

Education Report: Proposed changes to NCEA in 2020 to respond to COVID-19: Finalising and announcing Option 2

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	29 May 2020	Priority:	Urgent
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1230263
Drafter:	Richard D'Ath	DDI:	§ 9(2)(a)
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

To provide you with further advice to support a recommended Wednesday 3 June 2020 announcement of the decision to provide additional credits to every student working towards an NCEA as they achieve against assessment standards in 2020 [Option 2 in METIS 1228520 refers].

Summary

- 1 In our advice dated 8 May 2020 and 12 May 2020 we recommended changes to the NCEA qualification system to coincide with the announcement on 11 May 2020 of the Government's decision on the COVID-19 Alert Level. On 24 May 2020 you agreed to:
 - a. The second of four presented options: additional credits provided to every student working towards an NCEA as they achieve against assessment standards – every student currently working towards an NCEA would receive additional credits, tied to the number of credits they attain through ordinary assessment, without a specific judgment by the school.
 - b. Authorise the Ministry of Education and NZQA to continue to work with the NCEA Professional Advisory Group to develop the supporting detail for the agreed option. You also noted that we would provide you with further advice, including draft communications material for a potential announcement.
- 2 We have now completed that detailed design work. We recommend an announcement on Wednesday 3 June to provide support to school leaders and teachers currently re-planning programmes and courses.
- 3 We have enclosed draft communications material, based on the outcomes of this design process, which has also been reviewed by the Chair of the Professional Advisory Group, Roger Moses.
- 4 This paper notes the final parameters of your agreed option:

- a. The credits available for award under these changes will be capped at 10 Level 1 credits, 8 Level 2 credits, or 8 Level 3 credits, based on the NCEA level the student is working towards.
 - b. The credits would be ungraded and not appear on the Record of Achievement (which does not show credit counts, only assessment standards obtained), but would be communicated to the learner by NZQA in early 2021 and could be tracked during the year by schools.
 - c. Both NCEA learners in school settings, and tertiary learners enrolled in a Vocational Pathways programme or a programme leading explicitly to NCEA, would be eligible for these additional credits.
- 5 We also seek your agreement to the rate at which credits will be awarded. The Ministry, NZQA and Professional Advisory Group have discussed two options:
- a. Students would receive additional credits at the rate of **1 per 5 credits achieved**. This option would provide greater motivation to students at risk of not achieving, at the risk of creating perceived unfairness around how assessment standards of different sizes are treated (e.g., achieving a single four credit standard would not result in the award of an additional credit, but achieving a single five credit standard would).
 - b. Students would receive additional credits at the rate of **2 per 10 credits achieved**. This option would reward a larger body of achievement, at the risk of creating perceived unfairness for students achieving multiples of five credits (e.g., achieving 25 to 29 credits would only award four additional credits, but 30 would see six awarded).
- 6 The Ministry of Education, NZQA and the chair of the Professional Advisory Group recommend the first approach, 1 per 5 credits attained, as providing the better balance of risk and benefits, as the perceived unfairness is likely to 'wash out' as students earn more credits during the year.
- 7 Communications materials to support either option are attached as **Annex A** and **Annex B**, for your review ahead of our proposed 3 June 2020 announcement.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **Note** that on 25 May 2020 you agreed your preferred option for changes to NCEA in 2020 to respond to disruption caused by COVID-19: additional credits provided to every student working towards an NCEA as they achieve assessment standards.
- b. **Note** that we have worked with your NCEA Professional Advisory Group to finalise the design parameters of this option and prepare communication materials to support a 3 June 2020 announcement.
- c. **Note** the final details of Option 2 below:
 - i. The credits available for award under these changes will be capped at 10 Level 1 credits, 8 Level 2 credits, or 8 Level 3 credits, based on the NCEA level the student is closest to achieving.

- ii. The credits, called 'Learning Recognition credits', would be ungraded and not appear on the Record of Achievement (which does not show credit counts, only assessment standards obtained), but would be communicated to the learner in early 2021 and tracked by schools.
- iii. Both NCEA learners in school settings and tertiary learners enrolled in a Vocational Pathways programme or a programme leading explicitly to NCEA would be eligible.

Noted

d. **Indicate** your preferred credit count for the award mechanism:

- i. Students would receive additional credits at the rate of 1 per 5 credits achieved.

OR

- ii. Students would receive additional credits at the rate of 2 per 10 credits achieved.

1 per 5 credits 2 per 10 credits

- e. **Agree** to announce the changes on Wednesday 3 June 2020, noting the communications materials attached as Annex A.
- f. **Agree** to proactively release this report following public announcements of the changes to NCEA described within.

Agree / Disagree


Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement

29/05/2020


Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

30/ 5/ 2020


Grant Klinkum
Chief Executive
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

29/05/2020