

## Q & As for Ministry – VET changes and secondary-tertiary pathways

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### System- wide

- **Te Pūkenga was set up as a national network for the country’s polytechnics and industry training organisations – does its disestablishment mean there is no longer a national network or national body in the VET sector?**

The vocational and educational training (VET) sector has always been more than just Te Pūkenga. Private Training Establishments and Wānanga are also part of the VET system and were never part of Te Pūkenga. Polytechnics will still be expected to work together and collaborate, and Industry Skills Boards will serve a national coordinating function across industries. The Tertiary Education Commission looks across the network as a whole in making funding decisions.

- **What support will be available for learners during the transition period, particularly those currently enrolled in Te Pūkenga programmes?**

The TEC will ensure that Te Pūkenga develops a transition plan that minimises disruption for all its divisions, including both its polytechnic and Work-based Learning divisions. Maintaining WBL divisions as ‘units’ attached to an ISB will minimise disruption for these learners and their employers.

- **Will existing vocational education providers need to reapply or requalify under the new system?**

Existing providers who wish to offer new programmes will need to observe normal regulations around programme approval and endorsement. Their existing programmes should not be affected.

### Polytechnics

- **What criteria were used to determine which 10 polytechnics will be re-established first, and how were those regions selected?**

The criteria were polytechnics that are financially viable or are on track to become financially viable in 2026 and meet the characteristics of a polytechnic as specified in the legislation before the House.

- **What happens to the other four polytechnics not in the first 10?**

The four polytechnics will remain within Te Pūkenga as they continue to work with the specialist advisors to find a pathway to viability. We expect decisions to be

made about whether they will be merged, closed or stood up as independent entities by July 2026.

Provisions in the Bill allow for disestablishment or merger if it clear a polytechnic is unable to reach viability.

- **What happens to learners in regions where a polytechnic is closed.**

Those polytechnics that are working to financial viability continue making progress in doing so. Any decisions on shutting the polytechnics remaining within Te Pūkenga would not take effect until 1 January 2027.

There is wide provision of vocational education in all regions through providers including Wānanga, private training establishments, and other polytechnics. Working through how the regions will continue to have access to key vocational education programmes will be a major consideration for decision-making about these institutions.

- **What happens to programmes and qualifications that are offered by one of the polytechnics not yet established?**

There is no immediate change for learners regardless of where they are currently studying when the transition occurs. All programmes and qualifications will be allocated to a polytechnic or an Industry Skills Board unless it is a programme that is being phased out, or one that is remaining within Te Pūkenga while further work on the final four polytechnics is undertaken. All programmes being phased out will be taught out over the next two years.

- **Will school-based polytechnic programmes continue in 2026?**

Yes. These programmes are expected to continue but may be delivered through newly re-established regional polytechnics. Schools will be kept informed of any changes to delivery or partnerships.

- **Will the disestablishment of Te Pūkenga affect our school's partnerships?**

There may be some administrative changes, but the goal is to strengthen regional responsiveness. Schools will likely work directly with local polytechnics again, which could improve coordination.

- **Will school students still have clear pathways into full-time study?**

Students will continue to have access to clear, supported pathways into full-time study at polytechnics, Wānanga and private training establishments.

- **Will there be changes to course availability or locations?**

Some course offerings may be reviewed, especially where enrolments are low. However, the government has committed to maintaining regional access and supporting high-demand areas like trades and health.

- **How will schools be kept informed?**

The Ministry of Education and regional polytechnics will provide updates through school networks, regional briefings, and direct communication with principals and careers advisors.

- **Why should a new learner in 2026 consider studying at a polytechnic when there is a two-year period of change which may mean that staff and courses are disrupted?**

As a result of the financial improvement work, polytechnics will know what their core programmes will be going forward, and which ones are going to be closed and taught out. It is normal for tertiary institutions like polytechnics to change programmes from time to time and they have systems to ensure learners are looked after when that happens.

Students, apprentices or trainees, whether domestic or international, can continue to enrol in vocational education and training courses. Although there may be some changes to how and where courses are delivered, the majority of students will be able to carry on with their study through any future change process.

## **Work-based learning**

- **How will the transition from Te Pūkenga to the Industry Skills Boards be managed to avoid disruption for current learners?**

There will be significant continuity between the current business divisions of Te Pūkenga and the work-based learning units that are temporarily attached to Industry Skills Boards. Officials are working closely with Te Pūkenga to ensure that good information and comms is developed, along with an active engagement plan for communicating with the sector about the implementation and progress made.

## **Secondary-tertiary pathways**

- **Will the VET redesign impact how VET is delivered in schools?**

These changes to VET do not involve making changes to how VET is delivered in schools. Some individual polytechnics may make decisions about their involvement in programmes like Trades Academies, but these will be made on a

case-by-case basis. The Government is committed to supporting these secondary-tertiary programmes.

The changes may offer new opportunities, for example through greater engagement by polytechnics with the schools in their local region.

- **How do these VET changes affect NCEA?**

Credits earned will still count towards qualifications. The industry-developed skills and unit standards will be maintained by Industry Skills Boards and can continue to contribute to NCEA.

The Government is also currently consulting on proposals to replace NCEA with a new qualifications pathway, including working with industry to integrate VET subjects into senior secondary qualifications. You can find more information about this here: [Consultation on proposal to replace NCEA - Ministry of Education](#).

These proposals could provide an opportunity to strengthen the approach to VET for secondary school students in the future, including building on effective services like Trades Academies.

- **How can I find out more on the NCEA changes and VET?**

Information can be found here [Consultation on proposal to replace NCEA - Ministry of Education](#) and we recommend you direct any enquiries to [NCEA.Consultation@education.govt.nz](mailto:NCEA.Consultation@education.govt.nz) and cc Natalie Stewart. Consultation closes on 15 September 2025.

## **Impact on Learners**

- **What support will be available for learners during the transition period, particularly those currently enrolled in Te Pūkenga programmes?**

The TEC will ensure that Te Pūkenga develops a transition plan that minimises disruption for all its divisions, including its Work-based Learning divisions. Maintaining WBL divisions as ‘units’ attached to an ISB will minimise disruption for these learners and their employers.

- **How will the new system accommodate learners who require additional support, such as those with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds?**

Vocational education providers will continue to receive funding based on the number of disabled learners and learners with low prior achievement that they enrol.

- **What happens to programmes and qualifications that are not immediately allocated to one of the new polytechnics?**

All programmes and qualifications will be allocated to a polytechnic or an Industry Skills Board unless it is a programme that is being phased out, or one that is remaining within Te Pūkenga while further work on the final four polytechnics is undertaken. All programmes being phased out will be taught out over the next two years. Industry Skills Boards will help ensure qualifications remain relevant and improve job readiness.

- **How will these changes improve outcomes for learners, particularly in terms of employment and skills relevance?**

Polytechnics will have more regional responsiveness and will develop relationships with local industries so graduates can be confident that they will have the skills local employers need. The system also strengthens the role of industry through the ISB model. Industry Skills Boards will help ensure qualifications remain relevant and improve job readiness.

- **What will be the differences between study at a stand-alone polytechnic and a federation polytechnic for a learner?**

In many cases there will be no difference. Federation polytechnics will offer many of their programmes in the same way as any other polytechnic might. In some cases, so that an important programme can be delivered e.g. if learners are in remote areas and class sizes are not very large, Open Polytechnic programme material might be blended with in-person delivery. The Open Polytechnic is Aotearoa New Zealand's leader in online and distance learning.

Any programme material would need to be educationally robust and sound. The polytechnic will be required to work through any design constraints such as digital access issues.