



Education Report: Decisions Ahead of Engaging on the Provisional Subject Lists for NCEA

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	14 May 2021	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1259517
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- **Agree** to public engagement on the *New Zealand Curriculum* provisional subject list for NCEA Levels 2 and 3, and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* provisional subject list for NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3, developed by the Ministry in consultation with NZQA following a review of the current subjects

Summary

- 1 We have developed provisional subject lists for NCEA Levels 2 and 3 totalling 78 subjects including 62 subjects derived from the *New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* and 16 derived from *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMoA)*. We are seeking your approval to publicly engage on whether the provisional subject lists reflect the National Curriculum-derived learning that should be available. Note, Vagahau Niue and Gagana Tokelau are confirmed as per Budget 21 decisions [METIS 1255448 refers].
- 2 The provisional subject lists reflect a policy intent for increasing specialisation at NCEA Levels 2 and 3. This will be implemented through the expansion of subject offerings at Levels 2 and 3, particularly through additional *NZC* subjects which support vocational learning, Mātauranga Māori and Pacific knowledges and through *TMoA* subjects which allow for more specialised learning within Wāhanga Ako.
- 3 Engagement will occur over eight weeks from June. We ideally need final decisions on the subject list by September 2021, which is when we intend to begin the development of NCEA Level 2 in order to stay on-track to implement the NCEA Change Programme by 2025. As part of decisions on the final subject list, we will identify which subjects will be developed under the NCEA Change Programme Review of Achievement Standards (RAS) and which will be developed in a longer-term development pipeline due to operational constraints and sector capacity to support the change. The implications of the Reform of Vocational Education will also

need to be considered before final decisions on the development of any new subjects in areas within the scope of Workforce Development Councils.

- 4 We will be developing nearly twice the number of subjects at Levels 2 and 3 than we did for Level 1. This means that our operational capability and capacity will need to scale up to deal with the increased volume and complexity. This is a large programme of work and change. We will be keeping a careful watch on progress through our planned programme of work, with particular reference to the sector's capacity to take part in the work on the current timeline and absorb the changes. We have considered contingencies should different approaches need to be adopted and will keep you informed as appropriate.
- 5 We have engaged with your Professional Advisory Group for NCEA during the preparation of our advice. They are supportive of the draft list, proposed discussion documents, and approach to engagement.
- 6 Once you have approved us commencing public engagement, we recommend that you instruct officials to offer briefings to the National Party, Act Party, Green Party and Māori Party education spokespeople, in line with the approach today of cross-party working on the NCEA Change Programme. You may also wish to take an oral item to Cabinet (as you did prior to engagement on the Level 1 provisional subject list) informing them that public engagement is about to commence.
- 7 Subject to your agreement, we will work with your office to arrange briefings for education spokespeople and prepare an oral item to inform your Cabinet colleagues on public engagements. We will also provide your office with full technical reports on the subject lists and our communications and engagement plans as they are finalised, so they can be proactively released.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **Agree** to public engagement on the *New Zealand Curriculum* provisional subject list for NCEA Levels 2 and 3 that has been developed by the Ministry in consultation with NZQA following a review of the current subjects
 Agree Disagree
- b. **Agree** to public engagement on *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* provisional subject list for NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 that has been developed by the Ministry in consultation with NZQA following a review of the current subjects
 Agree Disagree
- c. **Note** that for communication purposes, Vagahau Niue and Gagana Tokelau are already confirmed as NCEA Level 1 to 3 subjects derived from the *New Zealand Curriculum*, following your decision to progress development of these subjects
Noted
- d. **Note** that public engagement on the provisional subject lists is proposed to occur from June 2021 and be for eight weeks
Noted

e. **Note** that further decisions before September 2021 are required to finalise the subject lists and determine which subjects will be developed on longer timelines if the final list exceeds the Ministry, NZQA and the sector's capacity to deliver, or need to dovetail more closely with the Reform of Vocational Education

Noted

f. **Note** that operational capacity and capability will need to scale up to develop NCEA Levels 2 and 3, and the subsequent risks (and proposed treatments) outlined in paragraphs 32 to 36

Noted

g. **Agree** to instruct officials to brief the education spokespeople of the National Party, Act Party, Green Party and Māori Party on the public engagement on the provisional subject lists

Agree / Disagree

h. **Agree** to take an oral item to Cabinet to advise of the public engagement on the provisional subject lists

Agree / Disagree

i. **Agree** to proactively release this report following announcements on public engagement

Agree / Disagree



Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement

14/05/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

19 / 5 / 2021

Background

1. As noted in our previous Education Reports on the Review of Achievement Standards (RAS) [METIS 1244787 refers], before beginning development of NCEA Levels 2 and 3 you need to approve public engagement on the list of subjects which will be developed at those Levels. We have undertaken a robust process internally to develop provisional subject lists on which we propose to engage publicly before advising you on final decisions.
2. RAS is the most significant and ambitious lever to implement the NCEA Change Package. By 2025 RAS will have replaced all current achievement standards with new standards which reflect the seven NCEA changes. This is a significant undertaking, essentially overhauling the entirety of senior secondary education while minimising disruption to students, teachers and schools.
3. Since late 2020, we have been running an internal process to determine which subjects could be developed at Levels 2 and 3. From this process, we have developed provisional lists of 78 subjects in total, 62 derived from the *New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* and 16 from *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMOA)*. We intend to engage on these lists publicly for eight weeks beginning from June. Further details on the policy and development process behind the provisional subject lists and how we intend to engage on the subject lists are provided below.
4. We recommend that prior to public engagement you instruct officials to brief the Education spokespeople from the National Party, Act Party, Green Party and Māori Party in line with the approach today of cross-party working on the NCEA Change Programme. You may also wish to take an oral item to Cabinet (as you did prior to engagement on the Level 1 provisional subject list) informing them that public engagement is about to commence. However, Cabinet approval for the provisional subject list is not required. Following public engagement, we will need you to approve the Ministry announcing the final subject lists before we commence the development of NCEA Level 2 from September 2021 to stay on-track to implement the NCEA Change Programme by 2025 (not including subjects on a longer development track).
5. Following your previous decisions on Budget 21 [METIS 1255448 refers], the Ministry is treating Gagana Tokelau and Vagahau Niue as confirmed subjects for Levels 1, 2 and 3.

Developing the provisional subject lists for NCEA Level 2 and 3

6. In the current design of NCEA there is no definitive 'NCEA subject list'. Standards are instead presented as being able to be mixed for use in school-designed courses with all sorts of names and content. We currently consider there to be 51 Level 2 and 3 subjects for the *NZC* and 10 for the *TMOA*, with some ambiguity. Further information can be found in the full technical reports which we will share with your Office should you wish to reference them and will be proactively released alongside this advice.
7. NCEA subject lists are very important in the NCEA Change Programme – each 'subject' will get 20 credits and four standards with two external assessments, and every teacher or kaiako who practices within that 'subject' (i.e., accesses its standards) will be expected to work with these standards.
8. We had direction to re-position NCEA Level 1 as a broad and foundational qualification. However, as you noted in the NCEA Change Package Cabinet Paper "Implementation of the new, strengthened NCEA" [CAB-20-MIN-0023 refers], we "anticipate an expansion of the range of subjects available at NCEA Levels 2 and 3, particularly for disciplines which

are vocational, grounded in Māori or Pacific knowledge bases, or which reflect modern disciplines and pathways.”

Our criteria, and increasing specialisation

9. The key policy question has been how to operationalise ‘increasing specialisation at Levels 2 and 3’. To guide the development of the subject lists and provide clarity of what specialisation at Levels 2 and 3 means, we have refined a list of criteria:
 - a. Presence of a coherent body of knowledge and/or skills, which is conceptually distinct from other subjects already registered and supported, appropriately levelled and sized for NCEA contexts
 - b. Public interest in the subject being available through NCEA
 - c. Quality and strength of pathways on to further study and employment
 - d. Material interest from ākonga (including, if applicable, sufficient ākonga enrolments in existing standards to indicate a minimum viable uptake)
 - e. Support from a significant body of practitioners, including sufficient commitment to supporting standard and resource creation, exam-setting and the moderation processes
 - f. Evidence the subject would support schools to develop local curricula which reflect the aspirations of their communities and the needs of their diversity of ākonga
 - g. Opportunity for the subject to support ākonga Māori to succeed as Māori, meeting the Crown’s commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Provisional Subject Lists

10. The provisional subject lists consist of 62 *NZC* derived subjects and 16 *TMoA* derived subjects. Note that in some cases, the new subjects we are proposing will impact the NCEA Level 1 subject list; new language learning subjects will need to be developed at NCEA Level 1 too for example.
11. Overall, we are satisfied that the provisional lists build on emerging new subject areas and include the subjects people will expect. This means an increase in subjects, but this is consistent with the policy of more specialisation and commitments made previously to Cabinet [CAB-20-MIN-0023 refers].
12. The lists are provided below. Subjects that are not currently supported with achievement standards are listed at the bottom of each section as *new subjects*.

New Zealand Curriculum Provisional Subject List

Learning Area	Current Level 2/3 Subjects	Proposed Level 2/3 Subjects
English	English	English
Te Reo Māori¹	Te Reo Māori	Te Reo Māori
The Arts	Art History	Art History
	Dance	Dance
	Design	Design
	Drama	Drama
	Music	Music Creation Music Representation
	Painting	Visual Arts (provisional name)
	Printmaking	
	Sculpture	
	Photography	Photography and Film (provisional name)
	Te Ao Haka	Te Ao Haka
	<i>New subjects</i>	Mau Rākau Raranga Whakairo
Health and Physical Education	Health Education	Health Education
	Home Economics	Food and Nutrition (provisional name)
	Physical Education	Physical Education
	<i>New subjects</i>	Outdoor Education Whaiora
Learning Languages	Bahasa Indonesia	--
	Cook Islands Māori	Cook Islands Māori
	French	French
	Gagana Sāmoa	Gagana Sāmoa
	German	German
	Japanese	Japanese
	Korean	Korean
	Latin	--
	Lea Faka-Tonga	Lea Faka-Tonga
	Mandarin	Mandarin
	NZ Sign Language	NZ Sign Language
	Spanish	Spanish
	<i>Confirmed new subjects</i>	Gagana Tokelau Vagahau Niue
	<i>New subjects</i>	Comparative Language (provisional name) English as a Second Language (provisional name)
	Mathematics	Mathematics and Statistics (Level 2)

¹ Te Reo Māori is not a Learning Area in the NZC. However, we have listed it separately to denote its importance and for consistency with the NCEA Level 1 provisional subject list.

Learning Area	Current Level 2/3 Subjects	Proposed Level 2/3 Subjects
Mathematics and Statistics		Statistics
	Mathematics and Calculus (Level 3)	
	Statistics (Level 3)	
	<i>New Subject (Level 3)</i>	Applied Mathematics (Level 3)
Sciences	Agricultural and Horticultural Science	Agricultural and Horticultural Science
	Biology	Biology
	Chemistry	Chemistry
	Earth and Space Science	Earth and Space Science
	Physics	Physics
	<i>New subject</i>	Science
Social Studies	Accounting	Accounting
	Business Studies (including Agribusiness)	Agribusiness
		Business Studies
	Classical Studies	Classical Studies
	Economics	Economics
	Education for Sustainability	Environment and Societies (provisional name)
	Geography	Geography
	History	History
	Media Studies	Media Studies
	Psychology	Psychology
	Religious Studies	Religious Studies
	Social Studies	People and Societies (provisional name)
	<i>New subjects</i>	Māori Studies (provisional name)
	Pacific Studies	
	Tourism	
Technology	Construction and Mechanical Technologies	Materials Technology (provisional name)
	Design and Visual Communication	Design and Visual Communication
	Digital Technologies	Designing and Developing Digital Outcomes (provisional name)
	Generic technology	--
	Processing Technology	Processing Technology (provisional name)
	<i>New subject</i>	Computational Thinking (provisional name)

Te Marautanga o Aotearoa Provisional Subject List

Wāhanga Ako	Proposed Level 1 Subjects	Proposed Level 2/3 Subjects
Te Reo Māori	Te Reo Rangatira	Te Reo Rangatira
Pāngarau	Pāngarau	Pāngarau
Hauora	Hauora	Hauora
		Hākinakina (<i>new</i>)
Tikanga ā-lwi	Tikanga ā-lwi	Tikanga ā-lwi
		Tauhokohoko (<i>new</i>)

Wāhanga Ako	Proposed Level 1 Subjects	Proposed Level 2/3 Subjects
		Te Hītori o Aotearoa (<i>new</i>)
Ngā Toi	Toi Ataata	Toi Ataata
	Toi Puoro	Toi Puoro
	Ngā Mahi a te Rēhia	Ngā Mahi a te Rēhia
		Toi Whakairo (<i>new</i>)
Mau Rākau (<i>new</i>)		
Pūtaiao	Pūtaiao	Pūtaiao
Hangarau	Hangarau	Hangarau
		Hangarau Matihiko (<i>new</i>)
Te Reo Pākehā	Te Reo Pākehā (<i>new</i>)	Te Reo Pākehā (<i>new</i>)

13. Descriptions of each subject and the key changes are summarised in the proposed discussion documents appended at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. These discussion documents, along with proactively released technical reports, will provide the information base for public engagement.
14. Some newer subjects which we are engaging on will be developed and phased in over a longer timeframe, which reflects the additional scoping work and development required. However, where allowed we will develop new subjects more quickly. This is discussed more fully below.

Engaging on the Provisional Subject Lists for NCEA Level 2 and 3

15. Following your approval, we intend to engage for eight weeks beginning in June 2021. We will then work towards final decisions on the subject list by September 2021, which is when we intend to begin the development of NCEA Level 2 in order to stay on-track to implement the NCEA Change Programme by 2025.
16. To support the engagement, we have developed discussion documents on the *NZC* and *TMoA* provisional subject lists which are appended to this report, and a survey designed to gather targeted feedback from stakeholders. We will share our communications and engagement plan with your office closer to the time.
17. Our strategy for engagement will be to frame the provisional subject lists as a positive opportunity to modernise the offered NCEA subjects and credential previously unrecognised learning. This is particularly clear around new subject options which support mātauranga Māori and Pacific knowledges, and subjects which support the assessment of vocational learning through Achievement Standards.
18. Our engagement on Gagana Tokelau and Vagahau Niue will reflect the unique status of these as confirmed subjects, and will be consistent with post-Budget communications on their development.
19. We expect that there will be significant scrutiny of our proposals, particularly from teachers of subjects which were consolidated or removed in the *NZC* Level 1 Subject List or where we propose to make changes to an existing subject or group of subjects. Specific areas where we expect additional scrutiny are also highlighted below:
- We want to test the sector's appetite to have fewer, more distinct options in the Visual Arts, in contrast to the 'cloned' subjects that are currently available.

- b. We are seeking to refresh some subjects with declining student numbers – Home Economics (as noted above), Education for Sustainability, and Senior Social Studies – to clarify their purpose and emphasise underserved aspects of these subjects.
 - c. We wish to test a couple of options for Technology and have asked the Royal Society to take an independent look which we can discuss with the sector.
20. In our proposed discussion documents and communications, we will provide clear descriptions of each proposed subject and the rationale for any change alongside the provisional subject lists. We will also directly engage with Subject Associations and other interested groups.
21. As discussed at paragraphs 23 - 25 below, our engagement will manage sector expectations around the timelines for the development of newer subjects and be clear that final decisions have not been made on the subject lists.

Finalising the Subject Lists for NCEA Level 2 and 3

22. Following public engagement, we will work to finalise the Subject Lists, involving the sector as required, before beginning development of NCEA Level 2 in September 2021. If a list cannot be finalised quickly due to the findings of the public engagement, subjects which will definitely be developed will begin first. This is consistent with our approach to NCEA Level 1 where the subjects not impacted in the public engagement proceeded to development before final decisions on all subjects.

Delivery implications

23. Although the provisional subject list includes 78 subjects, the Ministry and NZQA planned for implementation of 68 as part of the main development timeline for RAS. This means that up to 10 subjects which we are engaging on will need to be developed outside the main RAS timeline. This upper limit is based on our and NZQA's operational capacity and capability as well as a recognition of the sector's capacity to take part in the work on the current timeline and absorb 'new' options on top of managing change.
24. For some newer subjects a different development timeline is also required as additional scoping work still needs to be done before a Subject Expert Group (SEG) can be convened to develop the subject. A longer development period will also provide additional opportunities to consult with subject matter experts and develop professional development for teachers picking up the subject. This will also allow for additional ministerial announcements once development begins and new subjects are launched, like the opportunity to announce and launch the Te Ao Haka standards in December 2020.
25. We will manage the sector's expectations through the public engagement process by making it clear that newer subjects may not be available on the same timelines as currently existing subjects. Even though not all subjects will be developed within the main RAS timeframe, engaging on a more fulsome subject list allows us to have more informed conversations with the sector about how new subjects fit within their wider learning areas and what the future of NCEA might look like. This also supports an open engagement where the sector can have confidence that their engagement will contribute to final decisions.

Vocational subjects and subjects with existing standard setting bodies

26. The inclusion of new subjects within the provisional subject lists is a key lever to implement the policy for showing clearer pathways to further education and employment and raising the parity of esteem for learning linked to the curriculum, but traditionally only supported by industry standards. A fit for purpose set of achievement standard subjects in turn supports the development of the Vocational Entrance Award, and how our work links with the Review of Vocational Education (RoVE) to ensure quality vocational pathways.
27. Two subjects, Tourism and Outdoor Education, are at present commonly assessed by industry developed unit standards, made applications to become new NCEA achievement standard subjects as part of our new subjects process. We have included these subjects on the provisional list as their applications met our criteria (see paragraph 9). Factors common to both of these applications include:
- These subjects are widely offered in schools and students are already engaged in this learning and will continue to do so
 - The current unit standards are limiting as they are skills and occupation focused
 - The current unit standards do not drive quality teaching and learning of those subjects in schools
 - The use of unit standards is seen to prevent these subjects from being on the University Entrance approved subject list under current policy settings
 - The bodies of knowledge are distinct enough from current subject offerings for those subjects to merely be contexts within existing subjects
 - The use of unit standards does not carry the same esteem as achievement standards.
28. Although we have included these subjects, further work on the implications of the Ministry recognising subjects that have traditionally been 'owned' by industry is needed before final decisions are made. In particular, making decisions on these subjects without considering the wider vocational education system may create an expectation on the Ministry to develop subjects in NCEA that were previously developed as unit standards by Industry Training Organisations, rather than the Workforce Development Councils (WDCs). We also think there is a risk that developing these subjects through RAS could further entrench the perception of unit or skills standards as 'inferior'. 9(2)(f)(iv)
29. This work on the implications of including these subjects will be led by the Ministry and NZQA, with the Tertiary Education Commission and Te Pūkenga, and will consider how RoVE should best be implemented within the schooling sector. 9(2)(f)(iv)
30. Some of the issues relating to vocational subjects also apply to the proposed new subjects Māori and Pacific Studies as the standards currently used in schools are 'owned' by external standard setting bodies. We will work with relevant standard setting bodies and kaitiaki as part of the development of those subjects to minimise any associated risks.

Subjects drawing from both curricula

31. Note that we have included Mau Rākau and Toi Whakairo on both the *NZC* and *TMoA* lists. As part of our engagements and work programme we will be seeking feedback and expert advice on how these subjects will draw from the *NZC* or *TMoA* and whether separate matrices will be needed if they draw from both *NZC* and *TMoA*. These subjects will likely follow a similar development process to Te Ao Haka, a subject which is an *NZC* subject suitable for seamless delivery in both English and Māori medium education settings.

Risks

32. A consequence of the larger *NZC* subject list for NCEA Levels 2 and 3 is that the Ministry and NZQA's operational capability and capacity will need to scale up to deal with the increased volume and complexity. This means that we will need to hire and train additional production staff to maintain momentum and scale up our existing quality assurance processes. This increase in scale and complexity is as expected and informed the development of our budget bids and funding decisions.
33. Scaling up the RAS operating model will introduce additional delivery risk due to the increasing operational complexity. Although the workforce to deliver RAS will increase in size, the same tight timeframes for delivery will remain in place to ensure a smooth transition for student and teacher cohorts. Based on the development of Level 1, we are confident that we will be able to maintain the current timeframe even when we scale up for Levels 2 and 3.
34. We are aware that the larger *NZC* subject list will also have significant impacts on the capacity of schools and teachers to support and manage change. We are also aware that the NCEA Change Package is not the only part of the Education Work Programme which schools will be affected by or need to implement over the next few years. 9(2)(f)(iv)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
35. This is a large programme of work and change. To minimise any risk to the programme we will be keeping a careful watch on progress through our planned programme of work, with particular reference to the sector's capacity to take part in the work on the current timeline, 9(2)(f)(iv)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
36. Should different approaches need to be adopted we will work with NZQA to provide you with further advice on how we will manage a contingency plan that maximises delivery and minimises disruption for students.

Consultation with the Professional Advisory Group

37. We have engaged with your Professional Advisory Group for NCEA during the preparation of this advice. They are supportive of the draft list, proposed discussion documents, and approach to engagement.

38. They recommended that engagement commence as early as possible to manage ongoing sector anxiety about potential reductions in the number of subjects, following the NCEA Level 1 decisions.
39. They have also asked that we consider a process for work with SEGs to make subject names more engaging, which we are planning for.

Next Steps

40. Subject to your agreement, we will work with your office to arrange briefings for education spokespeople and prepare an oral item to inform your Cabinet colleagues on public engagements.
41. We will also provide your office with full technical reports on the subject lists and our communications and engagement plans as they are finalised, so they can be proactively released.
42. Following public engagement, commencing from June (with exact dates to be confirmed with your office), we will provide you with additional advice to support final approval of and decisions on the subject lists.

Proactive Release

43. We recommend that this Education Report is released when public announcements have been made (details of which are yet to be agreed).

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Discussion document: Provisional subject list for NCEA Levels 2 and 3
- Appendix 2: Draft discussion document: TMoA New Subjects