

What the Reform of Vocational Education means for secondary students and whānau

The Government has announced its plan to create a strong and sustainable vocational education system. It will help improve the skills of all New Zealanders no matter where they are in their education or career, and will support a growing economy.

The world of work is changing significantly, and vocational education needs to adapt to stay ahead of these changes. A unified, strong vocational education system will help improve wellbeing for all New Zealanders and support a growing economy that works for everyone.

All regions deserve to be backed to succeed. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a system that enables regional training and education that has a nationally consistent strategic direction and adapts to suit the jobs of today and the future. Your input into the design of the new system is vitally important and this will continue throughout this change.

We want schools better linked into the vocational education system and the world of work and for vocational learners in school to have clearer and more direct pathways into vocational education in the workplace and the tertiary system.

One vocational education system will:

give all learners the education and training they need for the workplace

prioritise learners the system currently doesn't serve well, especially Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people and people with low levels of previous education

give employers greater access to a skilled, work-ready workforce across all regions of New Zealand

give industry the lead in ensuring New Zealand's workforce is fit for today's needs and tomorrow's expectations

ensure all the regions of New Zealand have collaborative, flexible, innovative and sustainable providers

build on New Zealand's reputation internationally as a great place to study

be culturally responsive to learners at work and on campus, particularly to Māori and Pacific peoples

help young people more easily transition from secondary school to good jobs with training or to high-quality and relevant online or on-campus learning

What this means for you

- » The new vocational education system will be better linked with schools, regional communities and employers.
- » There will be clearer and more direct pathways from school to higher-level vocational education and training, through to employment.
- » You'll have more access to high quality workplace learning and employer networks.
- » There will be a stronger focus on the groups who have been traditionally underserved by the education system, such as Māori, Pacific and disabled learners.
- » If you live in a remote area, you'll find greater access to vocational education and employment opportunities.
- » In the future, you'll have access to a system that's fit for the future any time you need or want to upskill, reskill or retrain throughout your working life.

support all people to continue employment by ensuring they always have the new, relevant skills that employers need through retraining, upskilling and reskilling

help whānau by ensuring that everyone in the family who is able to earn can, even while they continue learning new skills to help them advance into more rewarding jobs

What the Government has decided

The Reform of Vocational Education will allow learners to study for qualifications delivered throughout New Zealand, with greater assurance that they meet industry-approved standards, and with high-quality teaching and learning support.

The main changes the Minister of Education announced on 1 August 2019 are:

1. *Create Workforce Development Councils (WDCs)*: Around four to seven industry-governed bodies, to give industry greater leadership across vocational education.
2. *Establish Regional Skills Leadership Groups (RSLGs)*: RSLGs would provide advice about the skills needs of their regions to the Tertiary Education Commission, WDCs, and local vocational education providers.
3. *Establish Te Taumata Aronui*: A group to help ensure that the Reform of Vocational Education reflects the Government's commitment to Māori-Crown partnerships.
4. *Create a New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology (the Institute)*: A unified, sustainable, public network of regionally accessible vocational education, bringing together the existing 16 institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs).
5. *Shift the role of supporting on-the-job learning from industry training organisations (ITOs) to providers*: The Institute and other providers would support on-the-job training like apprenticeships and traineeships as well as providing education and training in off-the-job settings, to achieve seamless integration between the settings and to be well-connected with the needs of industry.
6. *Establish Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs)*: CoVEs will bring together the Institute, other providers, WDCs, industry experts, and leading researchers to grow excellent vocational education provision and share high-quality curriculum and programme design across the system.
7. *Unify the vocational education funding system*: A unified funding system will apply to all provider-based and work-integrated education at certificate and diploma qualification levels 3 to 7 (excluding degree study) and all industry training.

What does this mean for you?

The reforms will take time and we'll work closely with education providers like institutes of technology and polytechnics, wānanga, and industry training organisations to manage the transition. Existing programmes, qualifications and credentials will continue. You can continue enrolling as you normally would in 2019 and 2020. On-the-job learning will keep being supported, and your local institute of technology or polytechnic will keep going as part of the new Institute.

You'll begin to see changes from 2020, but many of the changes (particularly to the roles and responsibilities of different organisations) will be phased in over the next few years. The Government is committed to a managed transition to minimise disruptions during these changes.

There will be a stronger focus on the groups that have been traditionally underserved by the education system, such as Māori, Pacific and disabled learners. There will be more learning options to help you find what suits you. Learners who had difficulty in school previously will find that the system welcomes them and supports their unique needs. Remotely located learners will find greater access to vocational education and employment opportunities.

In the future, you'll have access to a system that's fit for the future any time you need or want to upskill, reskill or retrain throughout your working life.

For school students

Students should carry on with their vocational learning in schools, kura and wharekura, including those undertaken through funding and programmes such as STAR, Gateway and Trades Academies. They're encouraged to continue participating in career events and other opportunities to explore the range of vocational learning options available.

For young people enrolling in tertiary education

Young people should continue with plans to enrol in their chosen provider as they normally would in 2019 and 2020, including in multi-year programmes.

Fees Free tertiary education, along with financial support available through StudyLink, will continue.

For students enrolling in institutes of technology and polytechnics, when they complete their qualification or credential in the next few years, it will be awarded by their current institution and that institution's existing brand.

For on-the-job learners, support for their learning will continue, but will come from a vocational education provider rather than an industry training organisation at some point before the end of 2022.

Better linking schools into the system and the world of work

We heard through the Reform of Vocational Education consultation and the NCEA Review engagement last year that valuable vocational learning opportunities are currently available for senior secondary students. We want the reforms to build on these strengths while setting up a system that is more seamlessly connected with the workplace and post-school vocational education opportunities.

As part of the reforms, and alongside the NCEA Review, there will be work underway with schools to strengthen vocational learning opportunities students currently undertake. This includes aligning industry skills standards with NCEA and the National Curriculum. A Vocational Entrance Award will also be developed to enable direct entry into higher-level vocational education.

What's next?

If you'd like us to keep you up to date directly, please sign up for more information and we'll send you regular updates, information about the progression of the changes, and how you can get involved as things progress.

[Sign up to our newsletter update.](#)

For more information on the Reform of Vocational Education, and the full series of factsheets, please visit [Kōrero Mātauranga – the Education Conversation.](#)