



Education Report: NCEA Change Programme update

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	19 June 2020	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1232319
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to update you on NCEA change programme matters and seek your agreement on a small number of matters relating to the NCEA change programme that require urgent attention. We intend to discuss more substantive matters relating to this work programme with you at an upcoming Curriculum and Assessment strategy session in July (timing to be confirmed).

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **Note** that the NCEA change programme was in a ready state to commence change and implementation prior to lockdown, and there are a number of options for how the Review of Achievement Standards could be delivered in order to achieve a coherent NCEA made up of fewer, larger standards.
- b. **Note** that we are working with your Office to schedule a strategy session in July on your Curriculum and Assessment work programme and priorities – this will include identifying a preferred option for progressing the NCEA change programme and Review of Achievement Standards in the medium-to long-term, as part of the wider programme and priorities.
- c. **Note** that we have provisionally extended public engagement on the draft subject list for NCEA Level 1 to 20 July 2020 to ensure the sector has more time to engage [paragraphs 3 to 4], acknowledging that this increases pressure on reaching final decisions within the remaining term of the Government.
- d. **Agree** to publicly release the alternative options for NCEA Level 1 Science (described in this paper) so that we are in a better position to finalise a Level 1 subject list if changes to the approach to Science at Level 1 are recommended [paragraphs 5 to 7].

Agree / Disagree

- e. **Note** that the appointments and terms of reference for the Professional Advisory Group (PAG) expire on 24 September 2020 and that decisions could be progressed now to extend the advisory group [paragraphs 8 to 12], or deferred.

- f. **Agree** to the Ministry drafting a paper from you to the Appointments and Honours Committee to extend the term of the PAG a further year.

Agree / Disagree

- g. **Agree** not to proactively release this report in the regular cycle of releases until final decisions have been made.

Agree / Disagree



Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement

19/06/2020



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

23/6/20

Proactively Released

Background

1. Implementation of the NCEA change programme has been progressing in accordance with the indicative timeline provided to Cabinet in March 2020 [SWC-19-MIN-0045] refers, aiming for complete implementation in 2025. COVID-19 has caused disruption to some of our scheduling, particularly for the review of the Level 1 Achievement Standards. We are working through the range of options available within existing baseline funding and accounting for sector readiness to engage, including some that allow us to meet our overall five year timeline with trade-offs. We will discuss these matters with you at an upcoming strategy session.
2. In the interim, there are activities we can progress to keep your options open for the NCEA Review implementation timeline ahead of this strategy session:
 - a. Extending public engagement on the NCEA Level 1 Provisional Subject List from 20 June (provisional) to 20 July (provisional).
 - b. Releasing publicly two alternative options for Level 1 Science.
 - c. Extending the Professional Advisory Group appointments and terms of reference.

NCEA Level 1 Provisional Subject List

3. The purpose of the ongoing public engagement process on the provisional NCEA Level 1 subject list is to inform the final subjects that the Ministry will develop for NCEA Level 1 through the Review of Achievement Standards (RAS). This is to redevelop NCEA Level 1 as a broad foundational level.
4. The engagement process was initially for two months (20 February to 20 April 2020). However, during lockdown, we provisionally extended it to 20 June 2020. We have extended it provisionally again to 20 July 2020 to ensure that there is more time, considering the pressures currently facing the sector in relation to distance education. The extension leaves sufficient time for final decisions to be made, but it does increase pressure on this considering the remaining term of the current Government. We have consulted your NCEA Professional Advisory Group on the extension, who support this change.
5. Once we assess public feedback on the provisional list, we will come to you with advice so that you are able to make a final decision on the makeup of the new foundational NCEA Level 1.

Level 1 Science

6. Through Trial & Pilots, the Subject Expert Group (SEG) for Science has developed Level 1 standards for science that focus on the nature of science, and recognise mātauranga Māori as an important indigenous knowledge system.
7. In the Ministry's provisional subject list we proposed that those new general Science standards at Level 1 would replace the specialist strands of: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Earth Space Science (and be complemented by Agricultural Science).
8. Following feedback from the sector (through the Trial & Pilot public engagement process) and from similar feedback from specialist Science SEGs, we made the assessment that alternative approaches to Science were warranted. The Science SEGs and the

Professional Advisory Group are supportive of these alternatives, and the PAG note that it shows we are listening to the sector and the process was legitimate.

9. With your approval, we would like to release these alternative options publicly and allow further testing with the sector. Extending the timeframe of the public engagement process and publicly releasing the alternative approaches will enable the alternatives to be tested further and help us to land on a recommended approach as part of finalising the Level 1 list. We will work with your Office to confirm any communications, as per the no surprises policy.

10. The alternatives that have been developed are:

Option A: One general Science subject with four strands (STATUS QUO - as included in the Provisional Subject List for NCEA Level 1).

Subject	Internally assessed standards		Externally assessed standards	
Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science
	All standards cover all four contextual strands: Material World, Living World, Physical World and Planet Earth and Beyond.			

Option B: One General Science subject alongside two specialised Science Subjects (12 standards in total). This option would include the Nature of Science focused General Science (option A), but would also add two further subjects of four standards: Physical Science (Chemistry and Physics) and Natural World (Biology and Earth and Space Science).

Subject	Internally assessed standards		Externally assessed standards	
General Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science
Physical Science	Physical World (Physics)	Material World (Chemistry)	Physical World (Physics)	Material World (Chemistry)
Natural Science	Living World (Biology)	Planet Earth & Beyond (Earth and Space Science)	Living World (Biology)	Planet Earth & Beyond (Earth and Space Science)

Option C: One general Science subject plus four specialised Science subjects with 20 standards. This option would include the Nature of Science-focused general science subject, but includes a specific subject for each of the contextual strands, creating five subjects in total.

Subject	Internally assessed standards		Externally assessed standards	
General Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science	Nature of Science
Physics	Physical World (Physics)	Physical World (Physics)	Physical World (Physics)	Physical World (Physics)
Biology	Living World (Biology)	Living World (Biology)	Living World (Biology)	Living World (Biology)
Earth and Space Science	Planet Earth & Beyond (Earth and Space Science)	Planet Earth & Beyond (Earth and Space Science)	Planet Earth & Beyond (Earth and Space Science)	Planet Earth & Beyond (Earth and Space Science)
Chemistry	Material World (Chemistry)	Material World (Chemistry)	Material World (Chemistry)	Material World (Chemistry)

Professional Advisory Group

11. The appointments and Terms of Reference of your Professional Advisory Group (PAG) expire on 24 September, shortly after the 2020 General Election. The PAG is appointed by you following consideration by Cabinet's Appointments and Honours Committee.

12. The PAG has provided important expertise and advice relating to the NCEA change programme and are now working with us to support change and implementation. The PAG have also provided support and feedback as we have worked through changes to NCEA this year in light of COVID-19 disruption.
13. PAG advice has supported a focus on making decisions that land well with the education sector, for both the Ministry and NZQA. We think that there is merit in continuing the terms of reference of the PAG for a further year until September 2021 so that we are able to leverage this expertise as we continue implementing the change package.
14. You have the option of requesting a draft Appointments and Honours Committee paper now, or considering the matter further, for example it could be discussed at the strategy session in July.
15. If reappointments are not made prior to the General Election, the Ministry would keep the PAG (in a more limited capacity) through any caretaker period (for advice, if required) until decisions can be made to confirm its ongoing role. In its more limited capacity the PAG would function like a departmental advisory group.

Further activities in the NCEA change package

16. We are also continuing activities to ensure the implementation of the change programme is well supported, so your options are kept open ahead of the proposed July strategy session where we work through options for scheduling the Review of Achievement Standards and consider opportunities to leverage our pathways work stream. Out of Ministry and NZQA baselines we plan to continue:
 - a. Design for the Review of Achievement Standards – we are preparing for standards development to ensure that NCEA is rebuilt to have fewer, larger standards. We are also progressing the trial and pilot standards for Visual Arts, Science, English, and Religious Studies following sector feedback. These are scheduled to be released for sector consultation in June. We will work with your Office to confirm any communications as per the no surprises policy.
 - b. Limited school trials – we are intending to run a limited school trial next year with approximately six schools/kura using the draft Level 1 English, Science, Visual Arts and Religious Studies achievement standards next year.
 - c. Literacy and numeracy – we still intend to develop standards for literacy and numeracy this year so that they are ready for trial from Term 3 2021 if appropriate. We will continue to monitor for sector readiness before implementation.
 - d. Mātauranga Māori – work was not directly impacted by COVID-19, however we will ensure that it remains aligned as part of the NCEA reset.
 - e. Accessibility – we are progressing changes to Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) and the provision of digital support tools so that accessibility continues to be a key focus of NCEA changes.
17. Each of these activities is being delivered in a way that is mindful of the impact, if any, on the sector, and we will be taking regular advice from the PAG on the sector's willingness to take part in this work.