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Review of Initial Teacher Education Programme Requirements: Summary of discussion document

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Transcriber's Note: The logo at the top of the page is
MartinJenkins.

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The Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programme Requirements are being reviewed following the transfer of responsibility from the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand to the Ministry of Education and the introduction of the 2026 Standards for the Teaching Profession. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) contracted MartinJenkins to review the ITE Programme Requirements in this context, with dandolopartners (dandolo) subcontracted by MartinJenkins to support this review. MartinJenkins and dandolo have jointly prepared the full discussion document and this summary.

This document summarises the full discussion document prepared as part of that review, which considers whether the current requirements remain fit for purpose and continue to support high-quality teacher preparation. This summary is intended to support discussion and feedback on the main issues, assumptions and opportunities identified in the full discussion document.

ITE programmes provide the foundational training required for individuals to become qualified and registered teachers

in early childhood education, schools and kura across Aotearoa New Zealand. The ITE Programme Requirements establish the expectations that all ITE programmes must meet in relation to programme design, delivery, assessment and quality assurance.

The discussion document argues that while current ITE programmes have many strengths, there is a growing need for greater consistency in how teachers are prepared. Beginning teachers need to enter the profession with the knowledge, practices and capabilities to support all learners, including Māori, Pasifika, disabled learners, and those with diverse learning needs. At the same time, providers need flexibility to design programmes that reflect their own context and strengths.

This summary outlines:

- Why the requirements should be reviewed now
- The principles used to guide the review
- Opportunities for improving the ITE Programme Requirements

Why the requirements should be reviewed now

To assess whether the current ITE Programme Requirements remain fit for purpose, the review considered how well they support consistent, high-quality

teacher preparation across providers and pathways. Drawing on desktop research, stakeholder interviews, literature and international evidence, and advice from an expert advisory panel, the review identified four interrelated reasons for reviewing and strengthening the ITE Programme Requirements.

- 1. Improving teacher preparedness to contribute to improving student outcomes.** Inequity in student outcomes remains a persistent challenge in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The quality of teaching is a critical in-system influence on learner outcomes, and ITE plays a crucial role in establishing the knowledge teachers need to contribute to this.
- 2. Addressing inconsistencies in beginning teacher preparedness.** Recent evidence indicates that a significant proportion of new teachers enter the profession feeling underprepared. Variation depending on where they studied suggests that the ITE Programme Requirements may not provide a sufficiently clear and shared foundation for graduate readiness across providers.
- 3. Ensuring all student teachers benefit from the stronger evidence base about effective teaching.** There is now greater clarity about the knowledge, practices and capabilities that support learning and development across early learning, schools and kura,

providing the impetus for a stronger foundation across providers to ensure that all student teachers engage with the evidence available about effective teaching.

4. **Responding consistently to wider education reforms.** Changes to curriculum and child safety obligations are reshaping what is expected of beginning teachers and the environments graduates will enter. The ITE Programme Requirements have an important role in keeping programmes aligned with these reforms and ensure a consistent understanding of how those expectations should be reflected in teacher preparation.

The principles used to guide the review

The review is guided by five key principles:

- **Aligning with contemporary evidence about effective teaching.** The ITE Programme Requirements should reflect contemporary evidence about effective teaching and professional knowledge regarding what beginning teachers should know and do, while recognising that evidence should be understood broadly and appropriately.
- **Responding to the Aotearoa New Zealand context with a genuine commitment to te ao Māori.** The ITE Programme Requirements should establish clear expectations that all graduates demonstrate capability

to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi in practice, engage authentically with te ao Māori, and contribute to educational success for Māori as Māori.

- **Ensuring ITE recognises the diversity of learners.** The ITE Programme Requirements should ensure beginning teachers are prepared to work effectively with learners who bring different identities, languages, cultures, experiences, abilities and learning needs.
- **Balancing programme consistency with contextualisation.** The ITE Programme Requirements should provide greater clarity about the core capabilities expected of all graduates while preserving flexibility for providers to design programmes that respond to their contexts, learners and partnerships.
- **Applying good regulatory practice.** The ITE Programme Requirements should reflect good regulatory practice by providing clear and consistent expectations, remaining proportionate to the risks being managed and focusing on areas where regulation can most effectively contribute to improved outcomes.

Opportunities for improving the ITE Programme Requirements

The paper identifies nine opportunities to strengthen the clarity, consistency and assurance provided by the ITE Programme Requirements while preserving flexibility for providers. The opportunities are focused on improvement across programme design, programme content and quality assurance. Each opportunity describes the current settings, the opportunity to strengthen them and the types of changes that may be needed to realise that opportunity.

The opportunities are intended to support discussion and feedback about how ITE could better prepare future teachers. These are not final recommendations, proposed amendments or draft ITE Programme Requirements. No decisions have been made about where any opportunities should be progressed. The opportunities do not represent Government policy, or a position of the Ministry.

Improving programme design

1. Clarify what counts as evidence, and how it should inform programme design

The current requirements expect programmes to be "evidence-informed", but there is no shared understanding of what this means, nor do they distinguish between evidence about effective teaching and the less settled evidence regarding specific ITE programme models. This

creates scope for providers to interpret and apply the expectation in different ways.

The paper proposes strengthening how "evidence-informed" is defined and positioned in the ITE Programme Requirements and establishing clearer expectations about the evidence that should inform programme design and teaching content.

The intention is to ensure all student teachers engage with robust research and evidence about effective teaching. Evidence would be understood broadly, including mātauranga Māori, kaupapa Māori evidence, Māori education research and professional expertise. This would create a stronger link between programme design, what is taught, and graduate readiness.

2. Reframe staff capability away from research production

Current requirements place a strong emphasis on research activity as evidence of staff capability. This treats research production as a key marker of staff capability, which may not reflect the applied purpose of ITE or the diversity of the provider landscape and can create disproportionate burden for non-university providers.

The paper suggests shifting the focus towards professional expertise, practice knowledge and engagement with evidence and removing research production as the default way of demonstrating capability. This recognises that

preparing effective teachers requires a combination of current teaching knowledge, professional learning and connections to practice, not just research production.

Providers could continue to demonstrate capability through research activity where appropriate, but research wouldn't be required as the only or universal route. This would better align the ITE Programme Requirements with the applied purpose of ITE and the diversity of the provider landscape.

3. Require programmes to articulate a coherent and complete model of progression

The current requirements expect ITE providers to demonstrate how different parts of their programme connect, including through a conceptual framework outlining the beliefs and values underpinning the programme, as well as its learning outcomes, programme structure and assessment framework.

The paper proposes requiring providers to go further and articulate a model of progression that clearly explains how the student journey is deliberately designed to build teaching capability over time, from entry through to graduation. This model would complement, rather than replace, the existing conceptual framework.

In this model, the student journey would become the organising principle for programme design. Providers would be required to show how curriculum, pedagogy,

professional experience, partnerships and assessment work together to support student teachers' progression towards the Standards for the Teaching Profession and readiness for professional practice.

The goal is to strengthen programme coherence while allowing flexibility for providers to develop progression models that reflect their programme structure, qualification type, student teacher characteristics and context.

Improving programme content

4. Retain current student entry requirements but improve consistency in how they are assessed

Recent changes have strengthened entry requirements, including the introduction of a common national numeracy assessment for English-medium primary programmes. However, the literacy assessment remains largely provider led, which can require applicants to complete multiple tests and limits assurance that candidates are being assessed against comparable thresholds.

The paper does not identify a need to change the current entry standards for ITE. Instead, it proposes making the way those standards are assessed more consistent across providers. For example, a common literacy assessment could reduce duplication, improve comparability, and strengthen confidence that applicants are being assessed against the same expectations.

This would align the literacy assessment with the existing national approach for numeracy and provide comparable assurance across providers. This would complement, rather than replace, existing requirements that are not captured by LNAAT and sit outside of literacy and numeracy. In particular, providers would continue to assess an applicant's proficiency in te reo Māori upon entry.

5. Introduce greater specificity regarding required content aligned with the 2026 Standards for the Teaching Profession

Under the current Requirements, providers have considerable discretion in interpreting the Standards for the Teaching Profession and determining what student teachers must learn to meet them in a supported environment. While this supports diversity in programme design, it can lead to inconsistent interpretations of the essential knowledge and practices that all student teachers should develop before entering the profession.

One of the most significant proposals in the paper is the development of a "shared core" of knowledge, practices and capabilities that all student teachers should learn before entering the profession. This strengthens the current arrangements, which give providers significant discretion to determine what students must learn to meet the Standards for the Teaching Profession.

This shared core would be aligned with the 2026 Standards for the Teaching Profession and would identify the essential knowledge and practices expected of beginning teachers. It would include common elements for all programmes and specific elements for early childhood, schooling and kura contexts, drawing on the strongest available evidence, mātauranga Māori and professional consensus. It wouldn't cover everything a student teacher should learn, but would provide explicit direction in areas where there is clear and established evidence or consensus about the knowledge and practices required for quality teaching.

Providers would be required to incorporate the shared core into their programmes, while retaining responsibility for programme design, contextualisation, partnerships and professional experience models. This would establish a clearer common foundation for graduate readiness while preserving flexibility in how providers teach, sequence and contextualise the required content.

6. Embed clearer expectations for high-quality professional experience

Professional experience placements are widely recognised as one of the most important parts of teacher preparation. The current ITE Programme Requirements rely heavily on providers to interpret and implement the conditions that make professional experience high quality, which can contribute to variable placement experiences.

The paper proposes clearer expectations for what high-quality professional experience looks like, including better preparation and support for associate teachers, more structured opportunities for active teaching aligned to the model of progression, stronger communication between providers and placement settings, and a focus on quality rather than simply the number of placement days completed. Clearer expectations would also clarify the shared responsibilities of providers, schools, kura, early learning services and associate teachers.

The changes would distinguish between common quality expectations and pathway-specific design features, recognising that different programme structures, including employment-based pathways, may require different approaches.

The paper also recognises that many factors affecting the availability and quality of professional experience sit outside the ITE Programme Requirements and require complementary system-level action.

7. Consider a national, standardised and externally moderated assessment framework

The current assessment architecture outlined in the ITE Programme Requirements relies heavily on provider-led judgements and does not align these judgements to a sufficiently explicit external standard. This limits independent assurance that graduates from different

providers have met a consistent national threshold for readiness to teach.

The paper proposes retaining provider-led assessment while introducing a national assessment framework that provides stronger external assurance of student teacher capability. The framework could assess core knowledge, professional judgement and application, and observed teaching practice, supported by clear external standards and robust moderation from independent assessors.

The assessment framework would be guided by a set of principles to ensure that it strengthens confidence in graduate readiness while supporting assessment that is authentic, fair, and fit for purpose. It would support reliable and comparable judgements across providers, while allowing flexibility in how assessments are sequenced and embedded within different programme models.

8. Establish clearer links between ITE preparation and supports for early career teachers

At present, the ITE Programme Requirements and the supports available to beginning teachers, such as induction and mentoring, operate largely as separate systems. The transition of a student teacher from an ITE programme to employment in a school or early learning setting is a critical stage of teacher development. The current ITE Programme Requirements include a recommendation that graduates be provided with

information to inform their induction and mentoring but stop short of establishing a formal connection between programme design and early career support.

The paper proposes that ITE programmes more explicitly prepare graduates for the transition into beginning teacher roles. This would include helping student teachers understand induction and mentoring, progression to full certification and strategies for continued professional growth, while making clearer connections between the capabilities developed during ITE and those reinforced through early career support.

This would position ITE as the first stage of a more coherent professional learning journey, rather than a discrete phase that ends at graduation. It would not extend the ITE Programme Requirements into employment or transfer responsibility for ongoing support away from employers and the wider system.

Improving programme quality assurance

9. Strengthen the rigour and consistency of programme approvals, monitoring and moderation

Programme approvals, monitoring and national moderation are the three principal mechanisms through which the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand provides independent oversight of ITE programme quality. However, variation in approval panel composition, monitor selection

and moderation arrangements can limit the rigour, consistency and transparency of quality-assurance judgements across programmes.

The paper proposes strengthening these mechanisms through standing national approval panels, a trained pool of panellists and monitors, independent appointment of monitors, and a shared monitoring framework focused on programme delivery and the development of graduate capability. It also proposes clearer links between monitoring findings and required action, and a more coherent national moderation arrangement.

Together, these changes would provide stronger assurance that programmes are designed and delivered to a consistently high standard and that approval, monitoring and moderation decisions are based on explicit and transparent expectations. They would also support oversight of any new shared core and help ensure new requirements are implemented with sufficient depth, coherence and rigour.

Changes would need to build on the strengths of existing quality-assurance processes, complement the roles of the Ministry, Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand and tertiary quality-assurance bodies, and avoid unnecessary duplication or compliance burden for providers. Māori-medium programmes would continue to require an

appropriately contextualised approval pathway supported by Māori-medium expertise.

Looking ahead

Taken together, the nine opportunities represent a shift toward a more coherent and consistent approach to teacher preparation in Aotearoa New Zealand. The overall direction is to provide greater clarity about what all beginning teachers should know and be able to do, while preserving flexibility for providers to reflect their own contexts and approaches.

The discussion document does not propose a single model of teacher education. Instead, it seeks feedback on whether a stronger shared foundation, clearer expectations, and more robust quality assurance could improve confidence that all graduates are ready to support learner success from the start of their teaching careers.

How can I provide feedback?

We encourage anyone with an interest in Initial Teacher Education, teaching and learning, or the future teacher workforce to share their views.

The engagement period for the ITE Programme Requirements Review runs from 2 October to 13 November 2026. Please provide your feedback by 13 November 2026.

You can provide feedback by:

- Completing a short online survey (around 15 minutes) under Have Your Say on the ITE Programme Requirements Review webpage:
<https://www.education.govt.nz/have-your-say/have-your-say-review-initial-teacher-education-programme-requirements/details> or:
<https://www.education.govt.nz/ite-review>.
- Using the same online survey to make a written submission of any length.
- Emailing your feedback or submission to TeachingStandards@education.govt.nz.
- Providing your feedback in an alternative format, including New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), audio, video, or another accessible format, by contacting TeachingStandards@education.govt.nz.

For more information about the review, including supporting documents and accessible formats, visit the ITE Programme Requirements Review webpage:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/have-your-say/have-your-say-review-initial-teacher-education-programme-requirements/details> or: <https://www.education.govt.nz/ite-review>.

End of Review of Initial Teacher Education Programme Requirements: Summary of discussion document