



Vocational Education and Training – info for schools & wharekura

August 2025

- The vocational education and training (VET) system is very important to New Zealand and growing the economy with over 250,000 people studying and doing work-based and apprentice training through this tertiary system, each year.
- Vocational education supports learners to get the skills they need to thrive in employment and to contribute to growing our economy.

The Government has decided to:

- Disestablish Te Pūkenga
- Establish 10 polytechnics as stand-alone entities, with 4 remaining in Te Pūkenga and decisions on their future taken in the first half of 2026
- Establish 8 Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) to replace Workforce Development Councils.
- Transition 9 Work-based Learning divisions to relevant ISBs for up to two years.

On 31 December 2025, the six Workforce Development Councils will be disestablished.

What is happening with my regional polytechnic?

The 10 polytechnics returning to regional governance are:

- Ara Institute of Canterbury (Ara)
- Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT)
- Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT)
- Southern Institute of Technology (SIT)
- Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology
- Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec)
- Unitec Institute of Technology and Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) – merge and standalone

- Otago Polytechnic – standalone within the federation
- Universal College of Learning (UCOL) – standalone within the federation
- The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand – anchor institution of the federation.

Unitec and Manukau Institute of Technology will stand up as a single entity.

Otago Polytechnic and UCOL will be standalone within the new federation model, with The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand serving as the anchor institution.

Te Pūkenga will also act as a transitional entity for up to 1 year to support programme handover and continuity.

Four other polytechnics will remain within Te Pūkenga while they work toward financial viability:

- NorthTec
- Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT)
- Whitireia Community Polytechnic/Wellington Institute of Technology (WelTec)
- Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP).

What do the changes mean for school leavers enrolling in tertiary vocational education in 2026?

- The transition will begin in January 2026, and current programmes will continue during the changeover. Te Pūkenga and the Tertiary Education Commission will manage the transition to ensure continuity.
- Some changes to campus configurations and course availability may occur, but the goal is to ensure better access and quality across regions. You'll be informed well in advance of any changes.
- While some campuses may close, regional access and online learning options are expected to expand under the new model.
- School leavers can enrol with confidence in their chosen vocational education provider as they normally would. Most existing programmes, qualifications and credentials will continue, and any programmes proposed for closure will be taught out if discontinued at a later date.
- Final year Fees Free information is available at [Fees Free | Study or train fees-free](#), and student loan and financial support information is available through StudyLink [StudyLink](#)

What do the changes mean for schools involved in secondary-tertiary and workplace learning?

- These changes to VET do not involve making changes to how VET is delivered in schools. Secondary-tertiary programmes will continue.
- 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.
- For some of these programmes, the learning may be delivered through newly re-established regional polytechnics. Schools will be kept informed of any changes to delivery or partnerships.
- 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.
- Schools are encouraged to continue supporting learners with vocational education and training, including through funding and programmes such as STAR, Gateway and Trades Academies. You should continue to work with your local tertiary education partners, including institutes of technology and polytechnics, the Workforce Development Councils while they remain in place, the new Industry Skills Boards once they are established, and the work-based learning divisions of Te Pūkenga, as well as employers.
- The Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission will work with schools and tertiary education organisations involved in secondary-tertiary pathways to keep you informed and support you as part of the transition to the new system.
- The TEC will also make Gateway funding allocations to schools for 2026 following the usual processes and timeframes as previous years.

How will the changes affect schools involved in a Trades Academy?

- These changes have no impact on policy settings for Trades Academies. Some polytechnics and work-based learning divisions who are involved in Trades Academies may take this opportunity to consider how they participate in the future.
- The Ministry will continue to make Trades Academy place allocations to Lead Providers for 2026 following the usual processes and timeframes as previous years.

- The Government is also currently consulting on proposals to replace NCEA with a new qualifications pathway, including working with industry to intergrade 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 will the changes affect schools that work with work-based learning divisions?

- On 1 January 2026, work-based learning divisions will transfer out of Te Pūkenga and to a relevant Industry Skills Board (ISB) where the ISB will manage the division for up to two years. During that time, new work-based learning programmes will be developed by polytechnics, Wānanga and private training establishments. In many cases ISBs will transfer their learners and programmes directly to these providers.
- Changes to the entities responsible for work-based learning divisions will not be visible to apprentices and trainees, or employers, and the impact is expected to be minimal.
- School leavers wanting to take on an apprenticeship or traineeship can continue to seek out these opportunities, confident that the on-campus learning components will continue to be delivered either on-line, face-to-face, or a mix of both.
- All regions are expected to offer a mix of both on-campus and off-campus (in-job) learning options.

As a teacher, what do I need to know, and do, to help students with vocational education choices, while these changes are happening?

- Schools can continue to promote vocational education and training pathways as an option when providing guidance and support to learners.
- As a teacher, you can be confident that no **system level** changes to the Trades Academy, STAR and Gateway programmes are planned for 2026. However, there may be minor changes to course offerings or funded places that occur as part of standard business processes.
- Leavers can enrol in their chosen vocational education provider as they normally

would in 2026.

- Most existing programmes, qualifications and credentials are expected to continue, and alternative teaching arrangements will be found if discontinued at a later date.

Will there be changes to secondary-tertiary funding?

- Trades Academy, STAR and Gateway programmes all received a small funding boost in Budget 2025.

Where do I go to get national and local information about these VET changes?

Regular updates on the progress of the Redesign of the Vocational education and Training System can be found on:

- the Ministry of Education's website here:
[Redesign of Vocational Education and Training System - Ministry of Education](#)
- the Tertiary Education Commission's website here:
[Changes to the vocational education and training \(VET\) system | Tertiary Education Commission](#)
- Students should continue to talk to their careers advisors about career and study options. Helpful career information is also on TEC's [Tahatū Career Navigator](#) website.