**Briefing Note: NCEA Review Strategy Session 18 September**

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<th>Hon Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education</th>
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<td>Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education</td>
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<td>Priority:</td>
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<td>Security Level:</td>
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**Purpose of Report**

This Briefing Note provides you with an update on:

- the opportunities for ākonga Māori arising out of the NCEA review change package, as we move into detailed design and implementation planning
- the overall response from stakeholders to the NCEA change package
- connections between the NCEA changes and your portfolio as Associate Minister of Education.

This Briefing Note is complemented by Briefing Note: NCEA review – September strategy session [METIS 1204630], which supports our strategy session with Ministers Hipkins, Martin and Salesa on 18 September.

**Summary**

- In May 2019, Cabinet agreed in-principle to a package of changes to NCEA, following an engagement phase where the Ministry listened to a wide range of diverse groups. We have commenced detailed design work on each component of the change package and expect to continue this work in most areas through to early 2020, working with stakeholders and users where needed.
- We see the changes to NCEA as an opportunity to strengthen the qualification for ākonga Māori, and to ensure that all ākonga Māori are supported to work towards an NCEA that reflects their identity, culture, language and aspirations.
Since May, we have worked extensively to engage with a range of Māori organisations and leaders, as well as whānau, hapū and iwi to ensure that:

- the Māori education sector and wider communities are empowered to be stewards of the changes
- the success of ākonga Māori in the context of their whānau is central to the design and implementation of the changes.

Each change within the NCEA package is being designed and implemented conscious of ākonga Māori in a range of settings, including kura Māori and kura auralaki. We are focused on ensuring that the voices of Māori communities are heard, and are including Māori representation on all advisory groups.

The Ministry is exploring the meaning of mātauranga Māori in a secondary schooling context, while respecting that the kaitiaki of mātauranga Māori are iwi. We are also testing how best to expand access to subjects, courses and resources grounded in te ao Māori, while ensuring protection of that kaitiakitanga as we proceed with the Review of Achievement Standards.

Our changes to literacy and numeracy include te reo Māori me pāngarau and we have established a Technical Advisory Group to advise on these changes. The group’s initial advice (to be confirmed) is that any Māori-medium benchmark is likely to sit at approximately Te Marautanga o Aotearoa Level 4 – 5, should align withanga tupuranga, and should be assessed through the collection of evidence over time – while noting that there are tensions between the ethos of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and high-stakes assessment such as that emphasised by NCEA.

We will also work to align the implementation of changes to NCEA to other initiatives in your portfolio, particularly Te Ahu o Te Reo Māori, to ensure a coherent experience for the education sector, and to maximise the likelihood of changes that benefit ākonga Māori across their education pathways.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends that you:

a. agree that this Briefing Note be proactively released following our strategy session with Minister Hipkins in September.

Agree / Disagree

Pauline Cleaver
Deputy Secretary (Acting)
Early Learning Student Achievement
13/09/2019

Kelvin Davis
Associate Minister of Education
15/1/2019
Background

1. On 6 May, Cabinet agreed in-principle to a package of changes to strengthen the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) [SWC-19-MIN-0045; CAB-19-MIN-0203]. These changes were designed to ensure NCEA remains credible, while promoting balanced, meaningful, and coherent personalised pathways through the qualification for every young New Zealander. The change package was made up of seven major changes:
   a. Make NCEA more accessible, including by ending NCEA fees.
   b. Mana ōrite mo te Mātauranga Māori.
   c. Have fewer, larger standards.
   d. Strengthen literacy and numeracy.
   e. Simplify NCEA’s structure.
   f. Show clearer pathways to further education and employment.
   g. Keep NCEA Level 1 as an optional level.

2. Cabinet also agreed that the Ministry would engage with stakeholders to ensure they understood the changes and had the opportunity to inform us of the detailed design and implementation implications of these changes. On 13 May, Minister Hipkins announced the changes to NCEA as a pre-Budget announcement – including the immediately effective end to NCEA fees for students.

3. Cabinet agreed to a December report-back to confirm the changes to strengthen NCEA, and to confirm financial implications and the planned approach to implementation.

Opportunity created by changes to NCEA

4. As we discussed with you at our strategy session in March, the changes to NCEA are an opportunity to improve the experiences of ākonga Māori in our secondary schools and wharekura, and to push back against institutional inequities [METIS 1177604 refers]. We have heard clearly from Māori that aspects of NCEA are working well – particularly its flexibility and versatility – but that it can also:
   a. drive excessive workload for students and those who teach them – with near-constant assessment and excessive credit counts
   b. exclude learners’ identities, cultures and aspirations from the assessment process, and insufficiently support ākonga Māori to achieve success as Māori
   c. break up learning – making it hard to identify and connect up the most important learning
   d. deny some learners – particularly Māori and Pacific learners, and those on vocational pathways – access to a diversity of empowering pathways which lead to success in life
e. make it hard to understand what a young person with an NCEA is capable of, which reduces confidence that NCEA graduates are ready for the world.

5. We see the changes to strengthen NCEA as offering clear opportunities to improve the experiences of Māori in our education system, and to deliver on the design principles of the Māori Education Strategic Framework:

a. *Tino Rangatiratanga*: make it easier for learning programmes grounded in mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori to translate to success in NCEA, and for those NCEAs to reflect the identity, language and culture of ākonga; and improve resourcing for NCEA in kura Māori settings

b. *Whānau*: make NCEA more navigable for ākonga, whānau, āiwi, mana whenua and the wider community to empower communities to be involved in making decisions about pathways

c. *Mana Whakapapa*: design NCEA’s components to be readily contextualised for the diverse needs, experiences and backgrounds of ākonga Māori, making it easier to localise NCEA practice, and include hapū, āiwi and mana whenua in how schools and kura approach NCEA

d. *Mana Tikanga*: reviewing the subjects supported by NCEA to ensure Māori knowledge and experience are reflected in the education offered in our secondary schools and wharekura, making subjects grounded in te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori more accessible and prevalent

e. *Mana Tangata*: push back against streaming and biased expectations on learners by focusing on the most important learning in each discipline, making it less likely that some learners will only have access to pathways perceived as ‘easier’; and encourage culturally responsive pedagogy, by making inclusive teaching and assessment practice the norm within NCEA standards, resources and exemplars.

6. In 2018, only 66% of Māori school leavers attained at least NCEA Level 2, as compared to 79% of school leavers on average. In kura Māori settings, however, 80% of ākonga Māori attained at least NCEA Level 2 before leaving school.

7. This disparity is not solely attributable to NCEA – but delivered alongside other initiatives as part of the Education Work Programme, we expect that the changes to NCEA will make progress to narrow the gap between Māori attainment and that of the overall student cohort in English-medium settings. We also see opportunities to strengthen support for kura Māori settings to alleviate kaiko workload, increase the diversity of NCEA pathways which are accessible under Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, and to continue to strengthen attainment in kura Māori.

Engagement on the NCEA Change Package

8. Since May, the Ministry has been working with stakeholders in line with Cabinet’s agreement to shape the detailed design of the change package. Our 2019 engagement programme has included a range of key Māori organisations such as Te Runanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, Ngā Kura-ā-iwi o Aotearoa, Te Akatea, Te
Wānanga o Aotearoa, iwi education organisations, and a large number of kura Māori and kura auraki across the country.

9. Those we have engaged with are broadly supportive of the change package, and have signalled that it is critical they remain involved with the design and implementation of the changes. We have also heard strongly that:

(a) kura Māori expect the changes to continue to be designed to support te ao Māori

(b) both Māori and non-Māori kaiako want improved access to resources and subjects grounded in te ao Māori for both English-medium and kura Māori settings – while recognising that we will need to ensure that these resources and subjects are not used inauthentically or inappropriately

(c) changes to literacy and numeracy will need to reflect ākonga Māori in both English-medium and kura Māori settings, and be designed to support them to achieve.

10. Through the design phase of the changes, we are ensuring that reference groups, panels, and advisory groups are aware of and focused on our aims to support ākonga Māori and bring parity for mātauranga Māori. We have included these aims in terms of reference and operating models of such groups where appropriate. Each of these groups also have Māori representation from kura Māori and kura auraki perspectives.

Summary of our planned approach to change

11. For the NCEA changes to be effective, we need to ensure senior secondary schools and wharekura involve young people, families, whānau, hapū, iwi and mana whenua as partners in shaping the future of NCEA practice. In engaging with New Zealanders since May, we have heard that for implementation to be effective:

(a) we will need to continue to build understanding of NCEA and the secondary education system from relatively low levels, particularly for young people and whānau

(b) young people, whānau, hapū and iwi need to be empowered to be part of the change process in schools and kura, and to be active participants in making important decisions about students’ pathways

(c) schools and kura will need to have access to timely, clear information, backed up by tools, resources and supports, to transition their practice to reflect the changes to NCEA.

12. We intend to provide a full implementation plan alongside Minister Hipkins’ December Cabinet Paper, setting out our proposed approach to change, and how we intend to support that change process. We intend to deliver change through a suite of supports for secondary schools and wharekura, which will:

(a) step schools and kura through a self-evaluation process to determine their readiness levels in key areas – particularly local curriculum design, capability to work with the community, and literacy and numeracy practice – and agree priority
areas with their communities (including signalling connections to the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement work programme, and to Teacher Only Days resulting from the Accord)

**b.** support schools and kura to develop an implementation plan with clear steps to build capability in priority areas, effect the administrative and system changes needed to deliver the NCEA Review change package, and update local curriculum and course design to reflect the outcomes of the NCEA Review and Review of Achievement Standards.

**c.** provide access to quality information and resources to support schools and kura through their unique change process, including highlighting links and connections to Accord Teacher Only Days, centrally-funded PLD, and opportunities available through the wider Education Work Programme.

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**Detailed design work to date relating to your portfolios**

13. In line with Cabinet's expectations, we have also been continuing work on the detailed design of the NCEA change package. We have highlighted below areas of detailed design which are particularly aligned to your portfolio and other work programmes.

**Mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori**

14. Cabinet agreed in-principle to changes to NCEA to ensure mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori, including strengthening resourcing for kura Māori settings to deliver NCEA, and improving the inclusion of te ao Māori for both English and Māori medium NCEAs.

15. In our initial design planning we are seeking to explore what we mean by mātauranga Māori in the context of NCEA, recognising that the kaitiaki of mātauranga Māori are iwi. We have established a Ministry-wide whakaruruhau to explore mātauranga Māori, who have commissioned work from Charles Royal and will work alongside iwi on their findings. The same whakaruruhau is acting in an advisory role across the NCEA changes, in collaboration with NZQA's Māori Qualifications functions.

16. These groups will guide the ongoing design and implementation of changes to NCEA designed to ensure mana ōrite. For example, in redeveloping graduate profiles for each level of NCEA, these groups will inform how mātauranga Māori should be reflected in relation to each level of NCEA.

17. While we are still confirming the full range of activities needed to ensure mana ōrite in partnership with Māori, components of ensuring parity for te ao Māori pathways will include:

   **a.** investing in the development of unique achievement standards grounded in te ao Māori for both The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa

   **b.** strengthening standards and supporting material derived from The New Zealand Curriculum so that they reflect te ao Māori contexts, and can be delivered in contexts that are relevant to ākonga Māori.
c. establishing a unique Māori-medium benchmark for te reo Māori me pāngarau that is consistent with kura aromatawai practice

d. ensuring kura Māori have adequate assessment resources to deliver NCEA assessments aligned to their programmes of learning.

Refocus on fewer, larger standards within coherent courses

18. Through the upcoming Review of Achievement Standards, the Ministry will be redeveloping all achievement standards and associated resources, working with expert groups. The change is an opportunity to ensure that ākonga Māori can see themselves in their learning, and that learning contexts are relevant to te ao Māori.

19. For standards derived from Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, we intend to ensure that ākonga experience coherence across their Te Marautanga o Aotearoa learning journey, from kohanga reo and early learning, through kura tuatahi into wharekura and beyond. Central to this work is bringing more visibility to Te Tamaīti Hei Raukura as a framework for learning where te tamariki is central.

20. Standards derived from the New Zealand Curriculum are also being reviewed. Our operating model for this process includes understanding how NCEA can better reflect te ao Māori through the framework of The New Zealand Curriculum. This work includes reviewing:

   a. the taxonomy of 'subjects' to ensure that there is greater representation of knowledge that is consistent with a te ao Māori worldview
   b. the content of subjects to ensure that te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori are present and informed by expert input, particularly in the resources available to support standards; Māori bodies of knowledge will be explicitly considered when reviewing the range and content of subjects available, conscious of protection and guardianship of Māori intellectual property
   c. the resources and materials that support standards to ensure that te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori can be incorporated into learning
   d. the implications of this change on teacher and agency workforce capability and capacity, iwi education strategies, and students who wish to access te ao Māori.

Make NCEA's literacy and numeracy requirements more robust

21. Cabinet agreed in-principle to replace NCEA’s current literacy and numeracy requirements with a more consistent and robust benchmark that can be assessed against when students are ready. This will include strengthening te reo Māori me pāngarau.

22. As a result, there are likely to be two sets of standards that can be used to meet the new literacy and numeracy requirement: one set of standards will relate to literacy and numeracy for English language pathways, and the other for reo Māori student pathways. This reflects the status quo where a student can meet the NCEA literacy and numeracy
requirements through either The New Zealand Curriculum or Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.

23. We have established two Technical Advisory Groups to give advice on the components and technical design of the new standards, for The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa respectively:

a. The New Zealand Curriculum Technical Advisory Group has Māori representation (Roberta Hunter, Pania Te Maro, Irene Pewhairangi and Bronwyn Yates), both in relation to kura Māori and kura auraki, and in relation to both literacy and numeracy. One of the guiding principles of the group is that while the standards are likely to be context neutral, they should be developed alongside exemplars and readiness resources that allow literacy and numeracy to be understood within a te ao Māori context.

b. The Marautanga o Aotearoa Technical Advisory Group has strong representation across kura Māori and kura auraki, and in relation to both te reo Māori and pāngarau (Cath Rau, Hineihaea Murphy, Tony Trinick, Renee Campbell, Phil Heeney, Maraea Humia, Pania Te Maro, Mere Clendon-Smallman, Kerri-Anne Stephens and Raewyn Mahara). Some of these experts are also involved in curriculum and assessment development across the ākonga pathway from kōhanga to secondary and beyond. The group are currently exploring existing Māori-developed frameworks and models that are appropriate for ākonga in kura Māori.

24. We have received initial advice (subject to confirmation) from the Māori-medium Technical Advisory Group that any benchmark is likely to sit at approximately Te Marautanga o Aotearoa Level 4 – 5 for Māori-medium settings, should align with progression frameworks such as anga tupuranga, and should be assessed through the collection of evidence over time (such as through a portfolio) – while noting that there are tensions between the ethos of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and high-stakes assessment such as that emphasised by NCEA.

Make accessing NCEA easier

25. Cabinet agreed in-principle to make changes to Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) to simplify the application and evaluation process and extend SAC availability to all students where feasible. Minister Hipkins also made a pre-Budget announcement that fees would be removed from NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship from 2019. Feedback from whānau demonstrated that this had been a burden for many.

26. We are working with NZQA to determine which SACs can be expanded and how the process can be simplified, to ensure that students are able to access appropriate assessment conditions without putting an undue burden on ākonga, whānau, and the community.
Alignment to the Education Work Programme

27. The changes to NCEA align closely with other initiatives supporting Māori education and the success of ākonga Māori, and present a range of opportunities to leverage shared aims to strengthen practice and outcomes for ākonga Māori in secondary settings. In particular, we intend to ensure strong links between:

a. the investment in culturally inclusive pedagogy driven by Te Hurihanganui and changes to NCEA to push back against streaming, and encourage teaching and assessment in senior secondary which is culturally inclusive

b. Te Ahu o Te Reo Māori, and NCEA changes to strengthen the place of te ao Māori and te reo Māori in secondary contexts and NCEA

c. the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement work programme’s focus on identifying the most important learning in our National Curriculum, including the clarification of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and the development of anga tupuranga

d. the Reform of Vocational Education, and the opportunity to strengthen vocational pathways (particularly in school and kura settings) for ākonga Māori.

Next steps

28. We will reflect any feedback you have on our planned approaches and detailed design work above in the advice we provide to Minister Hipkins by November, ahead of his December Cabinet Paper.