



## Education Report: Finalising the NCEA Level 1 Subject List and Announcing the New Timeline

<b>To:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	30 July 2020	<b>Priority:</b>	High
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1235705
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No
<b>Consulted</b>	NZQA		

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this Report is to:

- Progress decisions on the NCEA Level 1 subjects to be developed from late 2020 for full implementation by 2023; provide you with an aide memoire to support an oral item to Cabinet informing the Cabinet of the new timeline for implementing NCEA changes; and to provide a proposed communications approach.
- It is intended to be considered in parallel with the Education Report: *Options to fund transformational curriculum and assessment work programme*, which provides advice on the financial implications of your decision to reset the NCEA Change Programme timeline (the companion paper).

### Summary

1. Your decision to a reset the timeline for the NCEA Change Programme [METIS 1234370 refers] requires final decisions to be made on which subjects will be developed as new Achievement Standards for NCEA Level 1, to be ready for full use in schools and kura in 2023.
2. To action this decision, you have agreed to take an oral item to Cabinet informing them of both the reset timeline and the Level 1 subject list, including changes to the final list as a result of the consultation we have undertaken this year.
3. Decisions on the financial implications of this new timeline, including reprioritisations required from within Ministry baselines, are dealt with in the companion paper: Education Report: *Options to fund transformational curriculum and assessment work programme*.
4. The list of Level 1 subjects enacts the Government's decision that NCEA Level 1 should be refocused as a broad and foundational qualification focused on the most important learning in the National Curriculum. Determining the list of NCEA subjects is

primarily an operational activity performed by the Ministry. However, as the changes required to enact a foundational Level 1 are significant, and will be of public and sector interest, we have provided you the list for your and Cabinet's noting.

5. One of the decisions, removing Latin from the Level 1 subject list, is more controversial and your agreement is being sought. This reflects the fact that Latin, as a language, is effectively removed from the NCEA Achievement Standards entirely if not included in the Level 1 list.
6. Based on 3,600 submissions and our analysis against the seven criteria we have established for enacting the Government's policy intentions for NCEA Level 1, the Ministry has made some changes to our initial proposed Level 1 subject list (see Annex 1). In particular:
  - a. The proposed **Food Science** (combining **Processing Technology** and **Home Economics**) subject will not be going ahead.
  - b. As a consequence we are reshaping Health and Physical Education Learning Area, **undoing the proposed merger of the Health and Physical Education subjects** and instead **merging Health and Home Economics**.
  - c. Similarly the subjects within the Technology Learning Area are being reshaped, with **Materials Technology becoming Materials and Processing Technology**.
  - d. The proposal that Business Studies, Accounting and Economics be merged into a single Commerce subject is being refined – we will work with the **Accounting Subject Expert Group to confirm whether Accounting can be woven into the new Commerce subject, or should only be available at Level 2 and 3**.
7. Public engagement on Level 1 Science (whether to have a single science subject as originally propose, or to instead have three or five subjects) does not close until 10 August. Following the receipt of all submission on Level 1 Science we will inform you of the outcome and fully finalise the new Level 1 subject list.
8. We propose that the Ministry then makes the new list public in the week of 17 August. You could either issue a press release on the revised timeline at the same time or the Ministry could issue the new timeline. The new timeline is provided at Annex 2.
9. We will be at the Agency meeting on Monday 3 August to discuss this report with you.

## Recommended Actions

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The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **Note** that your decision to reset the timeline for the NCEA Change Programme requires final decisions to be made on which subjects will be developed as new Achievement Standards for NCEA Level 1 for full use in schools and kura by 2023 [METIS 1234370 refers]

**Noted**

- b. **Note** that financial implications of this new timeline, including reprioritisations required from within Ministry baselines, is dealt with in the companion paper, Education Report: *Options to fund transformational curriculum and assessment work programme* [METIS 1236732 refers]

**Noted**

- c. **Note** the changes to the Provisional NCEA Level 1 Subject List [METIS 1218401] the Ministry has made in response to the 3,600 submissions received, and our own analysis of each subject against the seven criteria we have established for enacting the Government's policy intentions for NCEA Level 1 (the 'Final NCEA Subject List' – Annex A, and Draft Technical Report enclosed in Annex 4)

**Noted**

- d. **Note** that the Ministry has particularly considered the feedback that Latin should be retained, and our assessment is that the decision to remove Latin at all three levels of NCEA achievement standards should be a Ministerial one

**Noted**

- e. **Agree** to remove Latin as per the Provisional List

**Agree / Disagree**

- f. **Agree** to announce the new NCEA Change Programme timeline (Annex 2) and final Level 1 subject list (including the Ministry's final decision on Level 1 Science), after Cabinet has been informed, by:

- i. Releasing a press release (a Ministerial-led announcement)

**OR**

**Agree / Disagree**

- ii. A Ministry-led announcement, via our standard channels for communicating with those with an interest in NCEA

**Agree / Disagree**

- g. **Agree** that the Ministry should inform the opposition spokespersons for Education (Nicola Willis and David Seymour) after Cabinet has been informed but prior to public announcements

**Agree / Disagree**

- h. **Forward** the covering Education Report and Draft Technical Report to your Associate Ministers (Education)

**Yes / No**

- i. **Agree** that this report will be proactively released together with associated advice and the new NCEA Change Programme as part of Ministry-led communications after final decisions have been made and Cabinet has been informed.

**Agree / Disagree**

Ellen MacGregor-Reid  
Deputy Secretary  
**Early Learning and Student Achievement**

30/07/2020

Hon Chris Hipkins  
**Minister of Education**

2 / 8 / 2020

I think we are now too close to the election for an announcement in this area. I don't want this to become overly political. I would therefore prefer further consultation with the PAG, and final decision-making paper to come to the Minister of Education as soon as possible after the general election.

## Background

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10. On 17 February 2020, Cabinet agreed to the NCEA Change Programme including seven changes for NCEA including a broader, foundational Level 1 [CAB-20-MIN-0023 refers], with Cross-Party support.
11. To enact the NCEA Change Programme's objective to retain NCEA Level 1 but refocus it as a board, foundational qualification focused on the most important learning in the National Curriculum, the Ministry developed a set of criteria [METIS 1218401 refers]. These were applied holistically to create a provisional list of NCEA Level 1 subjects, which included the consolidation of some subjects at Level 1.
12. The seven criteria were:
  - a. How the subject fits within the broad objective of a foundational NCEA Level 1.
  - b. All foundational learning, disciplinary knowledge, big ideas and essence of each learning area derived from the New Zealand Curriculum are available through a subject at NCEA Level 1.
  - c. How best to structure that body of knowledge to support pathways to further specialist learning at NCEA Levels 2 and 3.
  - d. The extent to which subjects can interact with each other to form coherent courses in NCEA settings and support a breadth of learning for individual students.
  - e. The extent of sector and student demand, and sector capability to support the subject.
  - f. Ensuring that the Crown's commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi are upheld and that the subject offering supports opportunities for Māori learners to succeed as Māori, in English- and Māori-medium settings.
  - g. Inclusion as a subject is likely to contribute positively to the ongoing and future credibility of NCEA as a series of internationally-recognised qualifications.
13. As noted previously [METIS 1218401 refers] the Ministry of Education has consulted with the sector on this Provisional NCEA level 1 Subject List, to validate our decision-making and confirm the list of Level 1 NCEA subjects to be developed as part of the Review of Achievement Standards for full implementation in 2023.
14. As noted, your decision to a reset the timeline for the NCEA Change Programme [METIS 1234370 refers] has financial implications. The required reprioritisations required from within Ministry baselines is dealt with in the companion paper [METIS 1236322 refers].

## Engagement on Provisional Subject List

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15. Engagement on the Provisional Subject List was originally set at two months, beginning on 20 February. However, due to COVID 19 disruption, the engagement was extended to 20 July, to ensure all stakeholders had the opportunity to respond.
16. As part of the engagement, we organised meetings with Subject Expert Groups, and received detailed submissions from subject associations. We received over 3,600 responses in total, including engagement from individuals, teachers, students, tertiary

staff, community leaders, community organisations, and subject associations, both domestic and international.

17. We are still engaging with the sector on the Level 1 Science subjects [METIS 1232319 refers], to decide whether to support one, three or five Science subjects at Level 1. We will confirm the approach to Level 1 Science once the public engagement process is completed (10 August 2020), in the week beginning 17 August 2020.
18. Determining which subjects should be developed as Achievement Standards is primarily an operational activity performed by the Ministry in its role as standard setting body. However, as the changes required to enact a foundational Level 1 are significant, and will be of public and sector interest, we have provided you the list for your and Cabinet's noting.
19. One of the decisions, removing Latin from the Level 1 subject list, is more controversial and your agreement is being sought. This reflects the fact that Latin, as a language, is effectively removed from the NCEA Achievement Standards entirely if not included in the Level 1 list.

### Proposed changes to the Level 1 Provisional Subject List

20. Following engagement on the Provisional Subjects List, 3,600 submissions were analysed and summarised. We drew on the analysis of the feedback received through engagement, the meetings with Subject Expert Groups, feedback from subject associations, and the technical work undertaken to inform the provisional list. These findings are included in the Draft Technical Report included as Annex 4.
21. The report is near-final draft but we are undergoing final checks and refinements to prepare for public release. No substantive material or rationale will change, apart from the addition of final Level 1 Science analysis and recommendations once the engagement has concluded.
22. All feedback received during the engagement has been recorded and analysed in relation to the seven criteria (paragraph 12 above refers). Below are details of changes from the provisional list. We have also included areas where we have not made changes, but that attracted significant feedback through the engagement process.
23. Note that changes to the Subject list are enacted over time – the existing Achievement Standards, including for subjects that will not be continued into the new standards, will remain available until the end of 2022. This will give the sector time to adapt to the new subject list, including changes to programmes, timetables, and the deployment of the existing workforce.

#### *Technology, Health and Physical Education*

24. The provisional list suggested four subjects for **Technology**. Engagement showed the need to rethink the proposed Food Science subject, as well as realign the content proposed within the remaining Technology subjects.
  - a. The proposed **Food Science** subject (combining **Processing Technology** and **Home Economics**) subject will not be going ahead following testing of the feasibility of merging the big ideas across both subjects. **Home Economics** is instead being reintegrated back into the Health and Physical Education learning area, and merged with **Health** (see paragraph 24 below).

- b. There will remain scope for a course with a focus on food to be delivered using the Technology learning matrices, reinforced by Materials Technology becoming **Materials and Processing Technology**.
  - c. **Digital Technologies** will remain as a separate subject.
  - d. **Design and Visual Communications** will include increased focus on the design aspects of the subject.
25. As with Food Science, engagement confirmed the need for separate Health and Physical Education subjects as constructing a merged subject was not likely to be successful due to the fundamental differences between the subjects. Instead we will **merge Home Economics with Health**, as this represents a more natural consolidation for this learning area.

*Social Sciences (including commerce)*

26. In the Provisional Subject List, we suggested that some removed subjects could be delivered as contexts of maintained subjects, e.g. Media Studies and Psychology within Social Studies, and Accounting and Economics within Commerce. We received mixed feedback about the viability of this. However, we are confident this feedback can be addressed during the Achievement Standard development process with no changes to the subjects necessary.
27. In the Provisional Subject List we proposed that Business Studies, Accounting and Economics be merged into a single **Commerce** subject. Feedback was received both in support of this proposal (such as potential for an increased focus on foundational financial literacy), and against it (such as potential disruption to student pathways).
28. The decision is to confirm the single Commerce subject at Level 1. We considered including **Accounting** on the Final List as a separate subject, but decided not to pursue that approach, as Accounting is a specialised subject which is vocational in nature and not appropriate as a stand-alone subject in a foundational qualification. We therefore intend to further engage with the Accounting Subject Expert Group to explore whether fitting Accounting within the Commerce subject will be workable at Level 1. If not, we would decide not to include Accounting within Commerce but Accounting would remain as a specialised subject at NCEA Levels 2 and 3.
29. The Provisional Subject List suggested the removal of Classical Studies, Media Studies, Psychology and Art History from NCEA Level 1. Negative feedback was received in response to this (such as changing the perception of some of the subjects, making them more likely to disappear entirely), but the evidence is that learning in these subjects is specialised rather than foundational and that they can validly be offered from Level 2 (such as the majority of students taking Classical Studies currently do).
30. For these reasons we have decided to remove these subjects from NCEA Level 1, with the expectation that they will be maintained as subjects from NCEA Level 2.

*Other considerations*

31. In some cases, such as within technologies and social sciences, the boundaries between related subjects require further clarification. To ensure appropriate boundaries are maintained, we will work with the relevant Subject Expert Groups to confirm the content and shape of related subjects to ensure coherent foundational subjects and courses are available at NCEA Level 1.

32. No significant changes to Arts subjects (Music, Dance, Drama, Visual Arts, and the new Māori Performing Arts subject) were proposed in the provisional list. Through the engagement process this approach was validated, so we have finalised these subjects.

#### *Latin*

33. The proposed removal of Latin as a subject in NCEA was mentioned at least once in approximately 1,300 unique submissions (representing over a third of all submissions) in support of retaining the subject, both from domestic and international organisations and individuals. However, more than half were non-specific comments such as “save Latin!” or “DO NOT remove Latin”.
34. Other submissions emphasised the foundational character of Latin as preparatory for other disciplines (e.g., history, law); the significance of Latin in Western European history, culture and heritage; and the linguistic connections between learning Latin and improved literacy in English and other languages. There was also concern about the future of the Latin teaching workforce should we remove support for Latin in NCEA.
35. We have noted these submissions and recognise the decision as particularly controversial. The Ministry’s view in the Provisional Subject List was that while Latin may be beneficial to some pathways, it is not a necessary prerequisite of any, and the specialist skills Latin covers can be delivered through other supported subjects.
36. The decision to retain Latin commits the Ministry to develop and support the subject for approximately 10 years. This includes upfront design costs, and ongoing costs to maintain and deliver moderation and external assessments. Across 10 years, we expect the total cost to maintain Latin to exceed \$2,000,000.
37. While a number of specialist Latin teachers may also have the expertise required to deliver other subjects (e.g., Classical Studies), the removal of Latin could impact on this workforce once the existing standards expire from 2023 onwards.
38. Of particular concern is Latin’s very low and steadily declining enrolments (under 200 students per year, within approximately 10 schools, with only 25 students sitting Level 3). At some point, if enrolments continue to decline, Latin will cease to become viable to support without additional, highly costly interventions (similar to those required for the verified Pacific languages, which we currently absorb as a reflection of New Zealand’s special obligations to the Pacific, including the Realm Nations, and their living languages).
39. For the small number of students for whom Latin is a key part of their pathway, other options would exist, including accessing online or face-to-face delivery of international courses or qualifications that sit outside NCEA.
40. While this is a difficult decision, given the low numbers sitting Latin through NCEA, the Ministry has not reversed its initial decision to remove Latin from the Provisional Subject List. However, given the public interest and the concentrated impact on affected stakeholders, your agreement is being sought.

#### *Science*

41. Engagement on Level 1 Science has been extended until 10 August to allow engagement on the options for one, three or five Level 1 Science Options [METIS 1232319 refers].
42. Preliminary analysis shows that Option B (three subjects) is likely to be the one taken forward by the Ministry, as we have received feedback demonstrating strong polarised



preferences for a single subject or all five (with the majority favouring five subjects). Based on the expressed preferences and concerns, and our conversations with the Subject Expert Groups and Subject Associations, three Level 1 subjects could be developed that meet the needs of the sector while maintaining Cabinet's vision for NCEA Level 1.

## Te Marautanga o Aotearoa Subjects

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43. We are also taking this opportunity to confirm the core subject list for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. This does not propose material changes to either the provisional subject list or the status quo; seven of the nine Wāhanga Ako of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa will have matrices developed, as is currently the case. Māori Performing Arts will also be available to kura Māori, but may be developed derived from The New Zealand Curriculum to ensure accessibility to ākonga Māori in all settings.
44. There is potential opportunity for the development of further areas. We are continuing to explore with kaiako Māori, experts in mātauranga Māori and peak bodies whether development in further subjects is needed at NCEA Level 1. If so, we will progress development of these subjects alongside any other new subjects which might be developed for NCEA Level 1. This includes consideration of the status of Hangarau Matihiko as a separate Level 1 subject.

## Consultation

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45. We shared this advice and the Draft Technical Report with the NCEA Professional Advisory Group (PAG). The PAG remains broadly supportive of the process we followed to determine the Level 1 subject list, and accepts the overall decisions.
46. A couple of the members of the PAG have individual reservations (on specific subjects) but were not opposed in the PAG's collective view.
47. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority was consulted on the provisional subject list and the final list. They remain supportive.

## Next Steps

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48. The first step is to inform Cabinet of the Ministry's intended decisions on the NCEA Level 1 subject list, including notifying them of the proposed approach to finalising the list of Level 1 Science subjects. An aide memoire is attached to support you in taking an oral item to Cabinet.
49. Once Cabinet has been informed, and following your agreement that we may do so, the Ministry will also inform Opposition spokespeople David Seymour and Nicola Willis ahead of the public announcement.
50. Public announcements will be made in the week beginning 17 August, following your decision as to whether you wish to issue a press release, or for the Ministry to lead the communication activities.
51. The announcement will include the Final Level 1 Subject List, proactive release of the Technical Report, and the new NCEA Change Programme Timeline [METIS 1234370].
52. We will consult your Office on the contents of the proposed proactive release and communications materials.

53. As a major announcement, if the release is Ministry-led, the Ministry will communicate using all channels including emails to Regional Directors, Subject Associations, Subject Expert Groups, the PPTA, as well as notification in the school bulletin, social media and a media release on the Ministry website.

### Proactive Release

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54. We recommend that this Education Report is released as part of the announcement.

### Annexes

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- Annex 1: Provisional and Final Level 1 Subject List Comparison
- Annex 2: Revised NCEA Change Programme timeline
- Annex 3: Aide memoire
- Annex 4: Technical report (draft)

Proactively Released