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 assessment materials for **Geography 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: Geography
Level 1

Product	What's changed?
Conditions of Assessment across all internal standards	Updated to provide clearer guidance around authenticity.
AS1.3 91934 Unpacking	Further exemplification added to differentiate environments, processes and phenomena.

Contents

NCEA Conditions of Assessment

across all internally assessed standards

Subject:	All NZC subjects
Achievement Standard:	All NZC internal Achievement Standards

The Conditions of Assessment across all Level 1 internally assessed standards have been updated to include clearer guidance about authenticity. Any changes to Standard Specific Conditions of Assessment will be shown separately within this document.

Conditions of Assessment

for internally assessed standards

These Conditions provide guidelines for assessment against internally assessed Achievement Standards. Guidance is provided on:

- specific requirements for all assessments against this Standard
- appropriate ways of, and conditions for, gathering evidence
- ensuring that evidence is authentic.

Assessors must be familiar with guidance on assessment practice in learning centres, including enforcing timeframes and deadlines. The NZQA website offers resources that would be useful to read in conjunction with these Conditions of Assessment.

The learning centre's Assessment Policy and Conditions of Assessment must be consistent with NZQA's Assessment Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess. This link includes guidance for managing internal moderation and the collection of evidence.

Gathering Evidence

Internal assessment provides considerable flexibility in the collection of evidence. Evidence can be collected in different ways to suit a range of teaching and learning styles, and a range of contexts of teaching and learning. Care needs to be taken to allow students opportunities to present their best evidence against the Standard(s) that are free from unnecessary constraints.

It is recommended that the design of assessment reflects and reinforces the ways students have been learning. Collection of evidence for the internally assessed Standards could include, but is not restricted to, an extended task, an investigation, digital evidence (such as recorded interviews, blogs, photographs, or film), or a portfolio of evidence.

Effective assessment should suit the nature of the learning being assessed, provide opportunities to meet the diverse needs of all students, and be valid and fair.

Ensuring Authenticity of Evidence

Authenticity of student evidence needs to be assured regardless of the method of collecting evidence. This must be in line with the learning centre's policy and NZQA's Assessment Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess.

Ensure that the student's evidence is individually identifiable and represents the student's own work. The evidence must be an accurate reflection of what the student independently knows and can do, according to the Standard being assessed. This includes evidence submitted as part of a group assessment, evidence produced outside of class time or without assessor supervision, and evidence produced with any use of generative artificial intelligence tools (GenAI). GenAI use should be carefully considered in the context of the Standard being assessed and its Conditions of Assessment, discussed with students before the assessment, and its use must be acknowledged. For example, an investigation carried out over several sessions could include:

- teacher guidance on the nature and extent of acceptable GenAI use, if any
- assessor observations and conversations
- meeting with the student at set milestones or checkpoints
- the student's record of progress, such as photographic entries or any GenAI prompts used.

NCEA Unpacking the Standard

Subject:	Geography
Achievement Standard:	1.3 Demonstrate understanding of how natural processes shape an environment
Credits:	5

The intent of the Standard

The aim of this Achievement Standard is for ākonga to understand, from a geographic lens, how natural processes shape an environment. An environment is a particular geographic area within te taiao that has its own characteristics, and it can be local, regional, national, or global. The way natural processes work to shape an environment is complex. Ākonga will unpack this complexity by showing the relationship between natural processes at work, explaining how they create phenomena within the environment, and discussing the implications of these processes for people using relevant evidence and geographic terminology.

Ākonga will be equipped with a new way to look at the world around them and apply geographic thinking and knowledge to imagine how the environment has been shaped, and how it may continue to change. Being able to use evidence and geographic terminology to understand how natural processes shape an environment is a core aspect of geography. It means that ākonga can understand the history and future of te taiao, and appreciate how all the parts of the environment within te taiao are interconnected. Ākonga will be able to do this by looking at how phenomena within an environment are created through natural processes and by looking at the impacts of these natural processes. For example, how phenomena such as calderas and volcanic cones are created by volcanic processes or how phenomena such as flood plains and deltas are created by fluvial processes.

Ākonga will be able to use their understanding of how natural processes shape an environment to grow a positive and reciprocal relationship with their local environment. For example, knowing how natural processes can cause hazards means that ākonga can make informed, responsible decisions within te taiao, such as where to locate settlements, or how to prevent an area from flooding.
It can be part of a unit of learning that draws on the following Significant Learning:

- explore pūrākau and science to understand how te taiao is formed
- investigate how natural processes shape te taiao
- investigate how natural processes have consequences within te taiao.

For te ao Māori contexts, engaging with kōrero tuku iho, particularly pūrākau, can help ākonga to understand how natural processes shape an environment and the impacts and implications within an environment. Connection with local te ao Māori knowledge holders in the teaching and learning programme is encouraged to engage with kōrero tuku iho and taonga tuku iho in a way that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Making reliable judgements

To describe how the natural processes shape an environment, ākonga will outline the processes in action, and the resulting phenomena.

Ākonga will demonstrate understanding that there is a relationship between natural processes and an environment. An environment refers to a particular geographic area within te taiao, the space you stand in or observe. Features of te taiao are interconnected, including people who live within the space. They will describe how the natural processes relate to the specific environment they are looking at, for example, by showing where the natural processes occur to shape the specific environment. If ākonga look at a macro-process, they will also need to focus on the way it is involved in shaping the specific environment. They might describe how a particular part of the macro-process is located in the specific environment and shapes it. Ākonga will describe the phenomena resulting from the natural processes. At higher levels of understanding, ākonga will be able to explain how natural processes create the phenomena they have described.

To attain this Achievement Standard, ākonga will describe impacts of the natural processes and phenomena on the environment. For example, an impact could be the muddying of a river mouth due to erosion of the surrounding hills. Another example could be erosion causing a landslip where a surf lifesaving building is located.

At higher levels of understanding, ākonga will show understanding of wider impacts or implications of the natural processes on the environment. For example, a wider impact could be that the muddying of the river damages the river's ecosystem. Another example of a wider impact could be that the damage to the surf lifesaving building due to a landslip is fixed. Examining implications may include discussing real or potential effects, outcomes, or responses for people who live in or near the environment in the future. For example, an implication could be that the damage to the river's ecosystem due to the muddied waters means that people do not fish there anymore, so community fishing events move up the coastline. Another example could be that the risk of further landslips in the location of the surf lifesaving building means that the building is moved to a safer location on the beach, which changes where locals choose to swim on the beach.

Ākonga will also be assessed on their ability to include relevant evidence and geographic terminology. Deeper understanding of this Achievement Standard will be demonstrated by their ability to use evidence and geographic terminology effectively, to support and develop their explanation. Kaiako should include geographic terminology in their teaching and learning programme so that ākonga can use these terms correctly.

Collecting evidence

Refer to the External Assessment Specifications for further information.

Possible contexts

Natural processes covered within this Achievement Standard include glacial, tectonic, climatic, coastal, and fluvial. Kaiako should ensure a range of environments are part of the teaching and learning programme.
For example, they could explore:

- a coastal environment such as Omaha Beach, with the main natural processes being coastal and climatic which create phenomena such as dunes and spits.
- a volcanic environment such as the Tongariro volcanic zone, with the main natural processes being glacial and tectonic which create phenomena such as volcanic cones and caldera.
- a river environment such as Hātea River in Whangārei, the Whanganui River, or Te Awa Kairangi in Lower Hutt. The main natural processes being fluvial and climatic which create phenomena such as waterfalls and meanders.

Standard Exclusions

This Standard has one or more exclusions, or Standards that assess the same or similar learning. These Standards are excluded against one another to prevent assessing the same learning twice. You can only use credits gained from one of these standards towards your NCEA qualification.

Find out more about the NCEA Level 1 Exclusions List.

Literacy and Numeracy Requirements

This Achievement Standard has been approved for literacy in the transition period (2024-2027).

Full information on the co-requisite during the transition period: Standards approved for NCEA Co-requisite during the transition period (2024-2027).