

Cabinet Paper material Proactive release

Minister & portfolio Hon Erica Stanford Minister of Education
Name of package Public consultation on proposal to replace NCEA
Date considered 30 June 2025
Date of release 26 August 2025

These documents have been proactively released:

Public consultation on proposal to replace NCEA

Date considered: 30 June 2025

Author: Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee Minute

Date considered: 25 June 2025

Author: Committee Secretary

Cabinet Minute CAB-25-MIN-0208

Date considered: 30 June 2025

Author: Secretary for the Cabinet

Material redacted

Some deletions have been made from the documents in line with withholding grounds under the Official Information Act 1982. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

The applicable withholding grounds under the Act are as follows:

Section 9(2)(f)(iv) to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials

Section 9(2)(g)(i) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion

Some deletions have been made from the documents as the information withheld does not fall within scope of the Minister's portfolio responsibilities, and is not relevant to the proactive release of this material.

You can read the Official Information Act 1982 here:

<http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1982/0156/latest/DLM64785.html>

Budget Sensitive

Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Public consultation on proposal to replace NCEA

- 1 I am seeking approval to publicly consult on proposals to replace the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

Relation to government priorities

- 2 These proposals align with my education priority: 'Smarter assessment and reporting: implementing consistent modes of monitoring student progress and achievement.'

Executive summary

- 3 I am seeking Cabinet's agreement to publicly consult on transforming New Zealand's national qualifications so that all senior secondary students can achieve a credible, coherent qualification that supports positive post-school outcomes.
- 4 There is currently too much flexibility in how students can attain NCEA and not enough direction for schools¹ in what quality education looks like. This has led schools to prioritise gaining a qualification over learning. This can result in disjointed learning programmes focused on 'easier' standards or incoherent combinations of standards that do not support positive post-school pathways.
- 5 A knowledge-rich curricula, that reflects the skills and knowledge that students need post-school, should drive the teaching in classrooms, and our national qualification should assess and accredit this learning. The refreshed national curricula² will provide clearer direction on teaching and learning practices when it is fully introduced in 2027.
- 6 Curricula changes will significantly support students' learning and post-school outcomes, however the design of the national qualification will also shape the student experience in senior secondary education. Therefore, changes to the national qualification are needed. The proposed changes are:
 - 6.1 working more closely with industry to better integrate clear vocational education and training (VET) pathways;
 - 6.2 introducing a Foundational Award at Year 11, and only two national senior secondary certificates at Years 12 and 13;

¹ The expression 'schools' in this document is used interchangeably for schools and kura, including state, state-integrated, Kura Kaupapa Māori, kura motuhake, and kura ā-iwi (*except for where the document needs to specifically reference kura*).

² The national curricula refer to both the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.

- 6.3 shifting focus away from achieving individual standards to a subject-based approach;
 - 6.4 introducing English or Te Reo Rangatira and Mathematics or Pāngarau as mandatory subjects for students in Year 11; and
 - 6.5 requiring students to pass at least four subjects to attain each certification level, shifting away from terms like ‘Excellence’ and ‘Achieved’ and using more straightforward marking.
- 7 My proposals will, overall, lead to more meaningful and effective qualifications for our young people – supporting them to thrive post-school.
- 8 I am conscious that without sufficient support, these changes could impact of some student’s attainment with strengthened attainment requirements. To mitigate this risk, I have:
- 8.1 phased implementation in of the Foundational Award and new senior secondary certificates from 2028;
 - 8.2 designated current Year 8 students as the ‘tracked cohort’ who will experience the first year of each new qualification;
 - 8.3 rolled out the refreshed national curricula from 2026 for Years 0-10, and phased it in for Years 11-13 from 2028 to align with timing for implementing the new qualification to support effective implementation;
 - 8.4 invested early with tutoring for Years 7-8 students (e.g. in mathematics) and training for teachers; and
 - 8.5 aligned strengthened VET pathways with the roll out in 2028.

Background

I propose to replace NCEA as part of a wider work programme to deliver a world-leading education system

- 9 This Government is committed to delivering a world-leading education system that inspires and engages every child in their learning, helping them to gain meaningful qualifications that support them into further study and employment.
- 10 Significant changes to the national curricula are required to improve the quality and consistency of teaching. These changes will make sure our senior secondary education is knowledge-rich, internationally comparable and evidence-informed. The refreshed senior secondary curricula will detail what should be taught in each subject area year by year and provide more guidance on teaching and learning programmes.

- 11 The need to prepare for assessments will always drive some of the teaching and learning in schools. Therefore, the design of our national qualification needs to reinforce the need for foundational learning to make sure students have access to a credible and coherent qualification that can set them up for post-school success.

NCEA is currently not supporting students to succeed post-school as well as it should

- 12 NCEA in its current form is too flexible. Except for the newly introduced 20-credit co-requisite, any combination of standards can count towards the 60-credit requirement to attain each of the three levels of NCEA.
- 13 This creates too much variability in what is credentialed by NCEA, undermining its credibility. There are concerns that schools sometimes use low value unit standards to get students over the 60-credit threshold, even when these standards might not support students' pathways post-school.
- 14 Subjects are also not consistently taught and assessed across schools. For example, in a subject like Year 12 English, schools can select different combinations of 'English' standards (including unit standards) making comparing student qualifications between schools at a subject level more difficult.
- 15 A recent Education Review Office (ERO) report on the early implementation of NCEA Level 1 raised significant concerns.^{3 4} While focused on Level 1, these issues affect all levels of NCEA and align with findings from the 2018 review by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Key concerns identified include that NCEA is:
- 15.1 not a reliable measure of skills and knowledge, and there is widespread perceived inequality in credits attached to standards;
 - 15.2 difficult to understand for stakeholders, including parents and whānau, and employers and tertiary providers; and
 - 15.3 not preparing students well for further study (e.g., studying NCEA Level 2, due to the focus on credit accumulation).
- 16 Changes have been made under the previous NCEA Change Programme to address some concerns, however more fundamental changes are needed.

New Zealand's national secondary school qualification should be credible and support coherent learning

- 17 I propose to replace NCEA with a new qualification⁵, to:

³ ERO (2024). Set up to succeed: How well is NCEA Level 1 working for our schools and students? Set up to succeed: How well is NCEA Level 1 working for our schools and students?

⁴ Note: that as this was a report into the early implementation of the changes to NCEA Level 1, it is too early to provide insights on impacts of these changes e.g., on student success in Level 2.

⁵ New qualification refers to the two proposed new certificate levels at Year 12 and Year 13, each would be a separate qualification.

- 17.1 **increase credibility:** increase trust, particularly for employers, parents and tertiary education providers, in New Zealand and internationally, by making sure that our national qualifications are: easier to understand, more credible, a reliable measure of skills and knowledge, and more internationally comparable.
- 17.2 **support high-quality, coherent learning programmes:** improve how our national qualifications support all students to succeed post-school by making sure that they: have access to deep learning and develop coherent skills, knowledge and competencies; and develop foundational skills in literacy and numeracy.
- 18 These proposed changes will better support students' post-school outcomes as they will have access to a more credible qualification and will have demonstrated coherent skills and knowledge that will open more pathways into further study and employment.

Analysis

The proposals are fundamental structural changes to our national senior secondary qualification

- 19 The proposals are (see Figure 1 for a visual representation):
 - 19.1 **Working more closely with industry to better integrate clear vocational education and training (VET) pathways:** integrating high-quality VET that is valued like other subjects and better equips learners with the skills to succeed in industries post-school.
 - 19.2 **Introducing a Foundational Award at Year 11, and only two national senior secondary certificates at Years 12 and 13:** removing NCEA Level 1 will reduce the assessment burden on students and teachers, focusing more on deep learning.
 - 19.3 **Shifting focus away from achieving individual standards to a subject-based approach,** including subjects that will be designed alongside industry: making the results easier to understand and encouraging deep-learning across entire subjects.
 - 19.4 **Introducing English or Te Reo Rangatira and Mathematics or Pāngarau as mandatory subjects for students in Year 11:** to make sure that students have access to foundational learning before they undertake high-stakes assessments.
 - 19.5 **Requiring students to pass at least four subjects to attain each certification level, shifting away from terms like 'Excellence' and 'Achieved' and using more straightforward marking,** and making sure there is greater student participation in external assessments. Endorsements for certificates will also be available, based on students' scores across their five best subjects.
- 20 The NCEA Professional Advisory Group (PAG) have been closely involved in supporting the development of these proposals. This group is made up of 14 current secondary school principals from a diverse group of schools and kura.

Figure 1: Example of two students' record of learning under the new proposals. Alex has taken general subjects, while Sam has taken a combination of general and VET subjects

[New] Record of Achievement Alex

EXAMPLE ONLY

A minimum of 4 subjects passed is required to be awarded the qualification

Foundational Award			Awarded
New Zealand Certificate of Education			Awarded with Distinction
Subject	Marks	Subject Grade	
English Literature	93/100	A	0
Physics	74/100	B	
Mathematics - Statistics	81/100	A	
Geography	56/100	C	
History	63/100	C	
Biology	94/100	A	
Overall qualification	405/500		

Marks from top 5 subjects count towards certificate endorsement

New Zealand Advanced Certificate of Education			Awarded with Distinction
Subject	Marks	Subject Grade	
English Literature	83/100	A	0
Physics	79/100	B	
Mathematics - Statistics	86/100	A	
History	48/100	D	
Biology	96/100	A	
Economics	64/100	C	
Overall qualification	408/500		

[New] Record of Achievement Sam

EXAMPLE ONLY

A minimum of 4 subjects passed is required to be awarded the qualification

Foundational Award			Awarded
New Zealand Certificate of Education			Awarded with Distinction
Subject	Marks	Subject Grade	
English Literature	95/100	A	0
Physics	72/100	B	
Mathematics - Statistics	84/100	A	
Geography	56/100	C	
History	60/100	C	
Automotive Engineering	94/100	A	
Overall qualification	405/500		

Marks from top 5 subjects count towards certificate endorsement

New Zealand Advanced Certificate of Education			Awarded with Distinction
Subject	Marks	Subject Grade	
English Literature	85/100	A	0
Physics	77/100	B	
Mathematics - Statistics	85/100	C	
History	48/100	D	
Electronics & Mechatronics	77/100	B	
Automotive Engineering	94/100	C	
Overall qualification	418/500		

Subjects with learning designed by the Ministry

Subjects with learning designed by industry

Industry will support us to better integrate VET and make sure it is comparable to other subjects

- 21 The proposals include developing new VET subjects, made up of skill standards that provide students with a coherent, consistent set of skills and knowledge that industry and employers find meaningful. VET subjects will be in areas like building and construction, automotive or hospitality.

- 22 It is proposed that generally Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) will develop these VET subjects, with support from the Ministry. VET subjects will provide a pathway to further industry qualifications or employment.
- 23 This approach will mean that there are fewer unit standards on offer as part of the national qualification. For example, students can currently use credits towards NCEA for ‘managing (their) own learning in a programme’ (US7118) or ‘fill in a form’ (US3483) – this will no longer be possible.

Introducing a Foundational Award, and only two national senior secondary certification levels for Years 12 and 13

- 24 The proposed Foundational Award will credential students’ skills and knowledge in literacy or te reo matatini and numeracy or pāngarau⁶, so that students leaving school before the end of Year 12 continue to have access to a credential.
- 25 It will be a standalone award but will also be required for students to gain the new certificates at Years 12 and 13. It will initially be assessed at a Years 8 and 9 level of difficulty, but potentially be brought up to a Year 11 equivalency over time, as the refreshed national curricula take effect, and students begin building stronger literacy and numeracy skills.
- 26 Two new certification levels are proposed to be introduced, that should be completed over two years (generally Years 12 and 13)⁷. There are currently 3 levels of NCEA that are done over three years, which differs from some international practice, such as Australian states and British Columbia. Secondary school qualifications for these jurisdictions are one or two levels, completed over two years. There would no longer be a full qualification at year 11. Removing NCEA Level 1 will support students to focus on learning without the burden of high-stakes assessment in Year 11 beyond the Foundational Award⁸.
- 27 As you can see from these proposals, this is effectively a new qualification. Therefore, I am proposing to rebrand the national qualification to the ‘New Zealand Certificate of Education’ (Year 12 certificate) and the ‘New Zealand Advanced Certificate of Education’ (Year 13 certificate).

Shifting focus to a structured and subject-based approach and making English and Mathematics mandatory in Year 11

- 28 The new qualification will focus on overall achievement within a subject area, rather than achievement of individual standards. This is a key shift in the proposals and will support

⁶9(2)(f)(iv)

The discussion document includes a question to seek feedback around whether there is anything else that people would value in the award.

⁷ Students would still be able to begin the qualification earlier than Year 12 and complete it over more than one year as they can currently.

⁸ This includes more classroom time that was previously taken up by study and revision from home time.

credibility by making results easier to understand for employers, tertiary provider and parents and whānau, and incentivising coherent and deep subject learning.

- 29 A subject-based approach will integrate general and VET subjects. I intend that students will receive an overall subject grade that is aligned to traditional marking structures (e.g., A to F). This grade will be aggregated from their grades in all internal and external standards in that subject to incentivise full participation in assessments⁹. For VET subjects, assessment will be through skill standards and will be approved for use through a newly developed and clear framework to ensure equivalent rigour.
- 30 Through the national curricula, all students will be required to take English or Te Reo Rangatira and Maths or Pāngarau at Year 11, to support foundational learning that enables access to a broad range of subjects at Years 12 and 13.

Strengthening the attainment requirements to require students to pass at least four subjects to attain each certification level

- 31 Under the proposals, students would need to pass a minimum of four subjects to attain each certification level. The curriculum will generally require students to take at least five subjects.¹⁰ Students' overall score (out of 500) that reflects achievement across the best of five subjects, would be used towards recognising certificate endorsements, to encourage students to continue to engage across all of their subjects.
- 32 We need to raise our expectations for attaining senior secondary qualifications, and the proposed attainment approach will balance student choice and coherence.
- 33 I have asked for further advice on strengthening external moderation to reduce the marking burden improve consistency in marks awarded to students across schools and assessments.

The proposed changes will support students' post-school outcomes in the medium-long term

- 34 These proposals will have significant benefits in increasing the qualification's credibility and supporting deep and coherent learning that better prepares students for post-school study and employment. Currently, achieving NCEA can be a disingenuous sign of success - it does not always represent knowledge and skills that will support student success post-school.
- 35 Based on current data, officials expect that initially, attainment rates would likely to decline. These impacts are likely to be most significant for students facing socioeconomic barriers, Māori and Pacific learners, and disabled learners¹¹.

⁹ In 2024, two-thirds of students were not enrolled by schools in all four Level 1 standards – despite the new Level 1 subjects being developed with a four standard subject package – due to the current flexibility of NCEA.

¹⁰ Only 54% of Year 12 students who achieved Level 2 NCEA in 2024 did so while achieving 14 or more credits in three or more achievement standard based subjects.

¹¹ For example, when Queensland introduced a new senior secondary qualification in 2019, there was an initial slight decline in attainment rates (of around 3 percentage points), followed by an increase pre-qualification change attainment rates in 2024 where 94% of students who graduated attained the certificate. [Year 12 certification](#)

- 36 The onus is on us to make sure we support these students by bridging the teaching and learning gaps to improve student outcomes. I have instructed officials to consider what targeted support and resources may be needed, along with the changes already being implemented to the school system, to improve teaching and learning in all schools and provide accelerated supports for at-risk students through the change. Over time, wider curricula changes will make sure that students at all Year levels have access to coherent teaching that is grounded in the science of learning, preparing students to meet higher expectations at Years 12 and 13.

The changes will be a big shift for some kura

- 37 The overhaul of our national qualification will be a big shift for many kura¹², because the consistency of the subject-based approach will not align with current practices, which rely on local flexibility. The proposed changes need to have the right level of flexibility so that kura can continue to achieve great outcomes for their students as part of a strengthened national qualification.
- 38 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED] The Ministry will work closely with sector representatives, including Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa and curriculum design experts, in designing an approach appropriate for kura.

Implementation

Cabinet previously agreed to rephase the NCEA Change Programme

- 39 On 25 March 2024, Cabinet agreed to rephase substantive development work associated with the NCEA Change Programme by two years. This decision meant that the proposed roll-out of the new NCEA Level 2 (2026) and Level 3 (2027) would be delayed by a year to 2027 and 2028 respectively. [CAB-24-MIN-0098.01]
- 40 These decisions allowed the Ministry of Education to align the design of NCEA to follow the introduction of the refreshed national curricula. Rephasing changes to NCEA also addresses sector concerns around their readiness to adjust to further change at this stage.


















[summary: 2024 cohort](#)

¹² This includes Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura ā Iwi and Kura Motuhake.

Changes are proposed to come into effect sequentially, aligned with the introduction of the refreshed curricula

- 41 The timeline has been adjusted to allow time to successfully implement my proposals. The plan is to introduce the Foundational Award in 2028, and new certificates in 2029 and 2030 (for Years 12 and 13 respectively), replacing the current NCEA Levels 1 (and-co-requisite), 2 and 3.
- 42 These changes will follow the introduction of the refreshed curricula in 2026 for Phases 1-4 (Years 0-10). The refreshed curricula will be required for mathematics, English, pāngarau and Te Reo Rangatira in 2026 for Phases 1-4. All other learning areas in Phases 1-4 of the refreshed curricula would be required in 2027. Phase 5 (Years 11-13) of the refreshed curricula will be phased in alongside the NCEA changes from 2028 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Timeline of the refreshed curricula and qualification changes from a cohort view

2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Year 8 (lead cohort)  Existing curricula	Year 9  Refreshed curricula (encouraged)	Year 10  Refreshed curricula	Year 11  Refreshed curricula  Foundational Award introduced	Year 12  Refreshed curricula  New NCEA at Year 12	Year 13  Refreshed curricula  New NCEA at Year 13
Year 9  Existing curricula	Year 10  Existing curricula (refreshed curricula available)	Year 11  Existing curricula  Existing NCEA Level 1	Year 12  Existing curricula  Existing NCEA Level 2	Year 13  Existing curricula  Existing NCEA Level 3	

- 43 The adjusted timeline will:
 - 43.1 provide students with more learning under the refreshed curricula before they undertake the new qualification, which will be more rigorous. The first cohort of students doing the new qualification will have access to the refreshed curricula from Year 9, and will have completed three years of learning under it before beginning the first new certificate level. This will mitigate the risk to attainment rates for the early cohorts.
 - 43.2 give schools more time to prepare for the changes and develop resources and capability to deliver the new qualification.
 - 43.3 enable VET subjects to be fully ready before the new certification levels are introduced for Years 12 and 13.
 - 43.4 aligns the introduction of the refreshed curricula with the new qualification. This alignment avoids the risks of confusion and frustration for schools and impact on

student learning and achievement, posed by misalignment between what is taught (as set out in the refreshed curricula) and what is assessed (through the existing NCEA). For example, there are some subjects in the refreshed curricula not reflected in the existing NCEA and vice versa. The content within subjects will also be updated in the refreshed curricula.

- 44 Some parts of the sector may be frustrated with further timeline adjustments and some schools may consider other senior secondary qualifications. We will carefully communicate the reasons for the change in timeline, to provide certainty and confidence that there will be no further changes following final policy decisions.
- 45 The Ministry and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) will be developing a comprehensive implementation plan, with clear governance arrangements of the changes and building off the existing Change Programme. Support and resources will be developed for schools to adjust to the changes.

Public consultation on the proposals

- 46 The development of these proposals follows on from previous engagement through Education Conversation | Kōrero Matauranga and the NCEA Review in 2018. The insights from these engagements have informed the development of these proposals.
- 47 I am seeking Cabinet's agreement to release the discussion document (attached in Appendix NCEA) and to publicly consult on these proposals. Given the significance of the change and potential impact, public consultation is recommended to mitigate any unintended consequences arising from these proposals.
- 48 During public consultation, feedback will be sought on the proposed changes and implementation considerations. We will have an online survey and run a series of targeted hui with key stakeholder groups including education peak bodies and unions, industry representatives and Realm Nations during the consultation period. These insights will make sure that final policy decisions are well-informed.
- 49 I will report back to Cabinet following public consultation to seek final policy decisions in November 2025, including an implementation plan.

Cost-of-living Implications

- 50 There are not direct cost-of-living implications associated with this paper, but the proposals could lead to higher incomes and productivity as students attain the new qualifications.

Financial Implications

- 51 9(2)(f)(iv)

9(2)(f)(iv)

52

9(2)(f)(iv)

53 There is existing funding for the Ministry to progress the NCEA Change Programme. For this existing funding, I am seeking Cabinet agreement to:

53.1 transfer \$3.2 million underspend from 2024/25 to 2025/26; and

53.2 bring forward \$3.722 million of funding from 2026/27 into 2025/26, because the Ministry are now developing more detailed senior secondary subjects for the national curricula (including what assessment should look like), which means developing changes to NCEA assessments earlier than expected.

Legislative Implications

54 There may be minor consequential legislative changes arising from a potential name change to NCEA to the Education and Training Act (2020) and Social Security Act (2018). The proposed curriculum changes would be issued by the Minister of Education under section 90 of the Education and Training Act 2020.

55 I am seeking further advice on the impacts these proposals may have on the school leaving age. This would be a separate proposal.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS)

56 As required by the Ministry for Regulation, the Ministry of Education's Quality Assurance panel has reviewed the discussion document and determined that it will lead to effective consultation and enable the development of future impact analysis. Therefore, a RIS is not required at this stage.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

57 The Climate Implications of Policy Assessment (CIPA) team has been consulted and confirms that the CIPA requirements do not apply to this policy proposal at this time, as it is in the discussion document stage.

Population Implications

- 58 The proposals could improve equity in post-school outcomes for students, including Māori, Pacific and disabled students. Under the current NCEA settings, Māori and Pacific students are more likely to be ‘streamed’ into learning programmes that do not provide access to coherent learning and core subjects. The proposed changes would make sure that all learners get access to high-quality teaching and learning that will better support their post-school outcomes in the medium to long-term.
- 59 Achievement rates are likely to decline under the proposals in the short-term, especially for Māori, Pacific and disabled learners and learners facing more socio-economic barriers. These students are more likely to do more unit standards, engage in project-based and out-of-school learning, and therefore, be disproportionately affected by the proposals which will limit these practices.
- 60 This table sets out any specific implications for some population groups:

Population group	How the proposal may specifically affect this group
Māori	For ākonga Māori learning in a kura, the proposals limit kura autonomy to tailor teaching and learning programmes, as full subjects are required for the new qualification.
Disabled people	The proposals make sure that all disabled learners have access to deep and coherent learning, which they may not currently receive through very individualised approaches. Learners may still need some individualisation, especially in terms of assessments, and further work is needed on how to accommodate this.
Realm Nations	Realm nations use NCEA as their national qualification, predominantly NCEA Level 1. Removing NCEA Level 1 will have a significant impact on learners in these nations, as it will remove their access to a qualification.
Learners in tertiary settings	The proposals make it very difficult for students to achieve the new qualification in tertiary settings as they will no longer be able to ‘top-up’ credits from any standards. They will need to offer full subjects or subject packages, which is very difficult for tertiary providers to offer. There are currently nearly 2,000 learners per annum achieving NCEA after leaving school in tertiary settings. These risks are partially mitigated by incentivising more students to stay in school for longer, which could be achieved by raising the school leaving age.
Learners in alternative education settings	The proposals make it very difficult for learners who may miss large periods of learning e.g., students with health needs, to attain the new qualification. Students will be assessed on whole subjects, including on content that they may have missed.

- 61 Public consultation is an opportunity to understand what forms of targeted support would be most effective in supporting these learners to succeed.

Human Rights

- 62 This proposal is consistent with human rights obligations set out in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Use of external resources

- 63 The 14 members of the NCEA PAG supported the development of this paper. They receive a daily fee of \$500, and the chair receives a fee of \$700, when they are required to meet. There have been six meetings to support the development of these proposals.
- 64 The Ministry of Education have also used one Full-Time-Equivalent contractor, Senior Policy Analyst, over seven weeks in the development of these proposals.

Consultation

- 65 The following agencies have been consulted and their feedback incorporated where applicable in this paper: the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, the Education Review Office, the Tertiary Education Commission, the Treasury, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, the Ministry for Women, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Teaching Council, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, the Ministry of Youth Development, and the Ministry of Regulation. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was informed of this paper.

Communications

- 66 I will communicate our plans to publicly consult on these proposals with the sector and wider public. Following Cabinet agreement, the Ministry of Education will release the discussion document on their website ‘Open Consultations’ and invite written submissions and online survey responses to the proposals from the public. The Ministry of Education will also share this through their channels with the sector.

Proactive Release

- 67 This paper will be released once Cabinet decisions have been made, subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister of Education recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that in March 2024, Cabinet agreed to rephrase the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) change programme to align with the refreshed national curricula [CAB-24-MIN-0098.01];
- 2 **note** that transformational and significant changes to NCEA are needed and proposals have been developed to increase its credibility and to support coherent learning;

- 3 **agree** to the new implementation timeline for changes to the senior secondary qualification, with the new qualifications being introduced in 2029 for Year 12 and 2030 for Year 13;
- 4 **note** that the timing for introducing Phase 5 of the national curricula for has been adjusted to align with the timing for introducing the new qualification, from 2028;
- 5 **agree** to the public release of the discussion document (attached as Appendix One) on proposals to replace NCEA;
- 6 **authorise** the Minister of Education to make any editorial changes required before releasing the discussion document;
- 7 **authorise** the Minister of Education to add a proposal on strengthening moderation before releasing the discussion document, pending advice from officials;
- 8 **invite** the Minister of Education to report back to Cabinet in November 2025 with final policy proposals for replacing NCEA.
- 9 **agree** to rephasing parts of the associated NCEA Change Programme funding in 2024/25, to 2025/26, and the rephasing of part of the NCEA Change Programme funding in 2026/27 to 2025/26
- 10 **approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in recommendations above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net debt:

Vote Education Minister of Education (in millions)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28 and outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure Improved Quality Teaching and Learning MCA Departmental Output Expense: Support and Resources for Teachers (funded by revenue Crown)	(3.200)	6.922	(3.722)	-

- 11 **agree** that the proposed changes to appropriations for 2025/26 be included in the 2025/26 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply

Authorised for lodgement.

Hon Erica Stanford

Minister of Education



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

Appendix one withheld in full under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act. Final version is available at the below weblink:
<https://www.education.govt.nz/consultation-ncea>

9(2)(g)(i)



Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Proposal to Replace NCEA: Release of Discussion Document

Portfolio Education

On 25 June 2025, the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee (SOU):

- 1 **noted** that in March 2024, Cabinet agreed to rephrase the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) change programme to align with the refreshed national curricula [CAB-24-MIN-0098.01];
- 2 **noted** that transformational and significant changes to NCEA are needed, and proposals have been developed to increase its credibility and to support coherent learning;
- 3 **agreed** to the new implementation timeline for changes to the senior secondary qualification, with the new qualifications being introduced in 2029 for Year 12 and 2030 for Year 13;
- 4 **noted** that the timing for introducing Phase 5 of the national curricula for has been adjusted to align with the timing for introducing the new qualification, from 2028;
- 5 **agreed** to the public release of the discussion document *Proposal to replace NCEA with a new national qualification* (the discussion document), attached as Appendix One to the submission under SOU-25-SUB-0074;
- 6 **authorised** the Minister of Education (the Minister) to make any editorial changes required before releasing the discussion document;
- 7 **authorised** the Minister to add a proposal on strengthening moderation before releasing the discussion document, pending advice from officials;
- 8 **invited** the Minister to report back to SOU in November 2025 with final policy proposals for replacing NCEA;
- 9 **agreed** to rephrase parts of the associated NCEA Change Programme funding in 2024/25, to 2025/26, and the rephrasing of part of the funding in 2026/27 to 2025/26;

- 10 **approved** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in the paragraphs above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net debt:

Vote Education Minister of Education	\$ million			
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28 and outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure				
Improved Quality Teaching and Learning MCA				
Departmental Output Expense: Support and Resources for Teachers (funded by revenue Crown)	(3.200)	6.922	(3.722)	-

- 11 **agreed** that the changes to appropriations for 2025/26 be included in the 2025/26 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply;

- 12 9(2)(f)(iv)

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Simeon Brown
Hon Erica Stanford
Hon Louise Upston (Chair)
Hon Dr Shane Reti
Hon Mark Mitchell
Hon Nicole McKee
Hon Casey Costello
Hon Penny Simmonds
Hon Karen Chhour

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for SOU
Office of the Minister of Education
Office of the Associate Minister of Education



Minute of Decision

Report of the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee: Period Ended 27 June 2025

[illegible]

Out of scope

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Proactively Released

Out of scope	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	

SOU-25-MIN-0074 **Proposal to Replace NCEA: Release of Discussion Document** CONFIRMED
Portfolio: Education

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released