Submission

To the Ministry of Education on the Draft Curricula (years 0-10) and Te Mātaiaho 2026

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About PPTA Te Wehengarua

PPTA Te Wehengarua represents the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education in New Zealand including secondary teachers, secondary principals, manual and technology teachers and area school teachers and area school principals.

Under our constitution, all PPTA Te Wehengarua activity is guided by the following objectives:

- to advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;
- to uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively; and
- to affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

This submission is from the PPTA Te Wehengarua Executive and is on behalf of all of our members.

Introduction

At PPTA Te Wehengarua's Annual Conference in 2024, the following principles on curriculum development were agreed:

- Principle 1: Te Tiriti is valued and is visible;
- Principle 2: Learners are at the centre so that the curriculum is inclusive and equitable;
- Principle 3: The curriculum is manageable, is well resourced, coherent, and well communicated;
- Principle 4: Teachers are valued as curriculum designers and their expertise and specialisation are recognised and valued; and,
- Principle 5: The curriculum is regularly reviewed through research on effective practice to make sure it is fit for purpose.

This submission outlines significant concerns about the extent to which Phases 1–4 of the draft curriculum changes fail to meet these principles, and the risks this poses for learners, teachers, and the education system as a whole. It is organised into the following three connected sections:

1. PPTA Te Wehengarua's Five Principles for Curriculum Development
2. Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Structural Regression and Recolonising Risk particularly in relation to Te Mātaiaho
3. Subject-Specific Impacts and Risks Across Phases 1–4

PPTA Te Wehengarua acknowledges that there is considerable debate and discussion in the education sector about big questions that relate to curriculum, including the proper role of the Science of Learning, the interface between curriculum and pedagogy, and the proper role of 'knowledge-rich' and competency-based approaches to curriculum. It is not our intention in this curriculum to weigh in on these debates, or to advocate for particular sets of curriculum content in individual subjects. However, we are concerned that the process for development of Te Mātaiaho and the current learning area drafts for Years 0-10 has failed to sufficiently engage with the substance of these debates or with the expertise of subject specialist teachers. It therefore risks producing a curriculum product that does not meet the needs of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. The stated aim of this reform is to decrease the equity gap in New Zealand schools, and our primary concern is that this change risks failing against its own stated aim in this regard.

1. PPTA Te Wehengarua's Five Principles for Curriculum Development

Principle 1: Te Tiriti o Waitangi is valued and is visible

PPTA Te Wehengarua has significant concerns that the current approach to curriculum reform in Phases 1–4 fails to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi both in process and content.

Te Mātaiaho 2023 explicitly located all curricula within a Tiriti-based framework,[1] and began to redress the impact of colonisation on the curriculum, through the incorporation of Mātauranga Maōri and more emphasis on local curricula. This kaupapa has been substantially diminished or abandoned in the current draft materials. The removal of Mātauranga Māori as a foundational organising principle represents a loss of coherence, intent, and equity, particularly for Māori learners.

The lack of genuine co-design with iwi, hapū, Māori educators, and communities during Phases 1–4 stands in tension with Crown obligations to actively protect Te Tiriti rights and uphold partnership. Accelerated timelines, limited transparency, and the use of non-disclosure agreements have further eroded trust in the process.

PPTA Te Wehengarua takes its commitment to affirming and advancing Te Tiriti o Waitangi seriously and expects curriculum reform to give practical effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, protect and enhance the mana and dignity of Mātauranga Māori as knowledge in its own right, and be underpinned by transparent, principled engagement with Māori partners.

Principle 2: Learners are at the centre so that the curriculum is inclusive and equitable

In both Te Mātaiaho 2026 and across Phases 1–4 proposed curricula there is little evidence that learners' diverse identities, languages, cultures, and learning needs are meaningfully incorporated in the curriculum changes.

We are deeply disappointed by the loss of explicit youth voice between Te Mātaiaho 2023 and the 2026 version. In the 2023 framework, learner voice was structurally centred through *Mātaitipu*, described as *"the educational vision for young people, as conceived by young people"*, affirming ākonga as active contributors to curriculum design, relevance, and understandings of success. The removal of this explicit positioning in the 2026 version represents a substantive shift, not merely a change in language: learners are reframed from partners with agency to recipients of a pre-determined curriculum. This weakens alignment with Te Tiriti principles of participation and partnership, and undermines culturally sustaining and inclusive practice. If learners are genuinely to be placed at the centre, youth voice must be restored as an explicit, operative commitment rather than left implicit or rhetorical.

Other concerns raised by members include:

- Insufficient attention to inclusion, particularly for disabled students, neurodivergent learners, and those who do not fit linear or standardised progressions.
- A narrowing of curriculum focus that privileges a limited range of learning areas, particularly Maths and English, at the expense of a broad and balanced education. Aotearoa New Zealand has a long and proud history of a broad, liberal education in the compulsory schooling sector, and, in our view, a 'knowledge-rich' approach to curriculum would not live up to its name if it abandoned or weakened this tradition.

[1] The Kaupapa of Te Mātaiaho 2023 Video https://vimeo.com/757359115

- The allocation of more teaching hours to selected subjects over others, in effect promoting their importance over others, reinforcing siloed curriculum structures and undermining integrated learning approaches.

PPTA Te Wehengarua maintains that curriculum development must reflect the lived realities of learners, uphold the right of all young people to access a rich and future-focused curriculum, and embed equity as a foundational principle rather than an optional add-on.

In addition, PPTA Te Wehengarua is clear that an appropriate curriculum is as important for students with additional learning needs as it is for all students. The* Expanded New Zealand Curriculum *appears to be intended to address this need, but it needs considerable work. A full set of curriculum documents, including realistic and useful achievement descriptors, for students with additional learning needs, that covers the full breadth of the curriculum, is a bare minimum if these young people are to be served in this reform process.

Principle 3: The curriculum is manageable, is well resourced, coherent, and well communicated

Members consistently report that Phases 1–4 of the curriculum changes are unmanageable in pace, volume, and expectation. Middle leaders in particular are being required to respond to multiple, overlapping reforms without adequate time, resourcing, or clarity. The cumulative impact of ongoing curriculum change, alongside concurrent assessment and reporting shifts, is placing unsustainable pressure on teacher workload and wellbeing. This burden is further intensified by the increasing reliance on subject associations, organisations which are frequently led by middle leaders.

Teachers also report that the draft materials do not operate as a coherent curriculum system when examined across phases, learning areas, and real classroom contexts. Members point to inaccuracies in content and lack of disciplinary integrity (concepts, volume of content and sequencing).

Key concepts remain poorly defined, and guidance is often inconsistent or incomplete. Teachers are being expected to interpret and implement changes in the absence of:

- Clear national implementation plans
- Adequate time for professional input into curriculum design
- Subject-specific PLD

Going forward, PPTA Te Wehengarua expects curriculum implementation to be supported by realistic timelines, alongside funded release time and access to high quality professional learning and development. Clear, coherent national guidance is also essential to ensure schools are supported to enact change in a manageable and sustainable way, rather than being overwhelmed by competing demands. We note that there have been sustained and widespread calls for centrally-resourced collective PLD opportunities, such as subject 'jumbo days' that have been such an integral part of successful curriculum and qualifications reform in the past.

Principle 4: Teachers are valued as curriculum designers and their expertise and specialisation are recognised and valued

The current reform approach positions teachers primarily as implementers, rather than as curriculum professionals with disciplinary expertise.

Across Phases 1–4:

- Teacher voice has been limited or marginalised
- Subject associations and professional networks have been inadequately engaged
- Decisions appear to have been made in advance of consultation

Teachers are held professionally accountable for curriculum and assessment decisions, yet have been excluded from meaningful participation at key stages of curriculum development.

It is important to acknowledge that curriculum development and the education systems that the curriculum sits inside are of interest to us all, are often highly contested, and involve many stakeholders and multiple components. These education systems are 'made up of a large number of actors (teachers, parents, politicians, bureaucrats, civil society organisations) interacting with each other in different institutions (schools, ministry departments) for different reasons (developing curricula, monitoring school performance, managing teachers). All these interactions are governed by rules, beliefs and behavioural norms that affect how actors react and adapt to changes in the system'. [2]

The following table provides an overview of the actors involved, the levels of involvement, and some examples of activities the various actors are involved in.

Level	Description and examples of activity	Examples of actors in the Aotearoa-NZ context
Supra	**International:** Transnational curricular discourse generation, policy borrowing and lending; policy learning	OECD; Common European Framework of References for Languages[3]; UNESCO; Education International
Macro	**Systems at government level:** Development of curriculum policy frameworks; legislation to establish agencies and infrastructure	Curriculum agencies: Ministry of Education; NZQA – qualifications and examinations; NZ Curriculum - guidance; writing groups
Meso	**School, Institute:** Production of guidance; leadership of and support for curriculum making; production of resources	Boards, Principals, senior and middle leaders; School-specific programmes; Subject Associations; Networks of Expertise[4]; resourcing including textbook publishers. Evaluation agencies: ERO; ākonga and whānau
Micro	**Classroom, Teacher:** School-level curriculum making: programme design; lesson-planning	Teacher planning, instructional materials, modules, coursework (including assessment); learning experiences outside the classroom; ākonga and whānau
Nano	**Pupil, Individual:** Curriculum making in **classrooms** and other learning spaces: pedagogic interactions; curriculum events	Teachers; students - personal / individual plans for learning; ākonga and whānau

Adapted from Priestley et al. 2021[5]

PPTA Te Wehengarua asserts that the expertise and input of teachers should be considered - at the very least - at all levels of curriculum development, with increased involvement from the macro level.

[2] Global Education Partnership. (2019). Country level evaluations (Synthesis Report). https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-02-gpe-synthesis-report-country-level-evaluations_0.pdf

[3] Referenced in the creation of the *Learning Languages* learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum, 2007

[4] https://pld.education.govt.nz/find-pld/networks-of-expertise/

[5] https://www.storre.stir.ac.uk/retrieve/e68166a2-7fa0-4caa-b8d9-6e73d5fe7f59/Intro_curriculummaking.pdf

Teachers are experts in interpreting and implementing the curriculum through programme design and lesson planning, and are indeed held accountable for their actions through the Professional Teaching Standards, so it is unconscionable to suggest that they are shut out of curriculum planning at the macro level.

The voice of teachers, both directly and through their unions and subject association(s), needs to be explicit and visible both in this process, and in any ongoing process of review and refresh of the documents.

PPTA Te Wehengarua believes that 'Curriculum making strategies that allow actors to experience themselves as trusted and capable participants in curriculum making and make sense of it together with others are the most effective ones – 'effective' meaning here that people relate to the aims of the curriculum they co-construct and feel ownership, and through that are willing to adapt and develop not only curriculum, but also the educational system and settings within which they work". [6]

PPTA Te Wehengarua asserts that curriculum legitimacy depends on trusting teachers as knowledge experts, because excluding their professional expertise undermines effective implementation and educational quality.

Principle 5: The curriculum is regularly reviewed through research on effective practice to make sure it is fit for purpose

PPTA Te Wehengarua affirms that curriculum reform must be genuinely evidence-informed, with decision-making grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, mātauranga Māori, and Aotearoa New Zealand–based educational research, and informed — but not driven — by relevant, high-quality international research.

Across Phases 1–4, however, members have raised serious concerns about what counts as evidence, whose knowledge is privileged, and how research is being interpreted and applied within the draft curriculum materials.

In particular, teachers report that the rationale for major changes is poorly articulated, that concepts such as "knowledge-rich" and "evidence-based" are used without shared definition or professional clarity, and that the research underpinning these decisions has not been made available for scrutiny or debate.

Members also express concern that narrow interpretations of learning science are being used to justify increased specification, sequencing, and comparability, while sidelining relational, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions of learning that are well supported by Aotearoa-based research, Māori educational scholarship, and professional practice. The research base underpinning key decisions has not been clearly articulated or made available for professional scrutiny.

As Ford and Jepsen (2025) argue, without transparency and critique, the language of 'knowledge-rich' and 'evidence-based' risks enabling greater standardisation and central control, with consequences that echo longstanding colonial patterns within curriculum design. They further assert that this selective and decontextualised use of evidence risks repositioning knowledge as neutral, technical, and culturally universal, rather than as socially situated and historically shaped. As explored later in this submission, this approach aligns uncomfortably with patterns of recolonisation, where overseas frameworks and Eurocentric assumptions are recentralised, Māori knowledge systems are diminished or instrumentalised, and professional and cultural authority is

[6] Alvunger, D., Soini, T., Philippou, S. & Priestley, M. (2021). Conclusions: Patterns and trends in curriculum making in Europe. In: M. Priestley, D. Alvunger, S. Philippou. & T. Soini, Curriculum making in Europe: policy and practice within and across diverse contexts. Bingley: Emerald. The original publication is available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83867-735 020211013

removed from those closest to learners and communities.[7] Our Māori members are telling us that they share these concerns about the process and some aspects of the substance of these draft materials.

Teachers also note a troubling disconnect between the stated commitment to evidence and the practical consequences of the changes:

- As noted above, subject-specific evidence about progression, conceptual development, and disciplinary integrity has been overlooked.
- Content expectations are overloaded or inaccurately specified, despite longstanding local and international research warning against such approaches, including OECD analysis highlighting curriculum overload and over-specification as persistent barriers to effective implementation.[8]
- The professional expertise of teachers and subject associations — a critical source of evidence about what works in practice — has been marginalised e.g. through non-disclosure agreements that have not allowed subject association officials to engage with their professional communities during the curriculum development process.

PPTA Te Wehengarua argues that curriculum reform is only evidence-informed when it is grounded in Aotearoa New Zealand-based, Tiriti-honouring scholarship, open to challenge and revision, and responsive to subject-specific evidence about coherence, accuracy, and teachability.

Accordingly, PPTA Te Wehengarua calls on the Ministry of Education to publicly release the research base informing curriculum changes, establish ongoing review processes that meaningfully involve teachers and researchers, and demonstrate a willingness to revise curriculum reforms where risks to learners, teachers, or educational quality are identified.

2. Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Structural Regression and Recolonising Risk particularly in relation to Te Mātaiaho[9]

PPTA Te Wehengarua affirms that honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi in curriculum is not a matter of symbolic reference, but of structural design, decision-making authority, and lived practice. Te Tiriti must be visible in both *process* and *architecture* if it is to be upheld as our founding document for education.

Evidence from the evolution of Te Mātaiaho between 2023 and 2026, alongside Māori leadership analysis of recent curriculum developments, raises serious concern that the current reform trajectory represents a retreat from Tiriti-honouring practice and a re-consolidation of colonial control over knowledge, pedagogy, and assessment.

Te Mātaiaho: From Transformative Tiriti Framework (2023) to Standardised Delivery System (2026)

The original Te Mātaiaho (2021–2023) was developed through an unprecedented, Tiriti-grounded co-design process, with Māori leadership embedded at the conceptual and decision-making level. Its purpose was explicitly transformative: to give practical effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and restore mātauranga Māori as a legitimate, organising body of knowledge within the national curriculum.

[7] The Recolonisation of the Aotearoa New Zealand Curriculum in 2025 Final

[8] https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP(2020)27/En/pdf

[9] Ibid. This section draws heavily on the work of Ford and Jepsen (2025)

In its 2023 form, Te Mātaiaho functioned as a relational curriculum framework, grounded in whakapapa, where:

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi was positioned as a driver of disruption and redesign, not a contextual reference
- Learner progression was organised into five phases, enabling non-linear, strengths-based pathways
- Understand–Know–Do foregrounded big ideas, disciplinary thinking, and local curriculum design
- Essential pedagogies grounded in te ao Māori provided culturally sustaining teaching frameworks
- Teachers were recognised as curriculum designers exercising professional and cultural judgement

By contrast, the 2025–2026 iteration of Te Mātaiaho retains much of the original language and symbolism but fundamentally changes its function. The same elements remain visible yet no longer operate as decision-making principles in practice. Instead, they are repurposed to support a nationally standardised, compliance-oriented system characterised by:

- Removal of curriculum phases and replacement with year-by-year sequencing and readiness gates
- Knowledge - with little meaningful mātauranga Māori – positioned as the primary organising principle within tightly specified progressions
- Disappearance of explicit Tiriti-based pedagogy and key competencies as visible frameworks
- Standardised assessment descriptors and national comparability overriding professional discretion
- Teachers repositioned as implementers of centrally determined sequences

The net effect is not the outright rejection of Te Mātaiaho, but its transformation from a Tiriti-driven, culturally grounded framework into a system where Indigenous concepts survive rhetorically rather than operationally. Te Tiriti remains visible in parts of the language, but is largely absent from the governing logic of curriculum design and accountability.

Recolonising the Curriculum: Consolidation, Tokenism, and the Displacement of Māori Authority

The analysis offered by Ford and Jepsen (2025) positions the current "refresh of the refreshed curriculum" as a contemporary phase of recolonisation, consistent with historical patterns identified in Aotearoa's education system.

Recolonisation, in this framing, does not require the overt removal of Māori language or symbolism. Instead, it operates through more subtle mechanisms:

- Recentralising authority over what counts as legitimate knowledge
- Reframing equity as sameness and coverage, rather than relational responsiveness
- Replacing Indigenous pedagogical frameworks with ostensibly neutral, Eurocentric logics such as a narrow interpretation of the "science of learning". As noted above, the science of learning also remains poorly defined, making it challenging for educators to engage with the full evidence base, including Kaupapa Māori research.
- Maintaining Māori concepts and names while removing Māori people from positions of power and authorship

Particularly concerning is the documented marginalisation of the original Te Mātaiaho governance structures — including Rōpū Kaitiaki and Māori-led working groups — and their replacement with advisory arrangements that lack equivalent Māori leadership and Tiriti legitimacy. This signals a return to symbolic inclusion, where Māori knowledge is referenced but Māori authority is constrained or sidelined.

Ford and Jepsen argue that this pattern closely mirrors earlier stages of colonisation in education, where curriculum functioned as a mechanism for the consolidation of immigrant settlement, privileging Eurocentric knowledge, sequencing, and assessment structures while assimilating or diminishing Indigenous ways of knowing.

From this perspective, the current curriculum changes do not reflect Moana Jackson's ethic of restoration — which calls for dismantling colonial systems while restoring Māori ways of being, knowing, and relating. Instead, they risk reinforcing colonial hierarchies under the guise of neutrality, rigour, and comparability.

Implications for Phases 1–4

Taken together, the repurposing of Te Mātaiaho and the broader recolonising signals identified above strengthen, rather than sit alongside, PPTA Te Wehengarua's concerns about Phases 1–4.

They help explain why members experience the current reforms as:

- Lacking meaningful consultation and co-design
- Disempowering teachers as professionals
- Narrowing curriculum breadth and cultural legitimacy
- Increasing inequity under the banner of standardisation
- Undermining confidence in curriculum as a unifying national taonga

Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires more than retaining Māori language, metaphors, or document titles. It requires structural integrity, shared authority, and a willingness to design curriculum in ways that disrupt, rather than reproduce, colonial norms.

PPTA Te Wehengarua therefore maintains that a return to a principled framework equivalent to Te Mātaiaho 2023 is not only educationally responsible, but necessary to meet the Crown's Tiriti obligations and protect the long-term integrity of Aotearoa's curriculum.

3. Subject-Specific Impacts and Risks Across Phases 1–4

While many of the concerns outlined above cut across the curriculum as a whole, feedback from PPTA Te Wehengarua members and subject associations indicates that the impacts of Phases 1–4 are not evenly distributed across learning areas. The current reform approach risks disproportionate effects on particular subjects, with significant implications for equity, engagement, and curriculum coherence.

As noted above, PPTA Te Wehengarua does not take substantive positions on intra-subject debates about the nature of their own curricula. However, we believe strongly in the principle that subject-specific views, voiced by the professionals in those subjects, need to be heard in any reform process. It is on this basis, and drawing directly from member feedback provided to us, that we present the concerns and feedback items in this section.

Across learning areas, teachers consistently report that the draft documents are over-loaded, developmentally inappropriate, and misaligned with allocated teaching time, particularly in Years 7–

10. This undermines the stated intent of clarity and coherence, and instead creates conditions where meaningful teaching and learning are compromised.

The Arts

Teachers of The Arts report strong concern that the draft curriculum is overly prescriptive, conceptually dense, and insufficiently timed, particularly in Music, Drama, and Dance. Proposed structural changes — including the merging of traditionally distinct disciplines — risk eroding subject depth and ignore the specialist pedagogical knowledge required to teach these areas effectively.

In Dance and Drama, members and subject associations report that the collapsing of distinct disciplines into "Performing Arts" undermines established pedagogical practices such as dramatic inquiry and applied theatre, reduces already limited curriculum time, and results in tokenistic rather than embedded inclusion of te ao Māori, including the effective absence of Te Ao Haka in Years 0–10.

Music teachers have further emphasised that the challenges facing Music education under Phases 1–4 cannot be understood solely as matters of curriculum structure or content. Music is a cumulative, knowledge-rich, practice-based discipline that depends on sustained progression over multiple years and on specific system conditions for equitable delivery. These include access to specialist teaching, adequate curriculum time across Years 1–10, instruments and specialist spaces, effective itinerant music provision, and recognition of the significant workload associated with sole-charge programmes and co-curricular delivery. Leaders in music education caution that without explicit alignment between curriculum expectations and these delivery conditions, the proposed reforms risk entrenching existing inequities, where students' access to meaningful music learning reflects school resourcing rather than learner potential.

Members note that Arts subjects are among the most effective in supporting engagement, wellbeing, cultural identity, and neurodiverse learners, yet these strengths are marginalised in the current draft. The downgrading of time allocation and the loss of explicit cultural positioning further undermine commitments to equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education teachers identify significant concerns about the loss of conceptual coherence and the narrowing of wellbeing frameworks within the draft curriculum.

Members report the marginalisation of hauora-centred approaches, including the diminished visibility of *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, alongside a shift toward a more fragmented and sport-centric framing that weakens holistic understandings of health.

The marginalisation of Home Economics (Food & Nutrition) is untenable and reflects confusion between health as a concept and Health as a learning area. Food and Nutrition must be recognised as a holistic, decolonised discipline grounded in sustainability, food futures, and age-appropriate, contextualised practice that addresses socio-ecological factors and the social determinants of health. Its removal undermines an essential educational and public health response to Aotearoa New Zealand's escalating health challenges.

Teachers also raise concerns about uneven sequencing and the volume of prescribed content across year levels, creating a "scattergun" effect that compromises coherence, teachability, and effective use of limited curriculum time, particularly in Years 7–10.

The placement of sexuality education content, including the confinement of "sex education" to later years, raises practical and legislative concerns and risks confusion for schools navigating statutory obligations. Collectively, these settings risk undermining the curriculum's capacity to respond to

growing youth wellbeing needs, support culturally grounded practice, and deliver equitable, developmentally appropriate health learning across diverse school contexts.

Learning Languages

Language teachers express strong concern about the structural marginalisation of *Learning Languages* within Phases 1–4, including its optional status, the removal of the Communication Strand, and severely constrained time allocations.

Of particular concern is the positioning of te reo Māori alongside other languages within an optional learning area, which undermines its status as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand and as a taonga protected under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Expectations that meaningful language learning can occur within highly limited teaching hours are inconsistent with both international evidence and the Ministry's own guidance on effective programme intensity, and are insufficient to support progression, fluency, or readiness for senior learning.

Members report that the framing of languages as "knowledge-rich" reflects an outdated view of pedagogy that sidelines communication, intercultural competence, and the relational dimensions of language learning. These settings risk deepening inequity, particularly for students without access to language learning beyond school, narrowing global and cultural learning opportunities, and weakening the curriculum's commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Aotearoa New Zealand's wider educational and societal goals.

Science

Some science teachers welcomed the additional clarity and specificity promised by the curriculum reform programme, however this was seriously tempered by some teachers raising concerns about the loss of the Nature of Science strand, overcrowded content expectations, and a drift toward rote learning at the expense of inquiry, critical thinking, and contextual learning. The over-ambitious scope of content in Phases 3 and 4 risks disengagement and widens gaps between schools with differing resources and specialist staffing.

Members also note that the reduced visibility of Mātauranga Māori and cultural perspectives represents a step backwards from previous curriculum work and undermines Tiriti commitments. Science teachers have noted with concern that curriculum reforms under both flavours of government have taken overly quick and tokenistic approaches to the proper (and complex) relationship between mātauranga Māori and science in the school curriculum.

Social Sciences

Social Sciences teachers and academic commentators have raised serious concern that the proposed curriculum represents a regression from the critical, Te Tiriti-honouring intent of Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories toward an overcrowded, de-contextualised, and increasingly Eurocentric framing.

While New Zealand content remains visible, the removal of key conceptual understandings — including the foundational status of Māori histories, the role of power, colonisation, and contestation, and the importance of localised inquiry — risks reducing the social sciences learning area and history to a cursory coverage exercise rather than a discipline that supports critical thinking.

The compression of extensive historical periods into single year levels, alongside overloaded content expectations, increases the likelihood that complex and contested histories will be treated superficially or through monocultural narratives, inadvertently reinforcing myths and misconceptions rather than supporting informed, critical citizenship.

Framed publicly as "restoring balance", these changes risk deepening social divisions by replacing relational, evidence-informed, and locally grounded approaches with standardised sequencing that limits teachers' professional judgement and weakens the curriculum's capacity to support trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate engagement with Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial past.[10]

Technology

Technology teachers consistently identify confusion, loss of disciplinary coherence, and significant implementation risks across Phases 1–4. The draft curriculum fragments Technology into poorly aligned domains, with under-scaffolded learning progressions and a sharp cognitive shift between primary and intermediate years that risks disengagement and uneven access to learning.

The proposal to limit Years 9–10 to only two technological areas is of particular concern, as it risks shrinking departments, narrowing student pathways, and undermining equitable access to senior Technology learning.

Members further warn that the draft over-emphasises documentation and narrow digital strands at the expense of Technology as purposeful human intervention, authentic problem-solving, and critical engagement with ethical, cultural, and mātauranga Māori dimensions of technological practice.

The draft curriculum significantly underestimates the specialist knowledge, infrastructure, and time required to deliver this learning effectively, particularly in less-resourced schools, compounding existing inequities rather than addressing them.

The subject-specific concerns outlined above are not isolated issues within individual learning areas. Taken together, they provide a clear systemic warning about the current direction and execution of curriculum reform across Phases 1–4.

When curriculum change:

- overloads content while reducing time,
- diminishes specialist knowledge,
- marginalises creative, cultural, and practical learning,
- and weakens Tiriti-based frameworks,

Final Comments

This submission demonstrates that key aspects of Phases 1–4 of the current curriculum reform fail against PPTA Te Wehengarua's five principles for curriculum development. PPTA member feedback indicates that a large number of specialist teachers believe that a reform approach that does not honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi in either process or substance, does not genuinely centre learners or equity, and risks undermining confidence in the curriculum as a unifying national taonga. In particular, the repurposing of Te Mātaiaho from a Tiriti-grounded, relational framework into a

[10] Houliston, Jarmen & Ngata, 2026 https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/02-12-2025/why-the-new-history-curriculum-will-deepen-divisions-in-aotearoa?kuid=8e5b40d7-9750-4cd4-9228-06792f6c2c95-1776823000&kref=DqEQ3u6dah9c

compliance-oriented delivery system represents a significant retreat from partnership, shared authority, and culturally sustaining practice.

Learners are not meaningfully positioned at the centre of the proposed curriculum changes. The removal of explicit learner voice, the narrowing of curriculum breadth, and the privileging of selected learning areas through time allocation risk increasing inequity rather than addressing it. Insufficient attention to disabled and neurodivergent learners, alongside increasingly linear and standardised progressions, undermines the curriculum's capacity to reflect the diverse realities, identities, and learning pathways of ākonga across Aotearoa New Zealand.

The reforms are also widely experienced as unmanageable and poorly supported. The pace, volume, and overlap of change across Phases 1–4, combined with limited national guidance, funded release time, subject-specific professional learning, and coherent implementation planning, place unsustainable pressure on teachers and middle leaders. Draft materials are frequently experienced as lacking coherence, accuracy, and disciplinary integrity, raising serious concerns about teachability and eroding confidence in the practical credibility of implementation.

Finally, the current reform trajectory creates significant consultation risk and undermines implementation credibility. The parallel development of Phase 5, alongside fixed timelines, makes it unrealistic to expect that concerns raised through consultation on Phase 4 can be substantively addressed, revised, and re-issued in ways that meaningfully respond to the profession's feedback. This raises serious questions about whether consultation will function as a genuinely responsive process, or whether engagement risks becoming procedural rather than influential. These concerns are consistent with international evidence, including the OECD's *Curriculum Reform: Supporting Effective Implementation* (2020), which emphasises that curriculum change is most likely to fail when consultation is compressed, implementation timelines are misaligned, and teachers are excluded from meaningful influence over design and sequencing.[11]

Without credible evidence that widely held, deeply felt concerns can shape outcomes, confidence in both the integrity of consultation and the feasibility of implementation is diminished. PPTA Te Wehengarua therefore reiterates its call for the Ministry of Education to re-engage meaningfully with the profession and Māori partners, restore Tiriti-honouring governance and codesign, and return to a principled framework equivalent to Te Mātaiaho 2023. Curriculum change must be coherent, feasible, and educative — not accelerated or imposed at the expense of trust, equity, and educational quality.

[11] https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP(2020)27/En/pdf