



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020

2020 NCEA REVIEW UPDATE: PROGRESS, PANDEMIC, EXPECTATIONS

ANNUAL CONFERENCE PAPER



PPTA | PO BOX 2119, WELLINGTON 6140 | P. +64 4 384 9964 | E. ENQUIRIES@PPTA.ORG.NZ
FILE: G/E/AC; R/A/S/Q

This paper builds on the PPTA conference paper from 2017, *NCEA Review 2018: an opportunity for change*, which put the NCEA Review under the scrutiny of the eight criteria for an educationally valid qualifications system, established by PPTA's Qualifications Framework Inquiry (QFI) Te Tiro Hou in 1997. These criteria are that an educationally valid qualifications system must be: fair, inclusive, cumulative, clear, motivating, coherent, constructive and manageable. This paper provides an overview of the subsequent design of the NCEA Review and an update of the work completed to date, taking into account the impact of the 2020 COVID-19 situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be received.
2. That PPTA, as the voice of the secondary teaching profession, continues to monitor the process of the NCEA Review paying particular attention to the short and long-term impacts on teacher workload and wellbeing.
3. That PPTA supports the NCEA Review design and implementation processes which will address inequities for ākonga.
4. That PPTA continues to be guided by the eight criteria for an educationally valid qualifications system when responding to any sector proposals.

CONTENTS

Recommendations.....	1
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Progress made since 2018	3
3. The Review of Achievement Standards	4
4. Provisional NCEA Level 1 subject list	5
5. The Pandemic interruption.....	5
6. The COVID-19 Professional Issues (PI) Taskforce and teacher-based focus group	6
7. Expectations going forward.....	8

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This paper builds on the PPTA conference paper from 2017, [NCEA Review 2018, An opportunity for change](#) which scrutinised the review using the eight criteria for an educationally valid qualifications system, established by PPTA's Qualifications Framework Inquiry (QFI) Te Tiro Hou in 1997¹. Those criteria are that an educationally valid qualifications system must be fair, inclusive, cumulative, clear, motivating, coherent, constructive and manageable.
- 1.2. This paper provides an overview of the subsequent design of the NCEA Review and an update of the work completed to date, taking into account the impact of the 2020 COVID-19 situation.

2. PROGRESS MADE SINCE 2018

Background and Timelines

- 2.1. The review of NCEA² is one of four big reviews (along with the Tomorrow's Schools review, reform of vocational education (RoVE), and reform of school property) that form part of the government's [Education Work Programme](#). The NCEA review meets the 2016 rules made under the 1989 Education Act for ongoing review of all qualifications and is being managed by the Ministry of Education, supported by other education agencies and stakeholder representatives.
- 2.2. In 2018, a national conversation of consultation comprising a number of public engagement activities began as part of the NCEA review, underpinned by the five guiding principles that define a strong qualification; wellbeing, equity and inclusion, coherence, pathways and credibility, and addressing the following six Big Opportunities developed by the [Ministerial Advisory Group](#) (MAG):
 1. Creating space at NCEA Level 1 for powerful learning
 2. Strengthening literacy and numeracy
 3. Ensuring NCEA Levels 2 and 3 support good connections beyond schooling
 4. Making it easier for teachers, schools and kura to refocus on learning
 5. Ensuring the Record of Achievement tells us about learners' capabilities
 6. Dismantling barriers to NCEA³
- 2.3. PPTA was pleased to see that the review principles aligned well with the QFI criteria and that the Big Opportunities would provide a platform through the consultation process to address some of the concerns outlined in the 2017 conference paper, particularly around issues such as: the manageability of NCEA - including the need to focus more on the curriculum, motivation, and the tension between the desire to achieve well and student wellbeing.

¹ Te Tiro Hou Report of the Qualifications Framework Inquiry 1997; Annual conference paper 2017: NCEA Review 2018, an opportunity for change

² See Appendices 1 and 2 for Ministry of Education NCEA Review timelines

³ Education Gazette Issue 97 No. 9, 28 May, 2018: [NCEA review provides big opportunities](#)

2.4. Following the [consultation](#) period (NCEA review, findings from engagement) the MAG, the [Professional Advisory Group](#) (PAG, including three PPTA representatives), and the Ministry of Education provided advice to the minister on recommended changes, and an NCEA change package was released in May 2019. The aim of this change package was to ‘make our senior secondary qualification more robust, consistent, inclusive and accessible for students of all abilities and backgrounds’ and included the following seven changes:

1. *Make NCEA more accessible* – including an end to NCEA fees and making Special Assessment Conditions more available;
2. *Mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori* – including better integration and improved status of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in standards, assessment resources; building teacher capability;
3. *Strengthen literacy and numeracy requirements* – including allowing learners to achieve these credits earlier than currently;
4. *Have fewer, larger standards* – including standards that cover a broader range of knowledge and rebalancing the internally and externally assessed standards; strengthening industry-derived standards (as part of RoVE);
5. *Simplify NCEA’s structure* – including making each level 60 credits and reducing the number of resubmissions permitted;
6. *Show clearer pathways to further education and employment* – including creating graduate profiles, developing a Vocational Entrance (VE) award and refining the Record of Achievement (ROA);
7. *Keep NCEA Level 1 as an optional level⁴*

2.5. The change package was endorsed ‘in principle’ by Cabinet in February 2020 with some small changes following sector feedback:

- The new 20 credit literacy and numeracy co-requisite requirement will “be offered to students no earlier than Year 9”
- With regard to ESOL literacy and numeracy requirements “*the Ministry of Education and NZQA may explore limited exceptions to the single benchmark where appropriate...*”
- Limit resubmissions to the NA/A boundary only which will “*start from 2021*”
- Extension of course endorsement will occur from 2021

3. THE REVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

3.1. One of the work streams, and therefore a subset of the NCEA review, is the review of achievement standards (RAS). As outlined by the Ministry of Education, who are in charge of this process too, achievement standards are due to be reviewed every five years.

⁴ [The NCEA Change package](#) includes more detail, a link to the package overview and mythbusters

- 3.2. The RAS presents an opportunity to bring the curriculum to the forefront of teaching and learning to address equity and parity issues, teacher and student workload issues and to ensure that the standards are fit for purpose for today's context and into the future.
- 3.3. This is also an opportunity to action the outcomes of the NCEA review that relate to achievement standards and resources.⁵
- 3.4. Under review are all subject matrices, all achievement standards, all assessment resources, teaching and learning guides, and exemplars.
- 3.5. The RAS began with a pilot phase where some of the early thinking was put into action for four NCEA Level 1 subjects: English, science, the visual arts and religious studies. The work was completed by subject expert groups (SEGs) comprising appointed practising teachers and experts including some PPTA members. The process for the remainder of the subjects at all three NCEA levels is to be informed by the feedback and results from this pilot phase. See Appendix 3 for the initial timeline.

4. PROVISIONAL NCEA LEVEL 1 SUBJECT LIST

- 4.1. The provisional NCEA Level 1 subject list was designed as part of the ministry's response to support the vision for NCEA as a broad, foundational qualification at Level 1, with further opportunities for specialisation at Levels 2 and 3. The three criteria that determined whether or not subjects appeared on the provisional list were:
 - i. how the subject fits with the policy vision of a broader, foundational NCEA Level 1 with increasing specialisation at Levels 2 and 3;
 - ii. the extent to which the subject supports the inclusion of important and rich learning from the National Curriculum, with as little overlap as possible; and
 - iii. the extent to which the subject supports coherent and robust pathways into NCEA Level 2 and further study or training.
- 4.2. Feedback on the list was initially due in April 2020, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic the deadline was extended to July.

5. THE PANDEMIC INTERRUPTION

- 5.1. Just when the subject expert groups for the remainder of the Level 1 subjects were about to meet for the first time, (other than the four from the pilot phase of the RAS), the COVID-19 pandemic reached New Zealand's shores and the country went into alert level 4 lockdown on Wednesday 25 March 2020.
- 5.2. Prior to the closure of schools, PPTA was involved in regular meetings with the Ministry of Education and NZQA addressing the potential impact of COVID-19 on New Zealand schools. PPTA supported the view that the teaching, learning and assessment that occurred

⁵ [NCEA Review: RAS \(education.govt\)](https://www.education.govt.nz/ncea-review/ras/)

during the lockdown could, at best, be described as emergency remote teaching⁶ and that the key focus during and post-lockdown should be around wellbeing for teachers and students and equity issues rather than keeping up with and preparing for assessment events.

5.3. PPTA advice on assessment to teachers was that:

- *Focus should be on teaching and learning as students get used to learning from home. If students are already working on internal assessments then you may decide to carry on with this work. However it is probably advisable to avoid setting new summative assessments at this time as this puts added pressure on both the students and the teacher.*
- *Summative assessment raises a number of issues such as, a) fairness, validity and reliability; b) not all students have devices, space, quiet or similar levels of experience of remote teaching and learning; and c) distance assessment cannot be done in all subjects.⁷*
- *All the while, NZQA's message was to push the flexibility of the qualification with an almost business as usual approach to the lockdown: "Teachers will be communicating with students, and setting and marking work regularly throughout the week, just as they would if they were at school"*

6. THE COVID-19 PROFESSIONAL ISSUES (PI) TASKFORCE AND TEACHER-BASED FOCUS GROUP

- 6.1. At the Term 2, 2020 meeting of the PPTA Executive, several recommendations were approved to support PPTA to continue to address concerns arising from the COVID-19 situation. A PI Taskforce was established to give advice in response to proposals by NZQA, the ministry and the tertiary qualification boards in relation to teaching, learning and, in particular, assessment in response to disrupted learning programmes as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. This is a rapid response, high-level reference group - comprising members from the Professional Issues Advisory Committee, the Curriculum Advisory Committee, Te Huarahi, Secondary Principals' Council and includes the president and a guidance counsellor - that will remain in place until the end of 2020, or as needed.
- 6.2. This taskforce also supported the establishment of a PPTA teacher-based C-19 teaching, learning and assessment focus group to provide a broad view of teaching and learning from home and the return to school; and to feed in some of the issues, concerns across the membership back to the C-19 PI Taskforce.
- 6.3. Both groups have met twice via Zoom to date.

⁶ [The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning](#) and [This is emergency remote teaching, not just online teaching](#)

⁷ [COVID-19 Working from home \(PPTA\)](#)

NCEA 2020 changes

- 6.4. As expected, the disruption to teaching and learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on NCEA programmes. As students and teachers returned to school there was a commonly reported theme of anxiety and stress across all of the groups we consulted both formally (PPTA's advisory groups and COVID-19 PI Taskforce and focus group, and subject associations) and informally (PPTA social media sites). There was a tension between the need to continue with learning and teaching without feeling the need to 'catch-up' versus the desire to make up for the lost time and box on with the regular teaching and assessment programme.
- 6.5. Although from the start of the COVID-19 situation NZQA and the ministry (who are the owners of the NCEA qualification) were promoting the flexibility of NCEA and were providing other resources, templates and the like to support teachers as they gathered alternative evidence for assessment, PPTA is delighted that further more widespread changes were eventually announced for the 2020 academic year:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 13 May | Delay to the start of external examinations and submission dates for externally assessed portfolio subjects. ⁸ |
| 3 June | Learning Recognition credits, Certificate and course endorsements, University Entrance changes. ⁹ |

Changes to the NCEA Teacher Only Days

- 6.6. As part of the settlement of the secondary teachers' collective agreement last year, the Tripartite Accord between NZEI, PPTA and the Ministry of Education approved eight teacher only days to support the implementation of changes to NCEA. There were to be two days in 2020, three in 2021, and three in 2022.
- 6.7. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the Accord group, along with the Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand (SPANZ), and New Zealand Secondary Principals' Council (SPC), have agreed to make the following changes to the yearly allocation:
- There will be no teacher only day in August 2020. Schools and students need this time for teaching and learning.
 - There will be a teacher only day in November 2020 which will occur while senior students (Years 11, 12 and 13) are sitting their external exams.
 - The focus of the teacher only day in November will focus on changes to NCEA. Details will be confirmed closer to the time.
 - The teacher only day originally scheduled for August 2020 will now be used in 2022. This means that the eight days will now be allocated as follows: one day scheduled for 2020, three for 2021, and four for 2022.

⁸ [NCEA changes to address COVID-19 impact \(NZQA\)](#)

⁹ [NCEA-and university entrance changes for 2020 \(NZQA\)](#)

7. EXPECTATIONS GOING FORWARD

- 7.1. It is important to keep key messages from PPTA's Qualifications Framework Inquiry Te Tiro Hou, the 2017 conference paper NCEA Review 2018, An opportunity for change and the August 2018 submission on Big Opportunities at front and centre of PPTA responses. Key to the work of PPTA will be supporting members to navigate next steps, at the same time acknowledging the wide range of views that exist amongst its members.
- 7.2. PPTA will be making the most of opportunities to:
- bring the curriculum into the conversation as much as possible;
 - address inequities of workload;
 - promote increased opportunities for Māori students that take account of Māori student voice; and
 - acknowledge the need for a range of appropriate pathways for all ākonga, including those who need support getting over the line.

Caveat: the unknowns

- 7.3. At the point of completing this paper (23 July), decisions made based on the feedback received from the provisional NCEA Level 1 list were yet to be announced by the Minister of Education. These announcements have the potential to see the biggest changes the senior secondary teaching landscape has seen since the inception of NCEA.
- 7.4. PPTA must be ready to support both the positive opportunities that will arise (such as the inclusion of a Te Ao Māori perspective across all programmes, and, as mentioned above in the development of resources for Māori ākonga) and the anxiety that will be inevitable from, in some cases, unwanted changes to teaching programmes (including those that will cause some schools to drop some existing subjects) and the fear of uncertainty around employment.
- 7.5. By the time this paper reaches conference many of these changes will be known but the impacts on implementation will only just be starting to be understood.

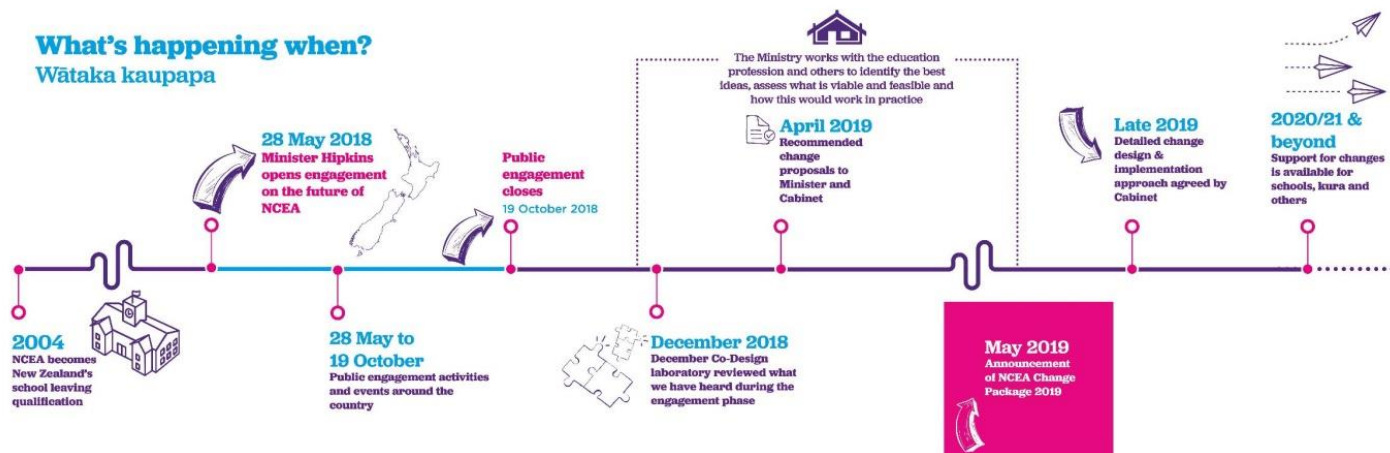
APPENDICES OF TIMELINES

Appendix 1 Timeline of the NCEA Review to date



Timeline of the NCEA Review to date

What's happening when? Wātaka kaupapa



Appendix 2 Timeline for design and implementation



Timeline for design and implementation



Minister announces change package

The Ministry is due to provide Cabinet with the final change package including detailed implementation plan

Implementation of NCEA changes across levels 1-3

 **Focus one – Ensure people fully understand the change package and are preparing for change**

 **Focus two – Undertake detailed design with targeted groups (ongoing into 2020 and beyond)**

 **Focus three – gather the necessary insights from key groups to support the implementation**

Appendix 3 Review of Achievement Standards timeline (as at March 2020)

