



Briefing Note: Language Competency Requirements for Registered Pacific Teachers

To:	Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	15 October 2021	Priority:	Medium
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Purpose of Paper

This paper responds to your request for advice on the English language competency requirement for teacher registration in New Zealand, and on Pacific educators' concerns about this requirement. It outlines work being done by the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) and the Teaching Council | Matatū Aotearoa (the Council) to address these concerns.

Summary

1. The requirements for New Zealand teacher registration apply to all applicants, including those intending to work in Pacific language settings, and include:
 - a. demonstrating a high level of language competency in either te reo Māori or English (through an IELTS¹ assessment, or other evidence specified by the Teaching Council), and;
 - b. completing an approved New Zealand initial teacher education (ITE) qualification or an overseas equivalent.
2. There is no option or requirement to demonstrate Pacific language competency for people teaching in Pacific bilingual and immersion settings. Some Pacific educators have raised concerns that this policy is not appropriate for these settings and is a barrier to growing and retaining a high-quality Pacific bilingual and immersion teacher workforce.


¹ International English Language Testing System

3. The language competency requirement is not the only barrier faced by Pacific people who are seeking to become New Zealand registered teachers:
 - a. Teachers who have done ITE in Pacific countries may not have their qualification recognised as equivalent to a New Zealand ITE qualification, and
 - b. Pacific people may face difficulty accessing tertiary study in New Zealand, and there is a lack of Pacific-focused ITE programmes.
4. The Ministry has work underway to support the growth of a high-quality workforce for Pacific bilingual and immersion settings, including:
 - a. amending the Teaching Council's purpose statement in the Education and Training Act, to make it clear that the Council has a mandate to set requirements for Pacific bilingual and immersion settings,
 - b. development of a Pacific bilingual and immersion workforce package for Budget 2022, and
 - c. development of a work programme and policy framework to guide investment in Pacific bilingual and immersion settings (an update on this is due with you later this month).
5. The Teaching Council's position is that lowering the language competency requirements for teacher registration could compromise teacher quality. However, the Council will consider reviewing its policy to include Pacific language competency in the future, following guidance from its Pacific Advisory Group and the change to its purpose statement. This will happen in the context of their other policy work and the Ministry's policy development currently underway.

Proactive Release Recommendation

Agree that the Ministry of Education release this briefing once it has been considered by you, with references to work under active consideration redacted.

Agree / Disagree


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Hon Aupito William Sio
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15/10/2021

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Background

Pacific language settings are well-established in New Zealand education

1. Pacific language education in New Zealand has been driven by community and sector commitment and passion. Pacific early learning has been part of the New Zealand education system since the 1980s, and there are now around 100 Pacific language (bilingual or immersion) early learning services. In 1994, the first Pacific bilingual primary school programme was established at Richmond Road Primary School in Auckland (gagana Sāmoa/English), and there are now around 30 primary and two secondary schools delivering bilingual or immersion education to around 2,000 learners, mostly in gagana Sāmoa or lea faka Tonga.

The Teaching Council sets the criteria for teacher registration in New Zealand

2. The Teaching Council | Matatū Aotearoa (the Council) is the professional body for teachers in early childhood education, primary and secondary schooling. It is an independent statutory authority, and its functions include registering teachers and setting the criteria for teacher registration in New Zealand (set out in the *Requirements for Teacher Registration: April 2020, updated February 2021*)².
3. Included in the *Requirements for Teacher Registration* is a requirement that the applicant be “able to communicate competently in English and/or te reo Māori”, to ensure competency in one or both of the common languages of instruction in New Zealand.
4. The Minister of Education may issue a policy statement in relation to Council functions, and the Council must have regard to the statement when performing its functions. This said, as the Council is an independent statutory authority, they cannot be directed to review the criteria for teacher registration.

The criteria include a high standard of language competency

5. The Teaching Council sees the maintenance of a high standard of language competency as essential to its role of ensuring quality teaching. Its language policy states, “*Teaching is a linguistically demanding profession. High-quality teaching demands command of a wide range of language skills.*” The standard of language competency reflects:
 - a. The demands of teaching the curriculum and managing a classroom;
 - b. A teacher’s wider role of engaging with school communities, with other professionals such as education psychologists, and with education research;
 - c. The language competency required to complete an ITE qualification, at degree level or higher.
6. Applicants may not have this level of language competency when they enter an ITE programme but are expected to have attained it by completion. *

*Correction for proactive release: Instead of “Applicants may not have this level of language competency when they enter an ITE programme but are expected to have attained it by completion.” The sentence should read “Applicants are required to provide evidence of language competency as set out in the Council’s policy on entry to an Initial Teacher Education programme”.

² Section 479 of the Education and Training Act 2020: *The functions of the Teaching Council are as follows: (...) (e) to establish and maintain any criteria for teacher registration under Schedule 3 that the Teaching Council considers necessary or desirable: (f) to review, at any time, the criteria for teacher registration (. . .)*

Registered teachers need to demonstrate competency in English or te reo, but not Pacific languages

7. New Zealand registered teachers need to demonstrate competency in English (via IELTS or other means) or te reo, to a prescribed level which is the same regardless of which sector or setting they will teach in.
8. However, for Pacific languages there are:
 - a. No options to demonstrate competency in a Pacific language when applying for teacher registration;
 - b. No formal means of assessing the Pacific language competency of educators teaching Pacific languages or working in Pacific language settings;
 - c. No clear policy on the relative levels of language competency needed (Pacific vs English/te reo) in Pacific bilingual settings.
9. These policy settings make it difficult for people who have had their formal education in Pacific countries to be registered as teachers in New Zealand when they cannot meet either the English or te reo language requirements.
10. These policy settings also risk compromising the quality of Pacific bilingual and immersion education, as teachers can be employed with no formal process for verifying that they meet expectations for best-practice in terms of Pacific language competence.

Addressing barriers to registration for Pacific teachers

English language competency requirements are a barrier to some Pacific teachers gaining registration

11. Pacific educators have regularly raised concerns about the English language competency requirements, including:
 - a. English or te reo being the requirement in Pacific language settings;
 - b. The level of English competency that applicants are expected to demonstrate (for example a score of 7/10 across all categories in IELTS Academic³);
 - c. The cost to applicants of tests such as IELTS.
12. Regulations and funding settings in the early learning sector incentivise services to increase the ratios of qualified teachers they employ. Many of the Pacific early learning workforce are highly experienced teachers, but unregistered. If services want to increase those ratios, there is a risk that many of these unregistered Pacific teachers, who have been fundamental in establishing and sustaining Pacific bilingual and immersion education, will not attain an ITE qualification or meet the requirements for English language competency, and may instead leave teaching.

³ There are two types of IELTS tests, Academic and General Training. IELTS Academic is described as suitable for those wanting to study in an English-speaking environment or university, or for professional registration purposes. IELTS assesses a candidate's ability to listen, read, write, and speak in English, giving them a score from 0-9 in each category (0 is lowest, 9 is highest).

13. Pacific services, particularly Pacific bilingual and immersion services, are much less likely to receive the higher funding rates based on ratios of qualified teachers compared to the rest of the sector. This suggests that some Pacific services may find it difficult to continue operating when the Government regulates for 80% qualified teachers.

The Council amended its language policy in 2019

14. In response to these concerns, in 2019 the Council amended its language policy to allow applicants more options to prove English language competency, such as;
 - a. Schooling completed in New Zealand, to a specified level;
 - b. Schooling completed in Australia, Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom, United States or South Africa, to a specified level;
 - c. Tertiary qualifications at level 7 or above with English as the primary language of instruction in Australia, Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom, United States or South Africa
 - d. Other formal English language assessments (Cambridge, Pearson etc.)
15. The Council may also grant an exception to applicants who cannot provide the above evidence, but can provide other evidence of English competency, on a case-by-case basis using its discretionary pathway process. This exception has recently been granted to several teachers planning to work in a'oga amata (Samoan early learning), who have then been granted registration.
16. Full lists of evidence accepted by the Council to demonstrate English and te reo Māori language competency, are attached as Annexes 1 and 2.

The Council believes the language competency requirement is not a significant barrier to Pacific teachers gaining registration

17. The Council has advised us that they do not have evidence that the English language competency requirement is a significant barrier to either New Zealand or Pacific-trained educators attaining New Zealand teacher registration.
18. The Council does not have final data on applications for registration from Pacific teachers, however indicative data shows that:
 - a. Between 2017-2019 there were 150+ Pacific-trained teachers who applied for registration and were on the pre-approved qualification list.
 - b. Fewer than 10% were declined and less than half of those were because of the language requirements
19. The Council acknowledges that its data is incomplete, and it does not know how many teachers don't apply due to the English language or qualification level requirements.

In addition to language requirements, Pacific-trained teachers may have difficulty getting their ITE qualification recognised for New Zealand registration

20. Most Pacific-trained teachers registered in New Zealand will have an ITE qualification from University of South Pacific (USP, founded in Fiji but jointly owned and governed by 12 Pacific nations).

21. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has recently updated its pre-approved overseas teaching qualifications list. This was part of a regular review cycle to better align overseas teaching qualifications with New Zealand ITE qualification requirements.
22. As a result of the update to the pre-approved overseas teaching qualification list, NZQA has reduced the number of pre-approved qualifications from USP to two⁴. There are other Pacific ITE qualifications that are not on the list, that may be comparable to a New Zealand ITE qualification. However, they require further assessment by NZQA.

The Ministry is beginning work to support and grow the Pacific bilingual and immersion teacher workforce

23. In addition to the issues identified above, prospective Pacific teachers face difficulties accessing tertiary study, and a lack of Pacific-focused ITE programmes.
24. The Ministry is developing a work programme and policy framework that will guide investment in Pacific language bilingual and immersion education in the future. Alongside this future-focused work is a range of other work to support and grow the Pacific teacher workforce in the shorter term:
 - a. Through Budget 2021, Cabinet agreed to use a Vote Education underspend to develop PLD (Professional Learning and Development), which will help develop the pedagogical and language competency of teachers in Pacific bilingual and immersion settings.
 - b. The Ministry is also developing a Budget 2022 bid, focused on growing and retaining the Pacific bilingual workforce.
 - c. Legislative amendments, “clarifying that the Council’s purpose is to regulate teaching in early learning services and schools in all languages of instruction and not English- and Māori-medium settings only”, are being progressed through the Education and Training Amendment Bill (No 2) [SWC-21-MIN-0118 refers, scheduled for introduction in December 2021]. The Council considers these changes as necessary before it can add Pacific language competency to its criteria for teacher registration.
 - d. In June 2021, the Minister of Education agreed that the Ministry would develop advice on ITE programmes that provide alternative pathways into teaching, including employment-based or field-based pathways [METIS 1259674 refers]. As part of this work, we will develop policy advice on alternative pathways to registration for teachers in Pacific language settings, particularly those currently working in Pacific early learning.
 - e. The Council also noted they have recently approved at least one new ITE programme with a specific Pacific focus.

Next Steps

25. Further work is required around the competencies and skills needed by quality Pacific bilingual and immersion teachers. The Ministry will do this research as part of the wider

⁴ the Bachelor of Education (Secondary) from the University of South Pacific was removed from the pre-approved list.

work programme on Pacific bilingual and immersion education (an update on this work is due with you later this month).

26. The Ministry will continue to support the Budget proposal to strengthen and grow the Pacific language teaching workforce.

The Teaching Council intends to do further work to support Pacific educators.

27. In February 2021, the Council provided you with a briefing, *Priorities for Pacific Education* (EC-2375), that outlines how it will support Pacific teachers and learners, and the Action Plan for Pacific Education⁵. Key points are that the Council has:
 - a. established a Pacific Advisory Group to help guide their work in Pacific education, and
 - b. been in discussion with Pacific educators about the possibility of providing a work-based Pacific-focused ITE programme.
28. The Council has also indicated its willingness to consider reviewing its language competency policy to include Pacific language competency in the future, with guidance from its Pacific Advisory Group and in the context of its other policy work (e.g. on limited scopes of practice, which may allow for different types of teacher registration in different sectors or settings). Previously, the Council considered it was unable to include other languages, beyond English and te reo, but the pending legislative change to the Council's purpose will enable this.
29. If changes were made to incorporate Pacific language competency into the Council's policy, there remains a question around whether:
 - a. demonstrating competency in a Pacific language would **replace** the need to do so in English or te reo, or;
 - b. applicants would need to demonstrate competency in **both** a Pacific language **and** English/te reo.
30. We will consider the need to engage further with key stakeholders, including the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, on our broader policy development alongside the Council's Pacific Advisory Group and update you on the progress of this work.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of evidence to demonstrate English language competency

Annex 2: List of evidence to demonstrate te reo Māori competency

⁵ Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030, developed by the Ministry alongside Pacific communities and educators

List of evidence to demonstrate English language competency

Please provide evidence of one of the following to meet the English language competency requirements:

- **New Zealand University Entrance literacy credits** at either NCEA level 2 or 3
- **New Zealand University Entrance** via NCEA as defined by NZQA
- **NZ tertiary entrance** (this preceded University Entrance)
- **International Baccalaureate** full diploma in English medium (24 points minimum)
- **Cambridge International Examinations** Cambridge International Examinations minimum 120 points on the UCAS Tariff plus meeting the CIE literacy requirements.
- **All primary schooling and at least three years secondary schooling** completed in the English language and while living in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, or South Africa. (For South Africa, applicants also need to provide a South African Matriculation Certificate Minimum Higher Grade D pass or Standard Level 5 in English or a South African Senior Certificate Minimum Higher Grade D pass or Standard Level 5 pass in English).
- **Six years of secondary and tertiary education** comprising secondary schooling to at least year 12 and at least two years of successful full-time tertiary education, taught in English as the primary language of instruction and through face-to-face learning and assessment such as tutorials, presentations, seminars, and supervisory meetings, and was gained while living in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, or South Africa. (For South Africa, applicants also need to provide a South African Matriculation Certificate Minimum Higher Grade D pass or Standard Level 5 in English or a South African Senior Certificate Minimum Higher Grade D pass or Standard Level 5 pass in English).
- **New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) qualification at or above level 7** Awarded a single qualification at NZQF level 7 or above which took two or more years of full-time study to complete and was taught in English as the primary language of instruction and through face-to-face learning and assessment such as tutorials, presentations, seminars, and supervisory meetings, and was gained while living in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, or South Africa. For South Africa, applicants also need to provide a South African Matriculation Certificate Minimum Higher Grade D pass or Standard Level 5 in English or a South African Senior Certificate Minimum Higher Grade D pass or Standard Level 5 pass in English.
- **Cambridge CELTA**
- **Trinity College CertTESOL**

Or achieve an approved test outcome in one of the following test options within the past two years:

Test	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall Mark (in one test)
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Cambridge English exams

C2 Proficiency (CPE) **or**

C1 Advanced (CAE) or Cambridge English exams	minimum of 185	minimum of 185	minimum of 185	minimum of 185	minimum of 185
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B2 First (FCE)

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
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International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR)	4	4	4	4	4
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Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic	65	65	65	65	65
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Trinity ISE III (3)	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit
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LanguageCert C2 Mastery
IESOL

Update: LanguageCert has changed the way it reports test results, changing from the language of 'pass/fail' to a numerical score. This change does not change the score required to meet our requirements, it is simply a change in language.	No less than 25/50	No less than 25/50	No less than 25/50	No less than 25/50	No less than 25/50
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LanguageCert

C1 Expert IESOL

Update: LanguageCert has changed the way it reports test results, changing from the language of 'pass/fail' to a numerical score. This change does not change the score required to meet our requirements, it is simply a change in language.	No less than 35/50	No less than 35/50	No less than 35/50	No less than 35/50	No less than 35/50
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TOEFL Internet-based test (IBT)	24	24	27	23	98
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Online examinations

We know that the world has changed, and that Covid-19 has made traditional face-to-face assessment difficult. If your language competency is based on an online examination rather than a qualification, this can only be recognised if your provider has supplied evidence to the Council that provides assurance around the examination's validity and security. At the time of writing, that includes the TOEFL Internet-based test and the ISLPR online test.

List of evidence to demonstrate te reo Māori competency

One of the following types of evidence must be provided to demonstrate te reo Māori competency:

- Achieved Whakamātauria Tō Reo Māori Level 3 (National Māori Language Proficiency Examinations)
- All primary schooling and at least three years secondary schooling in te reo Māori
- Five years of secondary schooling in te reo Māori