NCEA Review and Maintenance Programme – 2026 updates

Review and maintenance work has been undertaken for all three levels of NZC NCEA for 2026. This pdf document contains the updated Course Outlines for **Design and Visual Communication Level 1**. In January 2026 the NCEA website will be updated with these changes for Level 1, and the pdf version will be removed as it will no longer be necessary. For Levels 2 and 3, assessment materials will be updated on TKI in January. For external assessment specifications, refer to the NZQA website.

Subject: Design and Visual Communication
Level 1

Product	What's changed?
Course Outline 1	Updated for clarification and alignment with 1.1 Achievement Standard and Internal Assessment Activity B revisions
Course Outline 2	Updated for clarification and alignment with 1.1 Achievement Standard and Internal Assessment Activity B revisions

Design and Visual Communication NCEA NZC Level 1 Course Outline 1

Purpose: This example Course Outline (CO) has been provided to support teachers to understand how the new subject Learning Matrix and NCEA Achievement Standards might be used to create a year-long programme of learning.

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities
• Understand that the purpose of design is to enhance people's lives and their environments using aspects of kaitiakitanga, hauora, alofa, and empathy • Explore and consider design influences, design tikanga, practices, principles, and techniques from te ao Māori and indigenous cultures within Design and Visual Communication • Understand how Design and Visual Communication impacts on end users by considering the following mātauranga Māori principles: kotahitanga, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, wairuatanga, and tikanga	**Learning about one's personal perspective** **Students will explore how designers bring their own unique voice that draws from their personal experiences, cultures, values, and perspectives as well as those of other people, with particular attention given to personal perspectives.** Duration — 2 weeks Students will put together a set of work that shares their personal perspective. • Their background stories (something about themselves such as their family, culture, interests, or experiences). • The creative heritage that they bring to their work (art, design, music, drama, dance, writing, craft, sports, etc — what they have done and/or examples of what they are interested in). This is to be done as a collection of images (that can be talked or written about).
• Explore and consider design influences, design tikanga, practices, principles, and techniques from te ao Māori and indigenous cultures within Design and Visual Communication • Engage with decision-making that is connected to people, places, cultures, and design knowledge in developing design outcomes • Understand how Design and Visual Communication impacts on end users by considering the following mātauranga Māori principles: kotahitanga, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, wairuatanga, and tikanga • Develop good practice in the attribution and acknowledgement of sources when using third-party content • Develop the practice of generating design ideas that explore possibilities beyond first thoughts • Understand and use the design principles of aesthetics and function in own design thinking • Use both divergent and convergent thinking in developing design outcomes	**Project one — part one: Inviting Spaces** **Activity: Students will research, gather images, and explore ideas for inviting spaces.** Duration — 1 week Students will explore te ao Māori design influences and how a design has a whakapapa — heritage, philosophies, and knowledges, aesthetics, function, or both, in relation to product or spatial design. Examples of a design influence from te ao Māori could visually describe regional (design) styles and the knowledge and meanings within. Finding out about relevant tikanga, such as why specific designs are used in a certain way or in a certain place, will support students to gain meaning from and make a connection to the knowledge that informs the design appropriately. Students will select an appropriate design influence from te ao Māori such as an object, structure, or a product that serves a specific purpose (eg kupenga/fishing net, waka/canoe, patu/club, etc) — these can be traditional or contemporary. For each design influence, students will gather a range of images (as analytical image gathering) that may include photographs, drawings or diagrams that show: • the specific design influence from different viewpoints • close-up details and/or features of the design influence • how the design influence is constructed or assembled • how the design influence is used and any protocols associated with its use

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities
• Develop visual skills and techniques for generating and exploring design ideas • Use visual communication and visual presentation techniques to represent the qualities of design ideas and outcomes • Develop visual skills and instrumental techniques to communicate details of design ideas and outcomes	• different versions of the same design influence that might vary in terms of its history, region, or style. It is important to consider tikanga Māori to ensure authentic, respectful, and responsible use of design ideas from te ao Māori. Students will acknowledge any sources used when investigating design influences. **Project one — part two: Generating sculptural forms** **Activity: Students will generate a range of preliminary ideas that respond to different aspects of the visual qualities of the design influences researched.** Duration — 2 weeks These ideas are intended to be exploratory and not necessarily functional or purposeful at this stage. Generating ideas can include exploring aspects of form (3D), shape (2D), pattern, texture, colour, material, surface finish, etc, and can be done through any of the following visual communication techniques: • Paper sculptures that are documented though a set of photographs. • A series of quick exploratory sketches that can be generated though a range of strategies such as rapid vis, tracings, blind drawing, mixed media, etc. They can be either 2D or 3D or a combination. • Simple or abstract SketchUp models that are documented through images that show the idea from different viewpoints. **Project one — part three: Generating, experimenting, extending inviting space ideas** **Activity: Students will explore alternative inviting spaces design ideas considering a design influence from te ao Māori and one other design influence.** Duration — 4 weeks Students will: • incorporate the various elements and features (aesthetics, function, or both) in different and creative ways that may lead towards a potential inviting space design • consider the appropriateness to te ao Māori and other design influences • explore how the inviting space will be used by people. Consider its purpose, such as a sensory garden, picnic grove, or meditation nook. Consider if it is moveable or fixed. • explore how the inviting space will be set in its environment. Consider if it will blend in with its surroundings or make a visual statement. Consider if it will be suitable for the outdoors in terms of its durability and think about how it is positioned in relation to a view. Modes of visual communication that students can use include design sketches, physical models, digital models, or any combination of these, and they can use any range of techniques such as tracing, photography, collage, etc. Learning covered will provide opportunities to collect evidence towards AS 92000 (1.1) Generate product or spatial design ideas using visual communication techniques in response to design influences.
	Project two — part one: Shade structure design **Activity: Students will generate at least two different initial design ideas for a shade structure design for a specified outdoor area they have identified.**

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities
• Understand and use the design principles of aesthetics and function in own design thinking • Use both divergent and convergent thinking in developing design outcomes • Develop visual skills and techniques for generating and exploring design ideas • Develop visual skills and instrumental techniques to communicate details of design ideas and outcomes • Develop good practice in the attribution and acknowledgement of sources when using third-party content • Engage with decision-making that is connected to people, places, cultures, and design knowledge in developing design outcomes	Duration — 2 weeks Students will: • use ideas that are inspired by elements from project one (Inviting Spaces) • use ideas that are inspired by elements from famous buildings such as: 4 x 4 House — Tadao Ando Barcelona Pavilion — Mies van der Rohe Christchurch Transitional 'Cardboard' Cathedral — Shigeru Ban. • acknowledge any sources used when investigating famous buildings • use divergent thinking to generate design ideas • visually communicate their own initial design ideas through a set of 2D and 3D drawings that can be created manually, digitally, or as a combination of both • support their design drawings by adding labels and brief notes that help explain the main aesthetic and functional features as well as the student's design thinking behind each idea. **Project two — part two: Clarifying the context** **Activity: Students will clarify and visually communicate the selected details of their outdoor location in the form of a site analysis.** Duration — 1 week Site analysis information may include functional aspects such as: • location • topography • the size of the area • description of built or natural features (both onsite and adjacent to the site) • sun, wind, and views. Students will: • describe the activities that take place there currently • visually communicate analysis of the site location using maps, aerial views, photographs (both looking at the site and looking from the site), and diagrams (such as sun path), supported by labels and brief notes. **Project two — part three: Developing a shade structure design outcome** **Activity: Students will develop their design ideas, refining and clarifying the aesthetic and functional features of their main design idea for a potential shade structure.** Duration — 6 weeks Students will consider in their development and make decisions on:
• Understand that the purpose of design is to enhance people's lives and their environments using aspects of kaitiakitanga, hauora, alofa, and empathy • Develop the practice of generating design ideas that explore possibilities beyond first thoughts	

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities
	• overall form and aesthetics • overall use and functionality • size and site placement • materials and colour • basic construction • visually communicating their design thinking through the iterative use of 2D and 3D design drawings that can be created manually, digitally, or as a combination of both • supporting their design by using labels and brief notes that can help explain the aesthetic and functional features and details as well as the design decisions that have been made. Learning covered will provide opportunities to collect evidence towards AS 92002 (1.3) Develop product or spatial design ideas informed by the consideration of people.
• Develop visual skills and instrumental techniques to communicate details of design ideas and outcomes • Develop visual skills and techniques for generating and exploring design ideas	**Learning about instrumental drawing techniques and drawing systems** **Activity: Students will work through a series of manual drawing exercises.** Duration — 2 weeks Students will learn techniques and principles of instrumental drawing covering the following: • using manual drawing equipment (such as pencils, T-square, set-squares, compass, circle templates) • applying the principles of line weights, line types, and labelling • applying the principles of orthographic and paraline drawing systems • applying foundational instrumental drawing techniques related to product or spatial design (such as sectional drawing, exploded drawing, and drawing details). **Project three — Instrumental drawings of own design outcome** **Activity: Students will draft their instrumental drawings.** Duration — 6 weeks Instrumental drawing will consist of: • an overall assembled paraline drawing • either an exploded paraline drawing or sectioned paraline drawing as appropriate for visually communicating construction or assembly details. Learning covered will provide opportunities to collect evidence towards AS 92003 (1.4) Use instrumental drawing techniques to communicate own product or spatial design outcome.
	Project four — Learning rendering techniques and rendered visual presentation of own design outcome **Activity: Students will work through a series of manual rendering exercises and create rendered drawings to visually showcase the aesthetic qualities of one of their design outcomes.**

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities
• Develop visual skills and instrumental techniques to communicate details of design ideas and outcomes	Duration — 6 weeks Students will use the techniques and principles of rendering by: • applying the principles of tonal effects of a light source, cast shadows, shadow lines and highlights, materials, and textures • using manual rendering media (such as pencils, colour pencils, design markers, pastels, etc) • trial suitable techniques and media as drafts for their rendered drawings • produce a final hand rendered or digital rendered drawing of their own design outcome (either their inviting spaces design or shade structure design) that will visually showcase its aesthetic qualities with maximum visual impact. Learning covered will provide opportunities to collect evidence towards AS 92001 (1.2) Use representation techniques to visually communicate own product or spatial design outcome.

Design and Visual Communication NCEA NZC Level 1 Course Outline 2

Purpose: This example Course Outline (CO) has been provided to support teachers to understand how the new subject Learning Matrix and NCEA Achievement Standards might be used to create a year-long programme of learning.

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities
• Develop visual skills and techniques for generating and exploring design ideas	**Introduction to spatial design visual techniques** Duration — 2 weeks • Sketching exercises (elevations, isometric, 2pt perspective). • Learning SketchUp basics. • Hand sketching over SketchUp mass models.
• Understand how Design and Visual Communication impacts on end users by considering the following mātauranga Māori principles: kotahitanga, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, wairuatanga, and tikanga • Explore and consider design influences, design tikanga, practices, principles, and techniques from te ao Māori and indigenous cultures within Design and Visual Communication • Develop the practice of generating design ideas that explore possibilities beyond first thoughts • Use both divergent and convergent thinking in developing design outcomes • Develop good practice in the attribution and acknowledgement of sources when using third-party content • Develop visual skills and techniques for generating and exploring design ideas • Develop visual skills and instrumental techniques to communicate details of design ideas and outcomes • Engage with decision-making that is connected to people, places, cultures, and design knowledge in developing design outcomes	**Part one: Dream whānau bach** **Activity: Students will explore ideas for a dream whānau bach using a design influence from te ao Māori and another design influence as inspiration. Through responding to different design influences, including those of te ao Māori, students gain influence, inspiration, and understanding of diverse perspectives.** Duration — 5 weeks Design influence one: Te ao Māori traditional patterns and motifs. Finding out about relevant tikanga will support ākonga to gain meaning from, and make a connection to, the knowledge that informs the design appropriately. Consideration of tikanga Māori ensures authentic, respectful, and responsible use of design ideas from te ao Māori. Design influence two: Choose one of the following architects: • Ludwig Mies van der Rohe • Glenn Murcutt • Shigeru Ban • Rau Hoskins • Daniel Liebeskind • Nicola and Lance Herbst • John Scott • Belinda George • Bronwyn Kerr • Pete Ritchie.

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities

For each design influence, students will:

- show source images for each selected design influence and label characteristics they identify
- use visual techniques to explore ideas from each design influence and apply divergent thinking to generate own ideas
- use visual techniques (could be different techniques) to experiment with and extend these ideas towards ideas for a lake house
- explore possibilities beyond first thoughts, for example, by combining ideas from each design influence.

Visual techniques that could be used include quick SketchUp, 2D and 3D sketches, photography, and overlays.

Learning covered will provide opportunities to collect evidence towards AS 92000 (1.1) Generate product or spatial design ideas using visual communication techniques in response to design influences.

Part two: Dream whānau bach refinement

Clarify an idea further to reach a final outcome.

Duration — 3 weeks

- Select one idea to extend and clarify to create a final idea for the bach.
- Think about the building's relationship with the site, the form, materials, and details.
- Consider the people who will be using the dream whānau bach.
- Use freehand sketches, site plans, models, photos, and overlays, SketchUp etc.

This section of work is in preparation for the presentation in part three.

Part three: Dream whānau bach presentation

Activity: Students will explore and practise representation modes and techniques to present their final lake house design idea.

Duration — 5 weeks

Students will explore a range of representation modes to communicate design ideas using one of the following methods.

- Rendered CAD drawing.
- Hand-rendered presentation sketch.
- Architectural model.
- Computer animation or flythrough.

Students will explore a range of representation techniques

Duration — 3 weeks

Representation techniques can include:

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities
	• isometric sketching exercises • exploded isometric • section views • pulling apart an existing design and sketching all the parts • overlays or tracing. Select a suitable representation mode and technique most appropriate to their own design. • Research and learn the skills needed to execute the technique. • Practise the technique. • Execute the mode of final presentation. Learning covered will provide opportunities to collect evidence towards AS 92001 (1.2) Use representation techniques to visually communicate own product or spatial design outcome.
• Develop visual skills and techniques for generating and exploring design ideas • Develop the practice of generating design ideas that explore possibilities beyond first thoughts • Engage with decision-making that is connected to people, places, cultures, and design knowledge in developing design outcomes • Understand that the purpose of design is to enhance people's lives and their environments using aspects of kaitiakitanga, hauora, alofa, and empathy • Develop visual skills and instrumental techniques to communicate details of design ideas and outcomes • Understand and use the design principles of aesthetics and function in own design thinking • Use visual communication and visual presentation techniques to represent the qualities of design ideas and outcomes	**Water bottle design** Duration — 6 weeks Generate ideas by considering the following. • Mountains of plastic waste. • Many people have no access to safe drinking water. • When do people drink water? • Can people be helped to make a healthy choice? **Personal design statement** The water bottle design statement can relate to a global issue (eg plastic waste), or it could be personal (eg needing to take a water bottle to netball practice). It could relate to another person (eg the student's little sister needs a water bottle for school). Students use the thoughts above and design principles to create a design statement for a water bottle, including a specific situation and person or people who the water bottle will be for. **Generate ideas** Students will explore design principles and use design thinking to consider aesthetics and functionality. Students pick one of the phrases below (or one of their own) to help explore shapes and forms for a water bottle. • 'Go with the flow.' • 'Living on the edge.' • 'There's joy in repetition.' **Develop an outcome**

Significant Learning	Learning Activities and Assessment Opportunities
	Students select one idea to develop into a final design for a water bottle based on their design story. Students use visual communication techniques to develop and explain their water bottle. Students need to explore and show consideration of aesthetics and functional aspects such as: • who will use the bottle • where the bottle will be used and what functionality it will need • what are the parts and how are they assembled • how does the bottle look and feel • what materials and colour choices on the bottle will provide for aesthetical quality. Learning covered will provide opportunities to collect evidence towards AS 92002 (1.3) Develop product or spatial design ideas informed by the consideration of people. **Explore CAD** Duration — 3 weeks Explore CAD basics for product design: • Creating simple parts. • Adding features. • Editing. • Making assemblies. • Creating drawings (such as 3rd angle orthographic views, section views, paraline views, cutaway views, exploded views). **Instrumental drawing of final water bottle** Duration — 5 weeks Learn instrumental drawing techniques to communicate the features and details of the final water bottle. • Use CAD to create the parts and details for the bottle. • Make an assembly of the parts. • Create 1-2 drawing sheets of bottle assembly that show the features and details of your water bottle. • Select instrumental views and techniques that show the features of the design most clearly. Learning covered will provide opportunities to collect evidence towards AS 92003 (1.4) Use instrumental drawing techniques to communicate own product or spatial design outcome.