



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Proposed changes to NCEA: what you need to know as parents and caregivers



Evidence shows us that the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) isn't working as well as it could for students, families, teachers, and employers. It's more confusing and less reliable than it needs to be, so we're proposing changes to give New Zealanders confidence in our national qualifications.

We want to make sure that the qualifications students leave school with set them up well for what comes next – whether that be work, training, or study.

Learn more about the proposed changes below, and remember to let us know what you think.



Why we need to make changes



NCEA was introduced in 2002 as a flexible and standards-based national senior secondary qualification. It offered a wider range of assessment opportunities, including for students looking for future work in vocational pathways like trades, hospitality, and tourism. The changes were designed to have a positive impact on students, but recent national and international evidence show us that the current system is far from perfect:

- › The quality of a student's education is too inconsistent. Schools and kura are able to decide which NCEA standards they offer, meaning students can miss out on important learning that keeps them in school, engaged, and prepared for life after school.
- › International data shows that young adults in New Zealand have below average literacy and numeracy achievement despite many of them having an NCEA qualification – suggesting that it doesn't accurately represent students' understanding of those foundational skills.
- › Less than a third of employers believe that NCEA works well, meaning the qualification is not as useful as it needs to be for students looking to transition into future work, training, or study.

The changes we're proposing will help us build a more reliable qualification pathway that incentivises important learning and sets your children up for success in their lives beyond school.


The proposed changes

KEY

-  What we want to change
-  How it will help

Working with industry to integrate vocational education and training (VET) subjects into the senior secondary qualification

Designing subjects with industry experts


-  At the moment, NCEA assessments don't always do a good job of setting up students for a successful future working in vocational pathways. By designing consistent programmes of learning and high-quality assessments for those pathways, led by Industry Skills Boards, we can be sure that they align with the relevant knowledge and skills needed in those industries.

That means:


- › students will be **learning industry-critical skills**, making their transition into vocational pathways easier
- › more **meaningful pathways** exist to keep students engaged in their learning and in school longer
- › employers can trust that students are **well-prepared for a career in those industries**
- › skills standards will align with tertiary qualifications giving students better pathways into work based training or further tertiary study.

Introducing a new Foundational Award and national senior secondary qualifications for Years 12 and 13

Removing NCEA Level 1

-  Taking away NCEA Level 1 means that **Year 11 students have another full year of study**, making it more likely that they will be successful in Years 12 and 13. This would also bring us in line with other countries we compare ourselves to, who have fewer years of high-stakes assessment.

Replacing NCEA Levels 2 and 3 with new qualifications

-  With all of the ways we want to strengthen the current qualifications system, it makes sense to replace it with two new qualifications reflecting all the

improvements that come with change. The New Zealand Certificate of Education for Year 12, and the New Zealand Advanced Certificate of Education for Year 13, would give your children the opportunity to leave school with more credible qualifications, based on an internationally comparable, consistent national curriculum.

Students will also be able to do one qualification over multiple years and Year 13 assessments can count towards the Year 12 qualification.

Adding a new award that specifically assesses students' foundational literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini, and pāngarau skills

- ✓ It's critical that students leave school with strong literacy and numeracy skills (for those learning in English) and te reo matatini and pāngarau (for those learning through te reo Māori). The new **Foundational Award** would more reliably assess those skills at the right level, meaning employers will have a true picture of students' abilities.

The Foundational Award would be a standalone award that builds on the current Co-requisite assessments that students currently sit as a part of NCEA.

- ✓ We know it's important for your children to experience progress and success at school, that is why we are proposing to elevate the literacy and numeracy Co-requisite to be a Foundational Award at Year 11.

Shifting focus to a structured subject approach and introducing required subjects in the curriculum

Increasing consistency with a focus on subjects (instead of individual standards).

- ✓ Under NCEA, students can put credits from a mix of unrelated standards towards their qualification. That inconsistency leads to credit 'gaming' and makes it hard to understand students' knowledge and skills based on their qualification. We've heard from parents that they find this system hard to understand, and that you don't always know the best way to help your children.

Arranging important learning into specific subject areas would mean:

- › your children leave with qualifications that are clear about what they know and can do
- › students and teachers are incentivised to think about what subjects matter most for their plans after school
- › deep and consistent learning happens in each subject area to better prepare students for future study and work.

Simplifying the grading system

- ✓ We have heard from parents and caregivers that it can be hard to understand how your children are doing under the current system. **With specific, clear marks out of 100 for each subject and grades from A-E**, it will be easier to see how they're going and help them reach their goals.

Introducing required subjects at Year 11

- ✓ We are proposing to require English and Maths or Te Reo Matatini and Pāngarau at Year 11. This will help ensure students have good literacy and numeracy and set them up for success at Year 12.
- ✓ Making sure that your children are spending time on their **literacy and numeracy** or **te reo matatini and pāngarau skills**, means you can be confident that they're leaving school with the foundational knowledge they need to be successful.

Strengthening the achievement requirements

Requiring students to take a minimum of five subjects and pass four of them to be awarded the new qualifications.

- ✓ Making sure that students have a **strong set of knowledge and skills across multiple subjects** improves the credibility of the qualifications. That makes them more valuable for your children, because employers can trust that they're fully prepared for work, training, or study.

What this could mean for your children

These changes are designed to set your children up for success in life and work after school. A stronger national qualification pathway would mean that your children will:

- › have more reasons to stay engaged with their education and in school longer, because they're learning skills and knowledge that they recognise as useful for their future
- › leave school with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful, because important learning isn't left to chance
- › find it easier to transition into work, training, or study after school, because employers and tertiary providers can trust that their qualifications accurately show how prepared they are.

When would the changes come into effect?

The Government is also making national curriculum changes that will make sure that teaching and learning is consistent across the country knowledge-rich and internationally comparable. A new national secondary curriculum is being rolled out starting from 2026.

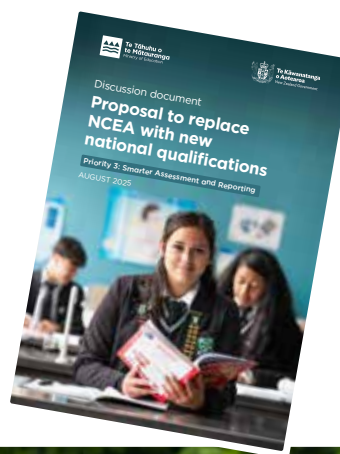
Teachers and students will have time with the new curriculum before the new qualification pathway is introduced over 2028–2030. That means that students who will be Year 9 in 2026 are likely to be using the new qualification system when they start Year 11 in 2028, beginning with the new Foundational Award.

Careful phasing gives us the time to make sure schools and kura are prepared for the changes, so that your children have the support they need to be successful.

Get the full picture

You can get a complete understanding of all the proposed changes in the full discussion document here:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/consultation-ncea>



Have your say

As parents and caregivers, it's important for us to hear what you think about the changes. We're also looking for feedback from your children, their teachers, and their future employers.

Use the QR code or the link below to have your say before consultation closes 15 September!

<https://www.education.govt.nz/consultation-ncea>



He mea tārai e mātou te mātaurangakia rangatira
ai, kia mana taurite ai ōna huanga.

We shape an education system that delivers
equitable and excellent outcomes.



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