



Briefing Note: NCEA Change Programme Update

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education (School Operations)		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
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Drafter:	James Gavey	DDI:	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
Key Contact:	Rob Mill	DDI:	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to provide you with a high-level overview of the NCEA Change Programme.

Summary

- The NCEA Change Programme is implementing a series of changes to the National Certificates of Educational Achievement to which Cabinet agreed in 2020, following wide-ranging engagements by the Ministry of Education through the NCEA Review.
- Significant work has been completed to date, including the development of new Achievement Standards for NCEA Level 1 subjects derived from the *New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.
- Last year, in response to COVID-19 disruptions, Minister Hipkins took advice to Cabinet to rephase the Change Programme, which is now due to be fully implemented by 2026.
- There is significant Programme activity occurring this year, including development, release, and piloting of standards and resources, alongside provision of implementation and change support.

Proactive Release

- a **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

☒ Agree / ☐ Disagree.

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

17/06/2022

Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education
(School Operations)

19/06/2022

Background

1. To meet regulatory requirements, the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) must be regularly reviewed. The NCEA Review began in 2018, when such a review was due, with the Ministry engaging on people's experiences of NCEA. In total there were over 20,000 points of engagement, including with ākonga, teachers, whānau, tertiary, and employers. This process included the release of a set of big ideas for change, which were co-developed between the Ministry and the NCEA Ministerial Advisory Group.
2. The Ministry, the NCEA Ministerial Advisory Group, and the NCEA Professional Advisory Group then engaged with the feedback and provided advice to Minister Hipkins, which was followed by Cabinet agreeing to seven key changes to NCEA in February 2020 (after agreeing in-principle in 2019). These seven changes form the outcomes of the review of NCEA, and are:
 - **Make NCEA more accessible** – zero fees, fewer barriers for learners with disabilities and learning support needs.
 - **Equal status for mātauranga Māori in NCEA** – develop new ways to recognise mātauranga Māori, build teacher capability, and improve resourcing and support for Māori learners and te ao Māori pathways.
 - **Strengthen literacy and numeracy requirements and assessments** – ensure students with an NCEA have functional literacy and numeracy skills that will ready them to transition into tertiary education or the workplace.
 - **Fewer, larger standards** – new achievement standards and resources will be developed to replace existing standards and ensure the qualification achieved credentials the most significant learning in a learning area or subject.
 - **Simplify NCEA's structure** – credits can no longer be carried over to the next level and resubmissions will only be allowed where they take students from a 'Not Achieved' grade to an 'Achieved' grade. Sixty credits are required to pass each NCEA level.
 - **Clearer pathways to further education or work** – develop a Vocational Entrance Award to clearly signal when a student is ready to transition into higher level vocational education and strengthen vocational pathways through NCEA.
 - **Keep NCEA Level 1 optional** – ensure Level 1 provides students with the broad, foundational knowledge needed to support specialization at Levels 2 and 3.
3. From 2020 onwards, the Ministry has worked closely with NZQA, the NCEA Professional Advisory Group (composed of current and former principals and teachers), and the sector, to develop and deliver the NCEA Change Programme.

Activity Completed to Date

4. Significant implementation steps have already occurred in the NCEA Change Programme, including:
 - a. Removing all NCEA fees, including those for New Zealand Scholarship
 - b. Changing rules for resubmissions, and adding course endorsements at Achieved
 - c. Engaging on, and confirming, subjects to be developed at NCEA Levels 1-3, aligned to either The New Zealand Curriculum or Te Marautanga o Aotearoa
 - d. Developing the majority of Level 1 subjects aligned to either The New Zealand Curriculum or Te Marautanga o Aotearoa
 - e. Piloting four Level 1 New Zealand Curriculum subjects in schools in 2021

- f. Developing kaupapa ako Māori subject Te Ao Haka, aligned to the New Zealand Curriculum, at Levels 1-3, and piloting this in schools and kura in 2021
 - g. Developing standards and assessments for the new Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau co-requisite, and piloted these in schools and kura in 2021.
5. Design work has progressed on the other key changes within the NCEA change package, including options for redeveloping the vocational pathways, and improving accessibility and access to Special Assessment Conditions.

NCEA rephasing and Budget Bid

6. With Cabinet agreement, Minister Hipkins rephased the programme in late 2021, following significant disruption to the sector due to COVID-19. This enabled the Programme to better support the sector through implementation, and also allows for better alignment with the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh timelines, upon which you will receive advice shortly.
7. Also in 2021, we identified a funding shortfall in the NCEA Change Programme, due to changes in scope (particularly the addition of new subjects), and the scale and complexity of developing and implementing new kaupapa ako Māori subjects.
8. The rephasing decision added to this shortfall, and we have subsequently developed an Implementation Business Case to confirm programme delivery and additional funding. The additional budget of \$95 million was approved in Budget 2022 with \$73.13 included as tagged contingency (for release on joint signoff by the Minister of Finance and Minister of Education) and the balance of the \$95 million (\$21.87 million) to be funded by the Ministry. The Ministry and Treasury have now initiated the process to obtain joint signoff of the funds in tagged contingency. As part of this work, the Change Programme is being reset towards Agile delivery. This transition is currently underway and is designed to ensure effective, responsive, and sustainable delivery through to the end of the Programme.

Upcoming Advice and Decisions

Implementation of Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau | Literacy and Numeracy standards

Following feedback from the sector and key peak bodies, along with analysis of the 2021 pilot results and uptake of the relevant supports, we have provided advice recommending that mandatory implementation of the *Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau | Literacy and Numeracy* co-requisite commence in 2024. To this end, a Cabinet paper has been lodged.

9. Before confirming the draft high-level design of the VE Award and progressing to more detailed design work, the Ministry is undertaking targeted engagements with a select number of schooling and tertiary sector stakeholders this year. These engagements will also allow the Ministry to seek feedback on its broader vocational education policy work. We are preparing an Education Report in July which will provide an update on the targeted engagement and recommend high-level policy settings for the VE Award.

Curriculum Refresh and NCEA Alignment

10. We are also preparing a Briefing Note for you on the alignment between the curriculum refresh work (across both *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautang o Aotearoa*) and the NCEA Change Programme.

NCEA Change Programme Activity in 2022

Pilots

11. To promote continuity and cohesion, Minister Hipkins agreed to expand mini pilots to all subjects and wāhanga ako, starting with Level 1 in 2022. This means the Ministry and NZQA are running an additional mini pilot across all subjects and wāhanga ako this year (i.e., with 5 schools per subject, rather than the planned 15 to 30 schools per subject)
12. Te Ao Haka, the new Māori Performing Arts subject, is also being piloted across all three NCEA levels and, at Level 3, for University Entrance.
13. More than 200 secondary schools, kura, and tertiary providers are currently piloting the new standards that have been created to directly assess foundational Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau | Literacy and Numeracy. Pilot participants are being supported through a webinar series, hosted and run by the Ministry of Education and NZQA

Subject development

14. We are developing NCEA Level 2 materials for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa Wāhanga Ako and New Zealand Curriculum subjects. A total of 67 subjects are being developed, and will support increased specialisation at NCEA Levels 2 and 3 and mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori, as well as providing clearer pathways to further education, training or employment.
15. Development of New Zealand Sign Language from Level 1 and Pacific Studies from NCEA Level 2 have also recently commenced, and development of Vagahau Niue and Gagana Tokelau from NCEA Level 1 are due to begin shortly.

Accord Teacher Only Days

16. There are four Accord Teacher Only Days allocated this year to support the implementation of changes to NCEA. Following early feedback from Accord partners, a new delivery approach has been agreed and each 2022 TOD provides a 2-week flexible window where schools are able to select their own focus.
17. We are also developing an increasing set of resources that will support schools to implement the NCEA changes. These include readiness guides, videos and tools for schools to use as they pilot and implement the new achievement standards.
18. Alongside this, our Learning Area Leads will be providing Learning Area and subject specific guidance, and specialist support to regions, subject associations, and middle and senior leaders.

NCEA COVID-19 Responses

19. In recognition of the classroom, learning, and assessment time lost due to COVID-19 disruptions, the Ministry and NZQA granted Learning Recognition Credits (LRCs) to all NCEA candidates in both 2020 and 2021. We also amended the requirements for Course Endorsements, Certificate Endorsements, and University Entrance to take into account the impacts of nationwide and regional lockdowns. These changes were strengthened for regions that faced greater lengths of time in lockdown (Auckland in 2020, and Auckland, Northland, and part of Waikato in 2021), and were met with a positive response from ākonga and teachers.
20. This year, disruption has continued, but without lockdowns. We have released a survey to secondary schools to determine the level of disruption to NCEA this year, and will provide you with advice on this shortly.