

Supporting ākonga through the new NCEA Level 1 materials in 2024 and on to the existing Level 2 and 3 courses in 2025/6

On 19 April 2023 Minister of Education Jan Tinetti announced a shift in the implementation timing for the new NCEA Level 2 and 3 materials to 2026 and 2027 respectively. Both the NCEA co-requisite for literacy, numeracy, te reo matatini and pāngarau and the new NCEA Level 1 materials will be implemented in 2024.

This shift means that ākonga undertaking NCEA Level 1 in 2024 will complete programmes of learning assessed against the new achievement standards in Level 1 and the existing standards in Levels 2 and 3.

Information in this document is intended to support schools and kura to understand what the transition from 2024 to 2025 means for them. This includes general advice and some subject specific information for several subjects aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Further information for kaiako of kaupapa ako Māori subjects and teaching and learning aligned to *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* is in development.

Key messages to think about

- NCEA is a multi-level qualification with open entry into NCEA Level 1, 2 or 3.
- Courses of learning towards NCEA are derived from the curriculum, but not all learning is credentialled via the NCEA qualification.
- The new NCEA achievement standards assess the competencies developed through the subject's significant learning.
- A strength of the new NCEA materials is the flexibility provided to schools and kura to tailor courses to meet the needs and aspirations of their ākonga, whānau and community.
- Schools and kura can be confident that new NCEA Level 1 materials support courses of learning that provide the broad, foundational knowledge needed for specialist courses at NCEA Levels 2 and 3, whether they are assessed against either the existing or future achievement standards.
- This confidence is reflected in feedback from teachers who piloted the new NCEA Level 1 materials in 2022, who are finding that ākonga are prepared for their existing Level 2 courses.
- Quick links to subject specific information, [Mathematics and Statistics](#), [English](#), [Science](#), [Social Sciences](#) ([Commerce](#), [Geography](#), [History](#)), [Technology](#) ([Materials and Processing Technology](#)).
- An [activity guide to support course planning](#) is available on the NCEA website.
- For further support, please contact the NCEA Lead at your [regional Te Mahau office](#).

NCEA Level 1 – broad and foundational learning

NCEA is a multi-level qualification with open entry into NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3. Schools and kura have flexibility to design their own courses of learning, including determining entry requirements. Courses designed using the new Level 1 NCEA materials will prepare ākonga to progress to courses that are assessed against both the existing and future NCEA Level 2 and 3 achievement standards.

The new NCEA Level 1 materials support courses of learning that include the broad, foundational knowledge and skills needed for specialisation at NCEA Levels 2 and 3. There is an emphasis on foundational knowledge and critical thinking, which can be developed through linking knowledge and skills across subjects¹. The new materials continue to have the demand and rigour required for an NCEA Level 1 qualification.

Central to the NCEA changes is the move to fewer, more meaningful assessments that reduce assessment workload and allow time for learning that responds to ākonga and whānau interests and aspirations, as well as reflecting local contexts. Space allowed by fewer assessments and the more holistic nature of the achievement standards, provides teachers with more flexibility in course design.

Courses of learning based on the new NCEA materials are designed to develop lifelong learners with a broad base of skills and knowledge that support ākonga into a range of pathways. Courses of learning towards NCEA are derived from the curriculum but not all learning is credentialled via the NCEA qualification. NCEA achievement standards assess the competencies developed through the subject's significant learning.

The new NCEA materials

The new [NCEA materials](#) aim to support kaiako to design courses that draw from the full breadth and depth of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and support ākonga to develop the skills and knowledge that is assessed via the achievement standards. The materials include increased guidance on teaching and learning so that teachers can have more clarity on the significant learning in the subject and learning area. The increased guidance includes the subject learning matrices, supporting guidance to unpack the standards, internal assessment activities and a glossary of terms.

Subject learning matrices are designed to support course design. They highlight the subject's big ideas and identify the significant learning at a high level. Courses that cover all the significant learning described in the subject learning matrices will prepare ākonga well to begin courses assessed against both the existing NCEA Level 2 and 3 achievement standards and the updated achievement standards, which will be published over the next two years. Supporting a diverse range of pathways, both in education and employment, remains a key focus for effective course planning.

Teachers of NCEA can continue to use the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) in combination with the new Level 1 NCEA materials. The 2007 NZC includes the updates to the Technology (Digital Technologies 2017) and the Social Sciences (Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories 2023) learning areas.

¹ Opinion: The value and portability of NCEA - Associate Professor Jenny Poskitt
www.massey.ac.nz/about/news/opinion-the-value-and-portability-of-ncea

Foundational skills – te reo matatini, pāngarau, literacy, and numeracy

Ensuring ākonga with an NCEA qualification have foundational literacy and numeracy skills to transition into tertiary education or the workplace is a key component of NCEA Change. Developing a schoolwide focus for every teacher to be a teacher of literacy and numeracy in their subject – alongside the introduction of the NCEA co-requisite for te reo matatini, pāngarau, literacy, and numeracy – is a key aspect of the steps to strengthen NCEA.

Resources supporting the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy in subject contexts have been developed and are available on the [NCEA website](#) and are promoted via [teacher-only days](#). New NCEA Level 1 courses are designed to be broad and foundational, and to include literacy and numeracy rich learning in subject contexts. This will prepare ākonga for the literacy and numeracy demands of NCEA Level 2 courses.

Information for teachers of Mathematics and Statistics, English, Science, Social Sciences and Technology

To support teachers' understanding of what this transition looks like at a subject level, the following is a brief overview of the intent of the new NCEA Level 1 materials, and how they prepare ākonga for a range of pathways.

Also included are summaries of conversations with teachers, who have been piloting the new NCEA Level 1 materials, to share insights on how they supported ākonga through the transition to the existing Level 2 courses.

Common insights from pilot teachers across the subjects include:

- The importance of designing courses that cover all the significant learning in the subject learning matrix,
- The need to discuss Level 1 and 2 course planning and design, both within and across departments,
- The need to carefully consider which achievement standards to offer in existing Level 2 courses,
- The importance of building understanding of the subject at higher NCEA levels, including branching subjects. This includes understanding the vocabulary, skills, knowledge, and contexts that ākonga will benefit from exposure to, prior to the Level 2 programme of teaching and learning.

An example planning template is included on page 11. This demonstrates an activity that could inform course design using new Level 1 NCEA materials and support a smooth transition into existing courses at Level 2 for 2025.

Mathematics and Statistics

Course planning informed by the NCEA Level 1 Mathematics and Statistics learning matrix ensures courses access the full depth and breadth of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

The new NCEA Level 1 subject materials for Mathematics and Statistics reflect the refreshed mathematics and statistics learning area. This means the key skills needed for successful transition to an NCEA Level 2 course are covered at the broad foundational level, before specialisation occurs in either or both the mathematics and statistics discipline.

The Level 1 NCEA materials include fundamental ideas in number and algebraic manipulation, key practices in geometry and space, including a major statistical investigation and literacy practices, all supported with relevant technology.

NCEA materials are designed to help make sure schools and kura develop courses that provide the confidence and knowledge ākonga require to pursue mathematical and statistical pathways. Assessment against the new Level 1 achievement standards will prepare ākonga for either or both the current NCEA Level 2 Mathematics and NCEA Level 2 Statistics achievement standards.

What we heard from teachers and kaiako piloting the new NCEA Level 1 materials

We heard from teachers that graduates of the new Level 1 programme were not particularly aware of the transition back to the existing Level 2 courses. However, teachers noticed the relative increase in assessments at Level 2 and the tendency to compartmentalise topics – teach, assess, then change topic and move on. This is not how they felt using the new NCEA Level 1 materials.

Teachers saw graduates of Level 1 as better prepared than they would have been under the previous Level 1 courses. Teachers reflected that this may be because they have taught the whole curriculum learning area versus only teaching some standards or having ākonga opting out of certain topics. For example, ākonga who would in the past have opted out of algebra are now showing interest and confidence. They have the basic skills, and this has been an advantage to them when beginning NCEA Level 2.

Teachers also found that the spiral nature of the new Level 1 Mathematics and Statistics course worked well.

Some teachers are using the draft Level 2 statistics learning matrix to plan their Level 2 courses and find they work well with the current achievement standards. One school adjusted their Year 10 programme to ensure coverage of all key concepts that will build towards the new NCEA Level 1 Course.

English

Both the 2007 NZC and the refreshed English learning area, which is now available for use, enable teachers to design learning that meets the needs of ākonga. The learning matrix for English details the knowledge and skills that will support success for ākonga across the NCEA Levels. By designing programmes of teaching and learning using the curriculum documents and supports, teachers can ensure that ākonga have the learning required for success in English.

Not all learning in a course is credentialled via the NCEA qualification. However, the four new Level 1 achievement standards assess the key knowledge and skills in English that will support ākonga as they move into courses assessed with the existing level 2 standards. There are currently a variety of standards available at Level 2, and teachers can select from these, with their ākonga in mind, to ensure continuity and development of the key knowledge and skills.

Some of the new Level 1 standards offer continuity to a number of current Level 2 standards, for instance, achievement standard 91925 (AS1.2) *Demonstrate understanding of specific aspects of a studied text* leads naturally to aspects assessed by the existing achievement standards 91098 (AS 2.1), 91099 (AS 2.2), and 91106 (AS 2.9). All of these achievement standards assess ākonga ability to understand, analyse and engage with texts. In addition, the inclusive design of the new Level 1 internal achievement standards supports the development of a range of communication skills, as understanding can be demonstrated orally, visually or in writing.

As teachers develop their pedagogical approach to using the new Level 1 standards, they can apply this same approach to the existing Level 2 standards. Through considered selection of achievement standards from the existing Level 2 assessment matrix, teachers can create a programme of teaching and learning with fewer assessments to better support ākonga by allowing space for significant teaching and learning.

What we heard from teachers and kaiako piloting the new NCEA Level 1 materials

We have heard from pilot teachers that in general, most students are coping well with moving from the new achievement standards at Level 1 and on to the existing standards at Level 2.

Level 2 teachers who have not taught the new Level 1 course have needed guidance to know which skills ākonga had focused on in the new Level 1 course.

A pilot teacher reflected that where possible, they would slow down and cover film terminology and essay writing in more depth in their Level 1 course. They had designed a very packed programme for Level 1 which meant less in-depth coverage of texts.

Some pilot teachers found that they needed to dedicate more time to developing the essay writing skills at Level 2 to prepare ākonga to respond to the older NCEA style questions that they found quite different to the new Level 1 assessments.

They also thought that ākonga were showing good development with their personal responses –the new Level 1 course had helped with developing the skills required of the achievement standard 91106 (AS 2.9) in Level 2.

After experiencing more inclusive approaches in their Level 1 courses, one pilot teacher is aiming to add more learner choice at Level 2, particularly in information literacy where they are, for example, increasing the range of options in how ākonga can demonstrate their learning and present their work.

Many pilot teachers were finding that with both the new and existing NCEA courses, Artificial intelligence platforms are a new world to navigate, and they are working to develop assessment strategies to ensure that all pieces of work are authentic.

Science

The Level 1 Science Learning Matrix identifies the significant learning required as part of a broad foundational course that will develop scientifically literate citizens who can progress on to any NCEA Level 2 science specialist subject. The subjects that fall under the Science learning area are Physics Earth and Space Science, Chemistry, Biology, Agricultural and Horticultural Science.

Schools and kura are able to identify contexts and content to explore within their Level 1 course which are relevant to their local community, and which will support the transition from NCEA Level 1 Science into the range of NCEA Level 2 courses.

What we heard from teachers and kaiako piloting the new NCEA Level 1 materials

The general feedback from pilot schools in Level 1 Science who have supported graduates of the new NCEA Level 1 programme on to existing Level 2 courses, is that ākonga are coping well. They found that there were few gaps in learning that created challenges for teachers or ākonga. One pilot teacher stated that most ākonga are better prepared for Level 2 than if they had done the previous Level 1 Science course.

One pilot teacher recommended consulting with Level 2 specialist teachers to design Level 1 courses that support ākonga into all science pathways. They found that the subject learning matrix for Level 1 was sufficiently high level, allowing content and contexts to be bespoke, depending on the likely pathways students will take beyond Level 1. For example, chemists decided conservation of matter and ionic bonding were important for Level 2 so included this context in the Level 1 Science programme.

One teacher explained that they covered acids and bases in the beginning of the Level 2 Chemistry course, for graduates of Level 1 Physics Earth and Space Science, to ensure ākonga had the necessary content knowledge to progress with confidence.

Some teachers have identified valuable learning advantages in all of the Level 1 pilot courses, finding that the ability to take information and link to the real world was strong across all graduates. Also, because the new NCEA Level 1 materials for science were based on understanding, learning was deeper and more readily transferred than would be the case with rote learning which tends to expire and is highly concept specific.

One pilot teacher found that they contextualised learning a lot more with the new NCEA materials. They provided more opportunities for students to work independently which resulted in ākonga strengthening their skills in self-directed learning.

Some pilot schools found that the uptake of entries into Level 2 senior sciences had increased after two years of piloting the new Level 1 materials. Also, one teacher saw that fewer students were avoiding external assessments, and that they were achieving these standards.

Pilot teachers noted that it is good practice to establish existing knowledge of each new Level 2 cohort and then to revisit key concepts and skills at the start of a new specialist course. They also recommended thinking about how Year 10 programmes are designed, to start to build those concepts and skills ākonga will need later.

Social Sciences

Commerce

Level 1 Commerce is drawn from the Social Sciences learning area of the NZC and has consolidated the disciplines of economics, accounting and business studies to provide ākonga with a broad base of foundational knowledge and skills that opens pathways to a range of more specialised Level 2 subjects. Level 2 branching subjects include Accounting, Agribusiness, Business Studies, Economics and Tourism.

One of the strengths of the design of Level 1 Commerce is its flexibility. There are no prescribed models or concepts in the subject learning matrix or achievement standards therefore schools and kura can choose the models or concepts that are relevant to their ākonga and the local learning context. The increased flexibility also allows schools and kura to design courses that cover specific concepts they feel their ākonga need moving on to an existing Level 2 subjects.

Geography

The new NCEA Level 1 Geography materials alongside the 2007 NZC and refreshed Social Sciences learning area, describe foundational knowledge and skills for ākonga beginning their journey in geography. The achievement standards focus on important capabilities required by ākonga, including demonstrating understanding of; spatial distribution phenomena and their impact on space, the environment using data, how

natural processes shape the environment, and geographic decision-making in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific.

The new NCEA Level 1 materials for geography include four achievement standards, each focused on one geographic capability. There are currently a variety of standards available at Level 2 including four 3 credit internal achievement standards that assess multiple capabilities. If all four internal assessments are offered in Level 2 programmes, it is likely to result in increased workload in Level 2 relative to the new Level 1.

Schools and kura may need to carefully consider the balance of internal and external achievement standards they choose to assess in their Level 2 programme, taking on board the changes to Level 1, where not all learning requires summative assessment.

History

Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories is now available to be used within the refreshed Social Sciences learning area and the NCEA Level 1 History materials. The new Level 1 materials for History assess similar capabilities to those found in the existing Level 1 standards and therefore support learners to progress smoothly to a Level 2 course that is assessed by the existing achievement standards.

There are clear connections to the current Level 2 and 3 achievement standards in the new Level 1 materials. For example, the new achievement standard 92024 (AS1.1) *Engage with a variety of primary sources in a historical context*, assesses capabilities which build toward those assessed by the current Achievement Standard 91229 (AS 2.1) *Carry out an inquiry on a historical event that is of significance to New Zealanders* and 91231 (AS 2.3) *Examine sources of an historical event that is of significance to New Zealanders*.

What we heard from teachers and kaiako piloting the new NCEA Level 1 materials

Commerce

Pilot teachers enjoyed the flexibility and reduced assessment workload of the new Level 1 course. They found the course prepared ākonga particularly well for business studies and tourism at Level 2.

They found that there was time in the new Level 1 courses to cover all the teaching and learning to support progression into existing Level 2 courses. Noting that with the flexibility offered by the new NCEA materials, it was important to liaise with teachers of branching subjects to support specific content required of Level 2 Accounting and Economics. For example, the concepts of supply, demand and market equilibrium, and accounting equations and financial statements.

They found that graduates of the new Level 1 course were all stronger in their understanding of mātauranga Māori. Also, that ākonga had a better understanding of how values and beliefs influence decision making.

They saw the need to explicitly teaching key concepts at the beginning of Level 2 Accounting and Economics, although this is good practice in all subjects. Pilot teachers also found that it was beneficial for departments to consider what Commerce topics and concepts can be built into the Year 10 programmes for Social Sciences.

Geography

We heard from pilot teachers that the new NCEA Level 1 course was engaging for ākonga and the flexibility in the course design allowed to for a more inclusive approach. They also found that graduates of the new Level 1 had a deeper appreciation of mātauranga Māori and perspectives of Iwi and mana whenua.

They found graduates of the new Level 1 course found the increase in the number of assessments in existing Level 2 courses a big adjustment. They encouraged teachers of existing Level 2 courses to carefully consider the selection and number of achievement standards in the programme.

Pilot teachers saw that a step up was required of ākonga in Level 2 to hold a detailed, deep knowledge of case studies. However, this amounted to an additional two - three lessons at Level 2 and did not significantly impact course planning.

One pilot teacher recommended using the course planning exemplars being provided by the subject association to support planning.

History

One pilot teacher noted that the reduced assessment workload for both ākonga and teachers made the transition to the higher volume of assessment in existing Level 2 courses very noticeable.

They found that graduates of Level 1 were very engaged in and had a strong understanding of mātauranga Māori. Pilot teachers recommend that departments consider how to continue this where possible in the existing Level 2 course. A pilot teacher also found that graduates were able to write more concisely due to being involved in the volume of evidence trial.

They advised ensuring the Level 1 course covers all the significant learning in the learning matrix to ensure key skills such as research, understanding cause and consequence and essay writing were developed to prepare ākonga for the existing Level 2 course.

Technology

The Level 1 Technology subjects include Design and Visual Communication, Digital Technology, and Materials and Processing Technology. Each subject has a subject learning matrix to guide the development of broad and foundational courses where

ākonga can develop their technological literacy with a view to participating in society as informed citizens.

Teachers will be able to design programmes of learning in a wider range of subjects at Level 2, including Computer Science, Design and Visual Communication, Digital Technology, Materials Technology, and Processing and Systems Technology.

What we heard from teachers and kaiako piloting the new NCEA Level 1 materials

Pilot teachers are positive about ākonga ability to cope more effectively with Level 2 requirements than in previous years. They found that ākonga continued to build on their understanding and application of technological practice and are more instinctively independent due to the nature of the teaching, learning and assessment experienced through the new Level 1 Pilot.

They found that graduates of the new Level 1 programme bring a broader base of skills and a better understanding of technology processes and seeing through an authentic process i.e., a project from conception to completion. They also found that graduates tend to be more creative as they have more opportunities to experiment and play in the new Level 1 course. They are also more resilient in coping with design failures.

Pilot teachers found that ākonga didn't notice that anything unusual about the transition from new Level 1 to existing Level 2. However, they thought that Level 2 teachers may need to plan a more accelerated learning curve for some specific skills and concepts that aren't covered in as much depth in the new Level 1 course. The pilot teachers thought that depth of knowledge is more appropriate in Level 2 and is well supported by a broad base in Level 1. One pilot teacher found that a bit more scaffolding of report writing was required at level 2, but not to an extent that it would impact course planning.

Like pilot teachers of other subjects, pilot teachers in Technology found it necessary to talk to teachers of Level 2 branching subjects when planning Level 1 to determine which specific skills and knowledge are required in Level 2 specialist subjects. This is good practice to ensure smooth and coherent transitions and should continue when the new Level 2 and 3 courses are rolled out.

This planning template aims to help you build the concepts, skills, and contexts into the significant learning in the new Level 1 courses to support a smooth transition into the existing specialised courses at Level 2.

Steps	Reflection questions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paste or copy the significant learning from the Level 1 learning matrix into the table and include the concepts, skills and contexts you plan to use in your Level 1 course in 2024. 2. List the current achievement standards you plan to use to assess the Level 2 course(s). Include branching subjects. 3. For the Level 2 courses that the Level 1 cohort is likely progress to in 2025, identify the key concepts, skills and contexts they will need to be familiar with to progress effectively. 4. Map both backward and forward to support a smooth transition for teachers and for ākonga. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning matrices allow for flexibility so how might your Level 1 teaching programme be adapted to ensure key concepts, skills, and contexts you know will be needed in 2025 are built in? • How might our Level 2 subjects be adapted to mesh with the skills and knowledge that graduates of Level 1 will bring? • In our usual introduction to Level 2 courses what might need to be revisited?

Level 1 (2024)

Significant learning	Key concepts, skills, and contexts that ākonga will explore
	Concepts
	Skills
	Contexts
	Concepts
	Skills
	Contexts
	Concepts
	Skills
	Contexts
	Concepts
	Skills
	Contexts
	Concepts
	Skills
	Contexts
	Concepts
	Skills
	Contexts

Level 2 (2025)

<p>Achievement Standard:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Concepts:</p> <p>Skills:</p> <p>Contexts:</p>
<p>Achievement Standard:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Concepts:</p> <p>Skills:</p> <p>Contexts:</p>
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