



Factsheet: Proposals to replace NCEA

September 10, 2025

Is the proposed Foundational Award different to the co-requisite assessment?

Yes. The proposed Foundational Award is a standalone recognition of literacy and numeracy or te reo matatini and pāngarau skills.

- If the proposal is confirmed, the Foundational Award would replace the current co-requisite requirement for NCEA and could be achieved from Years 9 to 13, with most students completing it in Year 11.
- Further work would need to be done on the format of assessments. We would build on what was learnt from the co-requisite process.
- If students do not achieve the Foundational Award on their first attempt, they will be able to achieve it alongside their Year 12 and 13 qualifications. Over time, it will be targeted at a Year 11 curriculum level.
- Like the current co-requisite, the Foundational Award is a requirement of the Year 12 and 13 qualifications. However, it could also be used by early school leavers as a standalone award that demonstrates literacy and numeracy skills to future employers and educators.

Are we returning to streaming? Is this a dual pathway?

No. Proposal 1 (to strengthen Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects) does not stream students into curriculum or VET pathways.

- This is a proposal for an integrated pathway, not a dual pathway.
- The Government is proposing to keep a single qualification pathway that can be made up of both Ministry-developed curriculum subjects and industry-developed curriculum subjects, based on students' interests, strengths, and aspirations.
- Students will be able to take industry-developed subjects alongside Ministry-developed subjects right the way through to the end of Year 13. They won't need to choose or be "selected into" one pathway or the other. This proposal is about learning consistently being of the same quality, regardless of the subject or the school attended, and providing students with access to quality learning that reflects real post-school opportunities for further study and work.

- For example, students could study Building and Construction alongside Mathematics, English, Physics, and Engineering.

Are we returning to scaling?

No. We are not returning to scaling and students will be assessed against a common standard set by the curriculum.

- We've heard people are concerned that the proposals mean we're returning to 'norm referencing' (as happened under School Certificate and Bursary). This is not the case.
- It is proposed that students will be assessed against a common standard set by the curriculum.
- The Government is proposing a system of marking and grading whereby points are accumulated from each assessment within a subject. A subject's assessments add up to 100 points, which could be divided to suit the assessments (e.g. 25, 25, 50). All points would count towards the achievement of the subject.

How can we comment on the proposals without seeing the refreshed curriculum?

The goal with this proposal is to create a credible senior secondary assessment system that can work for all students, whether they are on a pathway to further education, training or work. It should be able to endure curriculum changes.

- The information available in the discussion document can help teachers understand how the curriculum and proposals might work together.
- The Mathematics, Pāngarau, English, and Te Reo Rangatira curricula have been consulted on earlier this year and will be available in term 4.
- Importantly, assessments will not be developed ahead of the curriculum.

What is happening to subjects like Tourism and Outdoor Education?

The Ministry of Education is refreshing what students learn in Years 11 to 13. This work is still underway and will be communicated in the near future.

- The objective is that the curriculum drives what and how students learn in senior secondary school.
- The curriculum subject list will be released shortly. There will be a similar number of general subjects to what's currently offered. Some may be renamed or reorganised, and others may be new, to better reflect a future-focused curriculum.
- Under proposal 1, vocational education and training (VET) subjects will be developed by Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) and will be included in the curriculum as Phase | Tūāreke 5 (Years 11-13) subjects and will count towards the proposed qualifications.
- Assessments for industry-developed subjects will be comparable with Ministry-led subjects and lead to meaningful pathways.

What's being done to make sure nobody gets left behind?

The Government wants any new qualifications to be inclusive. The aim of consultation is to understand what resources and support might be needed for this.

- The proposals are designed so that all students have the opportunity to leave school with a robust qualification.
- Under the proposed changes, students would still be able to complete the qualifications at their own pace, over more than one year, just like they can under NCEA.

What's happening at the end of consultation?

Following the close of consultation, we will analyse responses from submissions and understand which areas of the proposed changes need further investigation. We are planning for further sector engagement, to test areas as needed and get your further input into the design, before final decisions are made. Once final decisions are made on the big building blocks for the qualification, we will be working with you on detailed design elements – for example, the balance of internal and external assessments.
