co-design of the refresh of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* is continuing and we are planning to provide you and Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education) Hon Kelvin Davis with an update in August.
- f. **Agree** to proactively release this report.  

**Agree** / Disagree

  
Ellen MacGregor-Reid  
Deputy Secretary Early Learning and  
Student Achievement

  
Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of Education

22/07/2021

01/08/ 2021

## Background

---

10. In January 2021, you advised Cabinet [CBC-21-MIN-004 refers] that full updates of both *The New Zealand Curriculum* (the NZC) and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* are needed to ensure that they are:
  - a. clear for kura, schools, kaiako and teachers about the learning that must be covered
  - b. clear about the characteristics of quality local curriculum and marau ā-kura
  - c. accessible and easy-to-use
  - d. fit for purpose for the unique learning contexts in English and Māori medium.
11. The refresh of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* includes shifting the framing toward He Tamaiti Hei Raukura (a holistic, future focussed and ākonga centred approach), which is different in structure to the current focus on learning areas and means that the whole document will be updated at the same time
12. For the NZC, the learning area structure is being retained. The refresh is starting with social sciences as this is where the new Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories content sits. It also begins elaboration of the key competencies within learning areas to make expectations for numeracy, literacy and social-emotional learning explicit. The initial phase is also strengthening the wider framing of the curriculum to ensure it is bicultural and inclusive.
13. The learning areas in the NZC are not currently clear about the learning that must be covered, or consistent in the approach across the eight learning areas. As part of preparing the draft Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories content for consultation, we developed a new approach to describing learning expectations. Our intention was that, subject to feedback during consultation, this would become a consistent approach to the treatment of all learning areas.
14. We are now ready to seek your agreement to the new content structure for the refresh of learning areas in the NZC. This follows testing of a proposed new content structure for describing expectations within learning areas through consultation of the draft Aotearoa New Zealand's histories curriculum content and further work on design of the overall framework. This paper also provides an update on the overall refresh of the NZC so that it is bicultural and inclusive, clear, and easy to use.
15. Co-design of the refresh of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* is continuing. We are planning to provide you and Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education) Hon Kelvin Davis with an update on our progress in a separate upcoming briefing in August.

## A consistent content structure for each learning area of the NZC

---

16. To provide clarity and make the NZC easier for teachers to use when designing local curriculum, we recommend changing the approach to the learning areas to use a consistent content structure. Expectations for teaching and learning need to be much clearer within and across all learning areas. There needs to be structure that ensures all the parts are coherent and able to be easily understood and engaged with. It needs to minimise complexity by being simple to use, with consistent use of language and elements applied to each of the learning areas.
17. Overall, we want teachers and communities to be able to focus their time on the decisions they need to make to deliver learning experiences and effective practices that

support learning progress of every ākonga. Using the same content structure for each learning area will mean:

- a. Teachers understand the purpose of each element as applied to each learning area. It will be easier for teachers to bring together elements from different learning areas when designing an authentic integrated learning experience.
  - b. Each phase of the refresh will be easier for teachers. When a new area is refreshed, they will be able to transfer their understanding from the earlier phases. They will be able to focus more on the changes in content and be more confident bringing it into local curriculum.
  - c. It is easier for ākonga, parents, whānau, iwi and communities to understand learning and progress that is part of the national curriculum, so they are better able to meaningfully participate in learning and local curriculum design.
  - d. It will be easier to notice the continuity of learning and progress over time across the curriculum, including how learning from each learning area contributes to the growth of the whole child.
  - e. It is easier to harness the benefits of digital technology for teaching and learning, including through the online curriculum hub and rich records of learning. For example, the consistent structure will make it easier to link resources to learning outcomes so that teachers can easily find resources that support their teaching and learning intentions.
18. The new consistent structure that we recommend is used to refresh the content in each learning area is described below. We are seeking your agreement to this structure now so that we can finalise the Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories content. This will also enable us to take the next step in the refresh of the Social Sciences learning area. The recommended content structure for learning areas consists of:
- a. Purpose and Pedagogical statements that describes the purpose of the learning area and key pedagogical considerations for local curriculum design decisions.
  - b. A new Understand, Know, Do model to framing knowledges and the big conceptual ideas. This approach is similar to that used in the British Columbia curriculum and makes explicit the important concepts, contexts and actions for learning and also incorporating Mātauranga Māori alongside western knowledge. It will explicitly weave in key competencies and literacy & numeracy into the national content. This part of the content structure is key to enabling more seamless integration and transfer of knowledge, skills and competencies across the curriculum.
  - c. A learning progression framework of 'progress outcomes' which describe the learning that cannot be left to chance at each phase of a learning progression. This enables a view of the continuity of learning and progress over time, making explicit the increasing breadth and depth of learning. Moving to 'progress outcomes' sharpens the focus on describing progress and enables significant streamlining compared with the current number of Achievement Objectives.
  - d. 'Learning Experiences', which show how to weave the 3 elements of the Understand, Know, Do model together, and sets of 'Key Questions', which guide teachers to plan focussed classroom and student inquiry. These scaffold local curriculum design by exemplifying how to design and teach the content in each phase of learning. This helps make clear the expectations for how the national curriculum is brought to life locally.

## Feedback on the proposed content structure for refreshed NZC learning areas

19. The recommended new structure for refreshed learning areas in the NZC has some shifts from the current approach. These are set out in Annex 1, which updates appendix 1 of your January update to Cabinet [CBC-21-MIN-004 refers] with the feedback we have had on each element. The level of change means that we need to be confident that we're on the right track to achieve what we intended to, and that it will make a difference to the work of teachers. Most importantly, we need to be confident that there is a shared belief in, and commitment to, the changes making a difference to ākonga experiences and contributing to inclusion and equity.
20. Teachers were asked to test the proposed new structure through the draft Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories content. They were asked if the Understand, Know Do statements were clear and easy to use, whether they had a strong bicultural focus and captured the most important learning. They were also asked whether the progression was clear and inclusive.
21. The report on classroom testing of the draft Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories content found that overall teachers in English medium responded positively to the intention, structure, and design of the draft curriculum. They described it as "balanced", "simple", "clear and easy to read", "broad and specific", "logical", "easy to align with current values" and "a better reflection of what teaching should look like".
22. As an example, the NZPF submission stated "We note that the consultation draft provides clarity and includes a valuable framework model which might usefully be applied to the whole curriculum as the 'Curriculum Refresh' exercise gets underway. Collectively, NZPF supports the progressions framework and the learning area model – know, understand, do. Further, NZPF supports considerations of equity and strongly supports an authentic, indigenous curriculum model for Aotearoa New Zealand Histories."
23. Teachers called out the need for a clearer connect with Te Whāriki and the Years 1–3 progress outcome. Secondary teachers wanted to ensure the quantity and level of content Years 9-10 was doable and progressed to years 11 – 13 curriculum learning, as experienced through subjects. Teachers also expressed a need to see more clearly how the key competencies have been woven into the content.
24. In partnership with NZPF, we have also been discussing the new model with principals as part of a series of regional meetings on the refresh of the NZC. At these meetings principals talked about how the lack of clarity in our current NZC has added to the complexity of a teacher's job and any changes made need to be well supported with appropriate resources, professional learning and time to embed. They expressed agreement that:
  - a. the refreshed curriculum needs to provide greater clarity around learning that cannot be left to chance, while not becoming too onerous and over prescriptive.
  - b. there is a need for greater guidance around what it means to localise curriculum to give effect to national goals within a context that young people understand
  - c. there is a need for progress markers as this supports the notion of clarity around how learning becomes more complex over time, but there is some concern within the sector around how information about student progress could be taken out of context or mis-used at a national level.

25. As a result of feedback, we will now contextualise the progression drawing important learning from Te Whāriki and post-school competencies to describe the focus of the phases of learning before and after schooling.
26. We will make clear the relationship between learning areas and NCEA subjects in the curriculum structure. The essence statement will provide clarity about the important foundation learning across years 1-10 that then provides the base to specialise in the specific subjects that draw from and extend the knowledge base in Years 11-13.
27. We will also be explicitly annotating each progress outcome with mātauranga Māori, the key competencies, literacy and numeracy. The literacy and numeracy statements will be linked to the Learning Progression Framework. If you would like to see what this would look like, we have models that we can talk you through at an agency meeting.
28. Note that while there has been some earlier work undertaken to develop more inclusive descriptions of progress, particularly for ākonga with high and complex needs, this has only focussed on Level 1 of the curriculum, with the unintended consequence of limiting expectations of progress across year levels.
29. The new approach to learning areas will include exemplars of progress that represent the full range of ākonga at the appropriate year levels, including ākonga who are demonstrating their learning in different ways through different modes and responses.
30. Further specific feedback from prototyping and testing of the different components of the proposed structure is included in Annex 2.
31. While we have had generally positive feedback so far, we will continue to engage with more teachers to design, test, and refine the content design as we progress through the refresh.

### The balance between national and local decision making in the NZC

32. One of the aims of the refresh is to achieve a better balance between national and local decision making, so that learning is not left to chance but there is still flexibility for teachers to make learning meaningful to their students and communities. It is also important that there is space for local curriculum to include local knowledges and aspirations, including of mana whenua.
33. We will be paying close attention to achieving a balance between national and local as we support schools to implement the refreshed curriculum. The intention is that all local curriculum have a clear link to the Purpose and Pedagogical statements in the national curriculum. We also expect that learning expressed within the Understand, Know, Do progress outcomes of each learning area will become a consistent feature of local curriculum. While these elements will help provide consistency, there is still considerable flexibility for local curriculum design in terms of how they are woven together within and across learning areas to create rich and holistic learning experiences.
34. The Learning Experiences and Key Questions are intended to help exemplify and guide the design and quality of learning experiences, but they are not intended to limit what is taught or learnt in local curriculum. It is flexibility around the design of learning experiences and key questions for exploration that enables the national curriculum to be brought to life in meaningful and authentic ways for ākonga.
35. The progression framework and progress outcomes also help to provide a level of consistency between schools that is missing currently. This is an important enabler of smooth transitions (including at school entry and into subject specialisation) and the

ākonga curriculum progress map within the record of learning. This doesn't change the flexibility schools have around assessment practices and what will fit their ākonga and local curriculum best. We intend to provide advice later in the year on how quality assessment practices can be better supported as the curriculum is refreshed.

36. Note that there continues to be concern about how information about student progress could be taken out of context or mis-used at a national level, which could create risks to the implementation of the new approach to learning areas. This means that it is critical that work on the record of learning progresses at the pace of trust, and that it continues to be developed collaboratively to first and foremost meet the needs of ākonga, parents, whānau and teachers. We will shortly be providing you with an update on the development of the record of learning so that you can consider how that can best be progressed alongside the refresh and in a way that continues to build trust.

## Refreshing other elements of the NZC

37. Alongside the refresh of the learning areas, we are refreshing other elements of the NZC so all of it is bicultural, inclusive, clear and easy to use. We have heard that:
  - a. Ākonga want to learn from a curriculum that is meaningful to them and their whānau. They want a stronger focus on wellbeing, identities, languages and cultures.
  - b. Parents and whānau want more certainty about what their tamariki will learn in schools and kura.
  - c. Teachers and parents want to be clear about what ākonga need to learn, their progress, strengths and the support they need.
38. We have been working with the Bicultural and Inclusive Framework working group on what that looks like. Their thinking has also been tested with the Curriculum Voices Group.
39. The bicultural and inclusive framing will weave throughout all parts of the curriculum. It will bind the whole while at the same time being woven into the fabric of each learning area so that there is no element of the framework that is not integrated. This eliminates the notion of a front and back part of the NZC.
40. Through our work with the Bicultural and Inclusive Framework working group, our guiding definitions have been further developed as set out below:

Bicultural and inclusive	<p>A bicultural and inclusive curriculum is one which is shaped and enabled by our mutual obligations to and through Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The framework of the curriculum is anchored by three pou which ensure te ao Māori is integral, and values and incorporates te reo Māori, mātauranga Māori and tīkanga Māori. It recognises the multi-cultural nature of Aotearoa New Zealand and the identities, languages, cultures and values of all ākonga and their communities.</p> <p>This curriculum is shaped by parents, whānau, educators, disabled people's, policy makers and researchers' ways of knowing and thinking; by the Human Rights Conventions and NZ policies and system responses; and by indigenous stories and the stories of all those who have chosen this land as their home.</p>
Clear	A clear curriculum, enables ākonga, parents, whānau and kaiako to have shared and clear expectations of learning and progress.

	A clear curriculum retains flexibility but addresses responsibility and enables quality teaching and learning for every ākonga. The changes we are making to refresh the curriculum are designed to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning while at the same time retaining curriculum flexibility, which is important in a system that strives to be inclusive and value diversity.
Easy to use	<p>Easy to use curriculum reduces teacher workload through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consistent use of the curriculum model in the design and the affordances when digitised</li> <li>• A well described and digital progression outlining increased complexity of learning.</li> <li>• Creation and curation of resources digitally linked to the curriculum on the new online hub</li> </ul>

41. The refresh of non-learning area elements of the NZC is being undertaken in tranches.
  - a. Tranche 1 (current) focuses on the National Curriculum Decision-making components. This includes refreshing the Vision for Young People, developing a new cultural narrative to weave together all parts of the curriculum, and refreshing the curriculum purpose statement.
  - b. Tranche 2 focuses on refreshing the progression approach, values and principles.
  - c. Tranche 3 focuses on local curriculum decision-making components, including Professional Inquiry guidance, Whānau and Iwi involvement in school curriculum design, and the Effective Pedagogy guidance.
42. Our next briefing will provide you with an update on tranche one, including working drafts of the three central pou: the vision for young people, the purpose of curriculum, and a cultural narrative that enables all parts of the curriculum to be woven together.

### Supporting successful implementation of the refresh of the NZC

43. As noted above, there are some shifts in recommended consistent structure for learning areas. This means that the refresh of the NZC involves implementing a different approach to curriculum design not just updated content. The need to help teachers understand the changes and grow their capability to use the new model was an important theme during testing and engagement. Without this, these shifts will not be successful in addressing our current issues of variability in the system or in contributing to inclusion and equity.
44. For curriculum to be a partnership and delivered through locally meaningful contexts, we need to also pay attention to the needs of iwi and community too. Again, work with iwi and community groups to support implementation of Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories has started conversation with iwi and community groups, but we will need to continue this throughout the refresh as local knowledges and contexts are important across the curriculum.
45. We are currently working with the Curriculum Voices Group to unpack the implications of the shifts in the national curriculum for local curriculum design. Together with them, we will identify what supports will be needed for successful implementation and how we can make the change process easier for schools, iwi and communities as the different phases of the refresh progress. We will provide you with an update on implementation supports in our next briefing.



## Next steps

---

46. If you agree to the recommended consistent content structure for the learning areas, we will use it to finalise the structure for the Aotearoa New Zealand's histories content.
47. We will also complete a draft of the Social Sciences learning area for your consideration. Our intention is to provide you this in August alongside drafts of the three central pou for the refreshed NZC, advice on next steps for testing these with a wider audience, an overview of our approach to supporting successful implementation. An update on progress with the refresh of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* will also be provided in August.

## Proactive Release

---

48. It is intended that this Education Report 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.

## Annexes

---

- Annex 1: Feedback on key shifts in the proposed new consistent content structure for learning areas in *The New Zealand Curriculum*