Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Report: Remaining polytechnics - Order in Council consultation process and material

To:	Hon Penny Simmonds, Minister for Vocational Education		
Date:	30/03/2026	Deadline:	2/04/2026
Priority:	Medium		
From:	9(2)(a) Acting GM Tertiary Policy	Phone:	9(2)(a)
Drafter:	9(2)(a)	METIS No:	1355413
Title ok for release?		Yes	

Why are we sending this to you?

- We are seeking your agreement to the proposed approach to the statutory consultation on the establishment of three of the remaining polytechnics.

What action do we need, by when?

- We request this paper be returned, indicating your decisions by 2 April 2026.
- Consultation material has been prepared and needs to be sent out to relevant stakeholders by 8 April 2026.

Key facts, issues and questions

- You are required to consult with stakeholders before the Orders in Council (Orders) establishing each polytechnic are lodged for approval by the Cabinet Legislation Committee (LEG).
- There is limited time for this consultation to occur, and for officials to provide subsequent advice to you, however we anticipate the process should be relatively straight forward.
- We recommend proceeding with the same approach taken last year when the first 10 polytechnics were established and running a closed consultation process with targeted stakeholders.

Proactively Released

Alignment with Government priorities

1. This report supports the implementation of the redesign of the vocational education and training (VET) system, which is one of your priorities for the Vocational Education portfolio.

Background

2. On 25 March the Social Outcomes Committee (SOU) agreed to proceed with the establishment by Order in Council of the Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT), WelTec/Whitireia in Wellington, and NorthTec Polytechnic in Northland [SOU-26-MIN-0022 refers].

3. This is a significant final step in the implementation of the redesign of the VET system, and towards the full network of regional polytechnics being operational on 1 January 2027.

4. Consultation is required by the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) before polytechnics are established and needs to occur before your LEG paper recommending the making of the Orders is circulated for Ministerial and agency consultation, which is currently scheduled to occur from 29 April to 6 May 2026.

5. Ministry and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) officials consider following the same process as the statutory consultation undertaken for the first 10 polytechnics established last year is the best approach to ensure consistency across the network and to meet the statutory requirements, as well as to fit within the tight timeframes available.

Discussion

There is limited time available for the consultation process and to meet deadlines

6. Meeting deadlines for your LEG paper requires a short consultation period, and a rapid turnaround between the end of that period and providing a draft of the LEG paper to you for your feedback and to ensure the paper is ready for Ministerial and agency consultation. Key dates in the process are set out below:

Date	Steps
8-17 April	Formal consultation with sector
22 April	Briefing to Minister with results of consultation, final advice on the polytechnics to be established, and draft LEG paper.
24 April	Feedback from Minister on draft LEG paper
28 April	Final LEG paper for Minister approval prior to formal consultation
29 April to 6 May	Ministerial and agency consultation
11 May	Feedback incorporated and final LEG paper to Minister for approval for lodging
14 May	LEG paper lodged
21 May	**LEG meeting**

Proactively Released

We propose to follow the same consultation process as last year

7. As per last year's process, we propose a targeted closed approach to consultation. Only stakeholders who receive an invitation will be able to access the response form, and they will provide feedback on a specific polytechnic.

8. Whilst you must consult on establishing each polytechnic, the provisions in the Act do not require you to undertake broad, open consultation. The polytechnic provisions give you discretion to identify the stakeholders you see fit. There has been extensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders over the course of the VET reforms. This has given the TEC and the Ministry a large bank of stakeholders that can be invited to participate in the consultation process.

9. We intend to use the same questions for each of the three polytechnics that were used for the statutory consultation last year. These include questions that allow for primarily 'Yes/ No' responses, or similar limited options, plus an open-text field to suggest an alternative name.

We will consult with specific regional stakeholders as we did last year

10. Polytechnic consultation requirements are set by section 315(2)(b) of the Act. This requires the Minister to, before establishing a polytechnic, "consult other persons or bodies that the Minister thinks fit". This is broad wording that requires you to engage in consultation, but does not specify who must be consulted, or the matters on which you must consult them.

11. Polytechnics are intended to reflect the regions they serve (section 314), and a key rationale for the VET redesign is to increase regional responsiveness. The TEC will develop a bespoke list of key regional stakeholders for each of the proposed three polytechnics, including local government and Chambers of Commerce. Annex 1 sets out the broad stakeholder groups that are intended to be included. These are the same groups that were approved by you to be consulted on the establishment of the first 10 polytechnics (METIS 1352460 refers). Please indicate if you would like any further stakeholder groups to be included in the attached list (Annex 1).

Proposed consultation materials for your consideration

12. The TEC will send an email directly to all stakeholders on your behalf to initiate the consultation, and the draft email is attached at Annex 2.

13. As per the previous consultation, we will not be including the draft Orders in the consultation materials, but they will mirror the Orders already published for the first 10 polytechnics. The polytechnic Orders are short and include very little content.

14. Section 315 of the Act requires you to consider some specific matters before establishing a polytechnic. Therefore, as per last year, the consultation questions are based on these three areas:

    a. Do you support establishing the polytechnic with this name?
    b. How well do you consider that this polytechnic will be able to meet the statutory characteristics of a polytechnic (as set out in section 314 of the Act)?
    c. Do you consider that establishing this polytechnic is in the interests of the tertiary education system and the nation as a whole?

15. We have reviewed the questionnaire used for the polytechnic consultation last year and consider it remains fit for purpose and propose that the same questions are used this time. The questions are attached at Annex 3 for your review.

Proactively Released

Risks

16. Whilst the stakeholder list and invitees are targeted, previous VET consultations have shown us that stakeholders do proactively distribute invitations among their networks, and it is likely they will do this again. However, based on last years' consultation process for the polytechnic Orders, we do not expect an onerous volume of responses. To manage response volumes, the TEC will commence analysis while consultation is still open and will ensure sufficient staff resource is available to process the responses within the limited time available.

17. To manage any concern regarding the closed approach to consultation, in any public facing communications, we recommend emphasising the large amount of consultation and engagement undertaken throughout the reforms since 2024, and how this has informed the polytechnics being established this year.

Next Steps

18. The next steps in terms of papers from the Ministry and actions required by your office are set out in the table at paragraph 6.

19. Officials are available to discuss any aspects of the consultation with you. Once we receive this paper signed and returned by your office, the TEC will finalise all consultation materials ready to be sent to stakeholders on 8 April 2026.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

note that consultation is required under section 315 of the Act before establishing each polytechnic

Noted

note that the timeline for completing consultation and progressing the LEG paper is tight, but manageable at this stage

Noted

agree that the consultation will follow the same process and engage the same broad stakeholder groups as for the establishment of the first 10 polytechnics in 2025

Agree / Disagree

agree that the consultation will utilise the same questions as for the establishment of the first 10 polytechnics in 2025

Agree / Disagree

Proactively Released

Proactive Release:

agree that the Ministry of Education release this paper once the secondary legislation instruments have been issued and published with any information needing to be withheld done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree

9(2)(a)

Acting General Manager

Te Pou Kaupapahere

30/03/2026

Hon Penny Simmonds

Minister for Vocational Education

31/03/20

Proactively Released

Annex 1:

Stakeholder groups for targeted polytechnic OiC consultation

- Establishment Advisory Groups
- Mayors within the relevant region
- Local chambers of commerce
- Iwi of the region
- Existing institution-based students associations
- Business New Zealand
- Tertiary Education Union and TIASA
- New Zealand Union of Students Associations
- Other Tertiary Education Institutions within regions

METIS No. 1352460 sought approval for these stakeholders in 2025.

In addition, regional development agencies were included in the 2025 consultation.

Proactively Released

Annex 2: Draft email

Kia ora

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, we are pleased to invite your feedback on the formal proposal to establish the new polytechnics under the reformed vocational education system, which are:

- NorthTec (Northland region)
- Whitireia and WelTec as a single entity (Wellington region)
- Western Institute of Technology Taranaki (WITT) (Taranaki region)

Purpose of the consultation

Section 315 of the Education and Training Act 2020 requires the Minister of Vocational Education to consult with persons or bodies they see fit, before the Order in Council establishing a polytechnic is made. You are invited to participate as one of these stakeholders.

Consultation materials

We request that you complete the webform for the polytechnic that is most strongly connected to your region.

The following materials are available to support your participation in the consultation:

- Legislation (Education and Training Act 2020)
- Polytechnic Order in Council consultation response form: *(relevant link added here)*

Deadline for feedback

Please provide your feedback by **12pm Friday, 17 April 2026**.

Your feedback will help ensure the Orders reflect the needs of learners, communities, and the tertiary education sector, and support the successful implementation of the new vocational education system from 1 January 2027.

If you have any questions about the consultation process or the draft Orders, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Ngā mihi

Gillian Dudgeon

Deputy Chief Executive, Delivery Directorate
Tertiary Education Commission

Katrina Sutich

General Manager Tertiary
Te Pou Kaupapahere | Policy
Ministry of Education

Proactively Released

Annex 3:

Polytechnic OiC Consultation Questions

Important note Please do not share the link to this consultation form. It is intended for invited participants only to ensure the integrity and relevance of the feedback received.

Use of Information The information you provide in this form, including any personal information, will be shared with the Ministry of Education (the Ministry). It will be used to inform the establishment of the Order in Council for each polytechnic. Neither the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) nor the Ministry intends to publish individual feedback. However, we may contact you directly if clarification is needed regarding your feedback.

Personal Information TEC and the Ministry are committed to complying with the Privacy Act 2020 in relation to the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information. There are appropriate processes in place to ensure the secure storage, access, and correction of personal information. Any personal information you provide will be used solely for the purpose of supporting policy development and finalising the Orders in Council.

Official Information Your feedback may be subject to requests under the Official Information Act 1982, which requires the release of information unless there is a valid reason to withhold it under the Act. If such a request is received, we will consult with you before releasing any part of your feedback. This is why we ask for your contact details.

Contact and Corrections If you have any questions, would like to request a copy of your feedback, correct it, or withdraw it, please contact us at VETconsultation@tec.govt.nz

Proactively Released

Question #	Question	Response
1	Do you accept the above terms before proceeding with the form?	Response: • Yes • No
2	What is your name?	Response: Open text
3	What is your email address?	Response: Open text
4	Do you support the proposed name for the Polytechnic?	Response: • Yes • No • No opinion
5 (Sub)[1]	If you would prefer an alternative name, please suggest this below.	Response: Open text
6	The Education and Training Act 2020 sets out statutory characteristics of a polytechnic. Do you think that, if established on 1 January 2026, this polytechnic is likely to meet each of these? **Characteristics of polytechnics:** (a) they offer a wide diversity of continuing education that contributes to the maintenance, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge and expertise and promotes community learning; and	Offering a wide diversity of continuing education that contributes to knowledge and promotes community learning RESPONSE • Yes • No • Unsure Offering education and training that responds to the needs of local communities and industries in your region

[1] This question is only visible if the answer is "No" to Q4.

Proactively Released

	(b) they are predominantly involved in providing continuing education that responds to the education and training needs of local communities and industries in their regions; and (c) they undertake research, particularly applied and technological research; and (d) they improve outcomes for Māori students and trainees and Māori communities in collaboration with Māori and iwi and other interested persons or bodies.	RESPONSE • Yes • No • Unsure Research, particularly applied and technological research RESPONSE • Yes • No • Unsure Improving outcomes for Māori students and trainees and Māori communities RESPONSE • Yes • No • Unsure
7	Do you consider that establishing this polytechnic is in the interests of the tertiary education system?	RESPONSE • Yes • No • Unsure

Proactively Released