



## Report: Curriculum and NCEA implementation timeline

To:	Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education		
Date:	17/06/2025	Deadline:	17/06/2025
Security Level:	In-Confidence	Priority:	High
From:	Claire Eden Acting Hautū   Deputy Secretary, Te Poutāhū	Phone:	9(2)(a)
Drafter:	Anya Pollock	METIS No:	1348675

### Why are we sending this to you?

- This paper seeks your agreement to the timeline for curriculum and qualification changes, so that it can be communicated to the sector and reflected in the Cabinet paper and discussion document for changes to NCEA.

### What action do we need, by when?

- There is some urgency. Decisions will be required by 17 June 2025 to ensure it is appropriately reflected in your Cabinet Paper and Consultation Document on proposals to replace NCEA. This paper is due with Cabinet Office by 10am Wednesday 18 June 2025.


## Alignment with Government priorities

1. This report helps to progress actions in the delivery plan for the Achievement Target under the 'clearer curriculum' and 'smarter assessment and reporting' priorities.

## Background

2. Following discussions with you, we have reviewed the timelines for the curriculum and qualification changes to balance:
  - 2.1. the first (and subsequent) cohort who will undertake the new senior secondary qualifications benefiting from the new curricula as soon as possible
  - 2.2. requests from the secondary sector for more time to prepare for implementation of Phase 5 of the new English, maths, Te Reo Rangatira and pāngarau curriculum content
  - 2.3. secondary schools and kura having time to prepare and access support for implementation of the new curricula and qualifications, noting that it is important they are able to focus on implementation of the new curricula before they need to implement changes to the senior secondary qualifications
  - 2.4. the need for both general curriculum subjects<sup>1</sup> and industry-led vocational curriculum subjects to be ready for use with the new qualifications.
3. Part A of this paper sets out how we have adjusted the timelines for the development and release of curriculum content to prioritise completing the Phase 1-4 learning areas and wāhanga ako so that they are ready for use from the start of 2026 (when the lead cohort for the planned, new senior secondary qualifications will be in Year 9).
4. Part B of this paper sets out advice on the timelines for requiring implementation of the refreshed curricula.

## Part A: Content development timelines and engagement on draft content

5. 9(2)(f)(iv)
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<sup>1</sup> These are the types of subjects that the sector currently knows as curricula-aligned 'Achievement Standards' subjects for NCEA, the development of which is led by the Ministry.

6. 9(2)(f)(iv)
7. To support the updated timelines, we are modifying our approach to engaging on the curriculum content as it is drafted. We will be more targeted in our approach to getting feedback on content and focus wider sector engagement on helping them understand the shifts in the content as part of preparing for implementation. We will primarily use focus groups to gather feedback on the content but will also provide an opportunity for the wider sector to see draft content during development so that they can provide feedback if they wish. 9(2)(f)(iv)
8. Given the accelerated approach, there may be concerns that issues will arise during implementation and not be responded to in a timely way. We will make clear that regular curriculum review processes are being established and will be informed by sector feedback on the curriculum alongside other insights and evidence. In addition, a Term 2 feedback loop with early adopters of the Phases 1-4 learning areas and wāhanga ako will be used to identify any matters to be addressed before the fully refreshed curricula are formally issued in the New Zealand Gazette in mid-2026 (and become required from the start of 2027). This aligns with your earlier update to Cabinet, which indicated that updated curriculum content will be tested in schools and kura before it becomes required [SOU-24-MIN-0051 refers].

## Part B: Setting requirements to use the updated curricula

9. Currently only English, mathematics and statistics, Te Reo Rangatira and pāngarau are planned to be finalised this year, and the sector is expecting their use to be required from the start of 2026. 9(2)(f)(iv)
10. We do not recommend also bringing forward the timeline for when the use of the full set of learning areas and wāhanga ako is required. This is likely to be seen as providing insufficient time for schools and kura to prepare. Our frontline curriculum advisory service and communications will, however, encourage schools and kura to begin using the updated curricula. They will also be clear that implementation of all the updated Phase 4 learning areas and wāhanga ako should be prioritised for Year 9 students (as the lead cohort for the new qualifications) and this will be reflected in our professional development and resources.
11. In relation to the fully refreshed English, mathematics and statistics, Te Reo Rangatira and pāngarau curriculum content, for which implementation is currently planned to be required from the start of 2026, we recommend that you:
- 11.1. maintain the current plan of formally issuing the updated curriculum statements for Phases 1-4 English, mathematics and statistics, Te Reo Rangatira and pāngarau in Term 4 2025, with their use becoming required from the start of 2026

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<sup>2</sup> We had 85 survey and 8 email responses on the draft Year 9-13 maths curriculum. This is significantly less than the 975 survey and 29 email responses for the earlier consultation on the draft Year 0-8 maths curriculum. Consultation on the draft Year 7-13 English curriculum is still open so we don't yet know final numbers, but we had 309 survey and 21 email responses as at 10 June. The earlier consultation on the draft Year 0-6 English curriculum had 396 survey and 34 email responses.

11.2. align the timing of the Phase 5 subjects for the English, maths, Te Reo Rangatira and pāngarau curricula with the implementation of the rest of the Phase 5 subjects (options for which are presented below).

### Options for implementation of Phase 5 of the curricula

12. We had earlier recommended adjusting the timeline for introducing Phase 5 of the refreshed curricula to align with the qualification changes, and you recently signalled your preference for this approach to be reflected in your Cabinet proposals [METIS 1346021 refers]. This would mean the curricula would be implemented for different Year levels using a cohort approach over 2027 to 2030 (Option A below).
13. Following further discussions, you have asked for more information on the relative benefits of aligning Phase 5 implementation timing with the qualification versus maintaining the existing timeline - which would see it implemented in 2027 for all Year levels but being assessed using aligned, existing NCEA Standards in the interim until the new qualification is available (Option B below).
14. While discussion with your Professional Advisory Group (PAG) traversed both approaches regarding Phase 5 timing, most members preferred that Phase 5 was implemented alongside NCEA qualification changes as it provided the sector with more time to get ready and was tidier to implement for schools (Option A).

#### *Option A: Aligning Phase 5 implementation timing with the qualification*

15. This option which would require Phase 5 curriculum content to be released in tranches ahead of changes to the NCEA qualification in 2028, 2029, and 2030. Taking into account the adjusted timeline for content development and release set out in Part A of this paper, this would see the sequential release of curricula as outlined in the table below.

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>Curriculum</b>	Refreshed curricula for Phases 1-4 (Yrs 0-10) available for use, with refreshed curricula for Phase 5 (Yrs 11-13) available for planning.	Refreshed curricula required for all learning areas in Phases 1-4 (Yrs 0-10).  Existing curricula for these Years are removed.	<b>Refreshed Phase 5 curricula with new Year 11 subject required</b> (including mandatory subject requirements)  Existing curricula for Year 11 removed.	<b>Refreshed Phase 5 curricula with new Year 12 subjects required</b> (including VET subjects and the new English, Mathematics & Statistics, Te Reo Rangatira and Pāngarau subjects)  Existing curricula for Year 12 removed.	<b>Refreshed Phase 5 curricula with new Year 13 subjects required</b> (including VET subjects and the new English, Mathematics & Statistics, Te Reo Rangatira and Pāngarau subjects)  Existing curricula for Year 13 removed.
<b>NCEA changes</b>	-	-	NCEA level 1 is removed & replaced by a Foundational Award	NCEA level 2 is removed and replaced with a new qualification	NCEA level 3 is removed and replaced with an advanced new qualification

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>Lead cohort (Year 8 in 2025)</b>	In Year 9: Strong encouragement and support for use of new curriculum with this cohort.	In Year 10: New curriculum required to be used	In Year 11: New curriculum required to be used New qualification	In Year 12: New curriculum required to be used New qualification	In Year 13: New curriculum required to be used New qualification

16. Analysis of key elements of this approach are that it:
- 16.1. doesn't create any student cohorts that are using the new curricula but being assessed against existing NCEA achievement standards
  - 16.2. doesn't require a best-fit of existing achievement standards as new standards will need to be developed and tailored to the subject content meaning it will be cleaner to operationalise
  - 16.3. allows the sector more time to get familiar with the Phase 5 curriculum content and to get ready for change, before it becomes required
  - 16.4. delays when students will begin being taught the new curriculum compared to current planning.

*Option B: Maintain the existing timeline for implementation of Phase 5*

- 17. Annex 1 sets out the timeline for curriculum and senior secondary qualification changes for Option B. Annex 2 providing a student-focussed cohort view of the implementation plan for Option B.
- 18. The timeline would mean there are three cohorts of students who will be taught the new curricula and assessed through aligned, existing NCEA standards. We have already begun an alignment process will be used to identify 'best fit' existing NCEA achievement standards which can be used to assess the new curriculum content for the subjects.
- 19. The release of the draft, and then final, subject curriculum content (as set out in the table in Part A of this paper) would be accompanied by the curriculum aligned standards which are to be used to assess students for the purposes of NCEA.

## Next steps

- 20. Any decisions arising from this paper may need to be changed in your Cabinet Paper due with the Cabinet Office at 10am Wednesday 18 June 2025
- 21. Communications for the timeline changes will occur as part of the integrated curriculum and NCEA plan being prepared to support the announcement of proposals for changes to qualifications for secondary schooling.

## Annexes

- Annex 1: Timeline for curriculum and senior secondary qualification changes if Option B chosen
- Annex 2: Student-focussed cohort view of the implementation plan if Option B chosen

## Recommended actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **note** that we are prioritising completion of the Phase 1-4 learning areas and wāhanga ako so that they are ready for use from the start of 2026, when the lead cohort for the planned new senior secondary qualifications will be in Year 9

Noted

- b. **note** that, to achieve this timeline, we have streamlined the approach to engaging on draft content through targeted use of focus groups with an opportunity for the wider sector to see a draft so that people can provide feedback if they wish (rather than formal periods of sector-wide consultation)

Noted

- c. **agree** that there will be no change to the planned timing for when the refreshed Phases 1-4 (Years 0-10) curricula will be required, i.e.:

- i. Phases 1-4 of the updated English, mathematics and statistics, Te Reo Rangatira and pāngarau learning areas and wāhanga ako to become required from the start of 2026
- ii. All other refreshed curricula content, including the other Phase 1-4 learning areas and wāhanga ako ~~and Phase 5 subjects~~ to become required from the start of 2027

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

- d. **note** that we will be encouraging use of all the new learning areas and wāhanga ako from the start of 2026, and that we will be clear that implementation of the updated Phase 4 learning areas and wāhanga ako should be prioritised for Year 9 students

Noted

- e. **agree** to one of the following options for the timing for when the refreshed Phase 5 (Years 11-13) curricula will be required:

EITHER

- i. Option A: Align timing with the qualification, which would see it implemented for different Year levels using a cohort approach, over 2027 to 2030

Agree / Disagree

OR

- ii. Option B: Maintain the existing timeline which would see it implemented in 2027 for all Year levels

Agree / Disagree

- f. **agree** that Phase 5 of the updated English, maths, Te Reo Rangatira and pāngarau subjects will become required at the same time as the rest of Phase 5 in alignment with your decision on recommendation (instead of the currently planned 2026)

as per feedback from the sector and NZATE.

Agree / Disagree

- g. **note** any decisions arising from this paper may need to be changed in your Cabinet Paper due with the Cabinet Office at 10am Wednesday 18 June 2025

Noted

**Proactive Release:**

- h. **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this paper once your decisions on timelines and the proposed changes to NCEA have been communicated publicly, with any information needing to be withheld done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree



Claire Eden  
**Acting Hautū | Deputy Secretary**  
**Te Poutāhū**

17/06/2025



Hon Erica Stanford  
**Minister of Education**

17,6,25

[IN-CONFIDENCE]

**Annex 1: Timeline for curriculum and senior secondary qualification changes if Option B chosen**  
9(2)(f)(iv)



Proactively Released

Proactively Released