Review of Achievement Standards Level 1, Phase 1

Feedback Report European Languages

Feedback provided on draft, Phase 1 subject content as at 27 April 2021

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## Purpose

This report outlines the feedback received by the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) on the Phase 1 development of Level 1 subject content for European Languages (French, German, and Spanish). It aims to identify common themes and trends across the feedback. This report will be used to inform any necessary changes to the subject content developed so far as well as the further development of Phase 2 subject content by the Subject Expert Groups (SEGs) as part of the Review of Achievement Standards (RAS).

## Background

1. As at 20 April 2021, the Ministry received 47 responses to the Ministry’s online questionnaire about the subject content developed so far for European Languages. These included both multiple choice answer questions and long form, written response questions.
2. This report is divided into the following:
   1. General Overview and Themes
   2. Analysis of Feedback by source
      1. Online
   3. Next steps
3. Please note that the content in this report does not reflect the opinions of the authors. The report aims to thoroughly and accurately reflect the views presented by those who fed back on the draft subject content.

## General Overview and Themes

Overall, response to the European Languages subject content for Phase 1 of the Review of Achievement Standards project has been generally positive. The following themes attempt to summarise the main concerns and suggestions offered within the Ministry’s online questionnaire, with a view to amend and refine subject content based on these themes as we move into Phase 2 of the project.

1. ***Divisive Response to Mātauranga Māori***

The response to the Mana Ōrite and mātauranga Māori aspects of the proposed subject content was divisive amongst respondents.

Some feared that too much of a focus on it would detract from learning about the target language and culture, and that it may make things challenging for both teachers and students trying to incorporate different additional cultures and languages into lessons and assessments. Many other respondents felt that there wasn’t enough inclusion of mātauranga Māori or Pacific concepts within the subject content and that more of an explicit focus was needed.

1. ***PLD and Resources Requested***

Following directly from theme 1 above, many teachers commented that they felt as though they didn’t have the right background or cultural knowledge to be able to incorporate mātauranga Māori appropriately and effectively into their lessons. Therefore, multiple requests were made for exemplars to show exactly what this might look like in practice with more clarification as to what’s expected from kaiako within their teaching and learning. There were also requests for Conditions of Assessment and Assessment Schedules to be provided (to be drafted in Phase 2).

Multiple requests for Professional Development were made in order to support teachers to implement these changes successfully. This included the need for clear and robust resources: “Knowledge and learning content on Mātauranga Māori,” as well as “guidance on how to embed Mātauranga Māori into content and delivery of the European Languages curriculum.”

1. ***Achievement Standard 1.2***

Out of the four proposed European Languages Achievement Standards, 1.2 (‘Produce simple [target language] to communicate information, ideas, and opinions related to an immediate context’) garnered the most attention from respondents. This was primarily due to the openness of the Standard in allowing the student to select which mode of assessment works best for them. While there were clear comments of support for this approach (particularly in the fact that it opens up UDL opportunities), there were also many others that raised concerns that students would be able to avoid written work altogether, which many saw as an integral component to language learning.

There were also concerns that this openness may create more work and stress for teachers in having to deal with student work in multiple formats and media types. Some also felt that this could lead to issues of authenticity of student work, and that clear Conditions of Assessment would need to be written to ensure all bases are covered in ensuring authenticity. Furthermore, more clarification was requested as to whether this would be a ‘one-off’ assessment, or a portfolio that the student builds over a term or year.

1. ***Asian and European Languages Should Be More Closely Aligned***

One interesting theme that emerged throughout the online survey feedback was the desire for Asian and European Languages to be more alike. Many questioned why there was a cultural Standard in Asian Languages (AS 1.2 in Japanese, Korean, and Mandarin) but not in European Languages. It was felt that learning about culture was just as important in European Languages and should therefore be included.

Comments suggested that Asian and European Languages should share the same Standards, as well as the same credit weightings for each of them. This was partly because it was felt that language teachers would be able to support each other more in being able to pick up the same Standards across multiple languages and still teach them effectively. In addition, many teachers argued that the cultural aspects of additional language learning was the main drawcard for most students, so having a Standard that focuses on culture across all languages in NCEA would attract more students and make the learning more enjoyable and relatable for them.

1. ***External Assessments***

There were multiple comments stating that asking second language learners to infer meaning from texts is unfair, and that the external Standards (1.3 and 1.4) should instead focus on their understanding of the vocabulary and grammar structures of the text. It was felt that, instead of asking students to try and “read between the lines” of a text, the Standards should ensure that basic understanding of the target language has been attained. A number of these comments suggested looking at a DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française) style of language assessment for these external Standards. There were also requests to make the topics the students are asked to engage with the same between AS 1.3 and 1.4.

1. ***Significant Learning Too High-Level***

Some respondents felt that the Significant Learning in the Learning Matrix was too high-level for NCEA; especially in regard to Curriculum Level 8. In particular, some felt that asking students to engage with extended authentic text types was too advanced for secondary students. A couple of respondents stated that engaging with figurative and idiomatic learning was also too difficult for NCEA language learning.

1. ***Vocabulary Lists***

Multiple respondents asked for the inclusion of vocabulary lists, stating that they would be helpful for teachers and may also help to guide subject content of lessons.

1. ***Definitions of Contexts***

Definitions of terms such as ‘immediate contexts’ and ‘everyday situations’ were requested to give a clearer vision of expectations for the Standards. These definitions will most likely be included in the Explanatory Notes for the Achievement Standards in Phase 2.

1. ***Not Much of a Change from Current European Languages Standards***

Finally, a few respondents felt as though these proposed Standards didn’t signal much of a change from what’s currently offered under the European Languages subjects in NCEA. No suggestions on how to address this were provided.

## Sources of Feedback

#### Online

Despite concerns that the content was too high-level, the Learning Matrix received a number of favourable comments, with strong support for the Big Ideas and the logical progression of the Significant Learning between Curriculum Levels. However, the need for amendments to the other subject content does reflect the themes summarised above.

The Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Guide (TLAG) seems to be most in need of amendments. Although there were only two comments in the survey feedback that addressed the TLAG specifically, one of them suggested that it was “definitely too wordy”. General comments relating to the need for more inclusion of mātauranga Māori and more clarity around expectations for both teachers and students may also reflect this data.

Comments related to the Course Outlines seem to echo the data here. The respondents with positive comments stated that they found the Course Outlines “really helpful” and responsive to the needs of teachers. Others felt as though they were too dense and overwhelming with not enough of an emphasis on mātauranga Māori. Teachers stated that, while they generally liked the direction the Course Outlines were taking, they felt the expectations laid out within them for a year’s worth of work was unrealistic.

## Next Steps

There are several recommendations which will be undertaken prior to reengaging with the SEG. Many relate to the general refining of the subject content overall, but notable themes include:

**Ministry Actions**

Ministry to clarify position on addressing PLD concerns in relation to:

* being able to adequately reflect and competently deliver mātauranga Māori in classroom settings, especially understanding kupu and Māori concepts
* providing sample or exemplar materials and learning resources to support the delivery of the new teaching, learning, and assessment subject content. These will be included in the Pilot products.

The Ministry will also continue to utilise the expertise of the NCEA Panels in order to ensure that the Critical Perspectives (Mātauranga Māori, Tapasā, Accessibility, and Pathways) are incorporated organically and effectively within the European Languages subject content throughout Phase 2 of the RAS project.

The Asian, European, and Pacific Languages Lead Secondary Advisors (LSAs) and Technical Writers will continue working closely together to ensure consistency in subject content throughout the Languages Learning Area.

**SEG Actions**

* SEG to discuss the inclusion of mātauranga Māori concepts and what can be done to address the concerns raised by the sector.
* Address concerns regarding Achievement Standard 1.2 and how it is to be undertaken by students and assessed by teachers. As the RAS project begins to move into Phase 2, discussions around Conditions of Assessment and the drafting of Assessment Activities and Schedules will be taking place, providing natural avenues to develop solutions and achieve more clarity with this Standard.
* SEG to discuss the consistency between Asian and European Languages, exploring the ways in which the two subject groups may be more closely aligned. Communication and transparency between the Asian and European Languages SEGs is recommended to allow for both convergence and divergence of subject content where appropriate.
* SEG to discuss external Achievement Standards and whether the suggestions made by the sector can be accommodated.
* Review the Learning Matrix to address concerns regarding expectations within the Significant Learning of Curriculum Level 8.
* SEG to discuss whether there is a need for explicit change to European Languages under the RAS project from how it is currently taught and assessed.