



Investing in Secondary Achievement

Budget 2026 | Fact sheet

Budget 2026 provides \$257.3 million operating expenditure (opex) and \$7.6 million capital expenditure (capex) in support of the new secondary curriculum and to strengthen vocational education and training, reflecting the importance of assisting students going into the trades. It also funds significant progress in student assessment.

Key initiatives

- **\$15 million** to enable Industry Skills Boards to develop at least eight new secondary subjects, each focused on a specific industry (e.g. construction or primary industries). These will support more students to get high-quality vocational education and training while in secondary school.
- **\$68.9 million** to nearly double the number of places in Trades Academies to 20,000 by 2030. Trades Academies provide a secondary-tertiary programme that is industry-focused learning, providing vocational education and training for secondary students.
- **\$61.2 million** for resources to support the Refreshed Curriculum for Years 9-13.
- **\$20.1 million** for teacher professional learning and development for the Refreshed Curriculum for Years 11-13.
- **\$29.5 million** to start the replacement of the 20-year-old legacy technology system in NZQA which holds over 4.4 million learner achievement records.

Initiative	Funding	Facts
Industry Skills Boards	\$15 million opex	<p>This will enable Industry Skills Boards to develop at least eight new secondary school subjects; each focused on a specific industry (e.g. construction or primary industries).</p> <p>This will support more students to get high-quality vocational education and training while at school, to assist them into higher education or employment, including apprenticeships.</p>

Initiative	Funding	Facts
Expanding Vocational Training Opportunities for Secondary School Students	\$68.9 million opex	This will create 10,000 new places in Trades Academies by 2030. Trades Academies offer a secondary-tertiary programme that provides secondary school students with access to high-quality industry-led learning. Trades Academy places are currently insufficient to meet student demand.
Senior Secondary Subjects - Resources to Support the Refreshed Curriculum for Years 9-13	\$53.7 million opex \$7.5 million capex	This will fund the development of resources for all secondary curriculum subjects in the refreshed New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. It supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development of curriculum aligned resource packages with teacher guidance and activities, improvements and ongoing maintenance of Tāhūrangi, the Ministry's curriculum website, and a fund for schools and kura to purchase English and Te Reo Rangatira texts.
Senior Secondary Subjects – Teacher Professional Learning and Development for the Refreshed Curriculum for Years 11-13	\$20 million opex \$0.1 million capex	This will fund professional learning and development for secondary teachers to deliver the refreshed senior secondary curriculum and new national secondary qualifications for Years 12-13. This will reach approximately 32,620 teachers of Years 11–13 across 100 subjects.
New Zealand Qualifications Authority	\$44.5 million opex	This will fund a gap between what NZQA currently receives and the actual cost of delivering assessment for our national qualification. The gap has been driven by increases in the number of subjects and in the support required for special assessment conditions, internal assessment and quality assurance activity. The funding includes supporting the cost of Special Assessment Conditions arrangements for 19,000+ students.
New Zealand Qualifications Authority - Strategic Technology Enhancement Project	\$29.5 million opex	This funding will support NZQA's Strategic Technology Enhancement Project (STEP), which replaces 20-year-old IT infrastructure. This IT system provides the foundation for nationally significant service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivering our national qualification to over 220,000 students across 500 schools holding records of achievement for over 4.4 million learners. STEP will support NZQA's core business functions, integration with the wider education and social sector and future changes to the national qualification system.
New Zealand Qualifications Authority - Implementing the New Secondary School Qualification	\$8.4 million opex	This will provide time-limited funding for NZQA to begin developing the new secondary school qualification. It includes development and testing of internal and external assessments for the new Years 11-13 curriculum subjects. This funding will cover the first phase of work to be undertaken in 2026/27, including specialist workforce to deliver development of Internal and External Assessments and other associated products for testing (incl. training costs) for 128 subjects across Years 12 and 13.

Initiative	Funding	Facts
Administration Payment to Schools and Kura to deliver Co-requisite Assessments	\$5.6 million opex	This will go towards the administrative costs of schools' and kura to deliver National Certificate of Educational Achievement co-requisite external assessments. Funding will be administered by NZQA. It includes funding to support approximately 110,000 students.
New Zealand Qualifications Authority - Piloting AI and Machine Learning in our national qualification	\$2.1 million opex	This initiative will provide funding to NZQA for the first phase of work to develop pilots and proof of concepts for auto text scoring, AI and machine learning to support marking, moderation and exam development for our national qualification. AI and machine learning applications may enable greater consistency and standardisation, operational efficiency and speed.
Student Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Tool	\$9.4 million opex	This will expand the reach of the Student Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Tool (SMART) to Year 11 to support assessment of literacy and numeracy in anticipation of the new national secondary school qualification. It will serve the dual purpose of supporting teachers' understanding of student progress and credentialing achievement in English and Mathematics.
Rockquest Events – Cost Pressure	\$0.2 million opex	This will provide additional funding in recognition of ongoing cost pressures for funded events and programmes delivered by Rockquest Promotions LTD. These events provide students with hands-on real-world creative experiences across live performance, digital media, and visual arts.