



Briefing Note: NCEA review – next steps for advice

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	11 March 2019	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1181169
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round robin:	No

Summary

- This Briefing Note updates you on proposed next steps to progress advice on NCEA through to a Cabinet Paper, following on from our 6 March strategy session with you.
- We have annexed draft letters to Hon. Nikki Kaye and David Seymour, inviting them to be briefed by the Ministry, and the Chairs of the Ministerial and Professional Advisory Groups, on our advice for the future of NCEA.
- In the interim, we will continue to work with the Chairs of the Ministerial and Professional Advisory Groups to explore where our advice differs, and will provide you with further Ministry advice if necessary.
- We propose that we will simultaneously begin work drafting a Cabinet Paper, for lodgment in early May. We also plan to commence early cross-agency consultation once you have agreed your preferred options, ahead of formal agency consultation on a draft Cabinet Paper.



Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement
11/03/2019



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

14/3/19

Background

1. Following our strategy session with you, Associate Minister Davis and Associate Minister Salesa on 6 March, we agreed to prepare draft letters for you to Hon. Nikki Kaye and David Seymour, offering to brief them on the advice you have received on NCEA.

Letters to Hon. Kaye and Mr Seymour

2. We attach at Annex 1 draft letters from you to Hon. Kaye and Mr Seymour inviting them to be briefed on the advice of the Ministry, Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) and Professional Advisory Group (PAG) – in line with your invitations to them last year to remain more closely involved in the NCEA review process.
3. We expect that these briefings will be attended by representatives of the Ministry, and the Chairs of the MAG and PAG. We will work with your office to organise these briefings by the end of March (if possible).

Next steps for advice

4. After our 6 March strategy session, there remain a few areas where the advice of the Ministry, MAG and PAG do not fully align. We attach at Annex 2 a one-page summary of the current convergence and divergence between the advice of the Ministry, MAG and PAG.
5. We propose to continue discussions with the MAG and PAG chairs pending briefing (and receiving feedback from) Hon. Kaye and Mr Seymour, to:
 - a. confirm and agree the extent and nature of any differences in our advice
 - b. identify any further opportunities to consolidate our advice, and reach agreement for the purposes of consultation.
6. We will provide you with further advice following these discussions if necessary.
7. We also intend to begin drafting a Cabinet Paper for lodgement in early May (pending confirmation of the final change proposals to be put forward). We plan to brief relevant central and social sector agencies on our advice before the end of March to identify any areas of potential challenge as early as possible.

Proactive Release

8. It is intended that this Briefing Note is not proactively released, pending your agreement to a change package on NCEA for consultation. When proactively released, any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree

NCEA Review

Advice alignment summary – Ministry, MAG and PAG

All groups agree we should:

But differ on:

Level 1	Retain Level 1.	MAG: Explicitly focus Level 1 on exploring across the curriculum. Ministry and PAG: No major change to current purpose.
Literacy & Numeracy	Re-benchmark LitNum to reflect the levels needed to succeed in education and life. Directly assess LitNum. Shift focus to building towards this standard from Year 7 with targeted support for those behind.	MAG and PAG: Establish a Technical Working Group to determine the appropriate benchmarks and how they should be assessed. LitNum should be assessed outside NCEA (i.e., no credits) as a co-requisite. Ministry: Apply the benchmark determined by the Ministry's 2016 Working Group. Consult on what method is used to assess this benchmark (i.e., naturally occurring evidence, or a digital test). LitNum should stay inside NCEA and bear credits, but should still be assessed when young people are ready (ideally Year 8 – 10).
Structure of NCEA	Consider some kind of 'breadth' requirement, and rebalance towards more external assessments (with different approaches proposed).	MAG and PAG: Require at least 15 credits from 4 different subjects / sub-domains (MAG: only at Level 1). Require a certain number of external assessment credits (e.g., 15 credits) in each learner's NCEA. Eliminate the carryover, reduce each level of NCEA to 60 credits, and cap credits per year at 120. MAG: Cap the number of credits per course at 20. Ministry: Consult on requiring some number of credits from 3-4 different subjects at all levels of NCEA. Do not impose a requirement for a certain number of external assessment credits, but rebalance the ratio of internal and external assessments through the achievement standards review. Consult on 60 or 80 credits at each level of NCEA and whether to retain the carryover. Expand course endorsements to recognise 'Achieved' grades (e.g., Biology with Achieved) and to require the registration of a brief statement stating the key curriculum objectives of the course.
Supporting ākonga Māori	Increase support for and recognition of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori.	No significant differences.
Coherence	Review achievement standards to improve coherence, likely by moving to fewer, larger standards with less flexibility and choice within subjects. Establish strong, consistent definitions for Achieved, Merit and Excellence. Alongside RoVE, strengthen industry-derived standards in schooling to improve parity of esteem with vocational pathways.	PAG: Consider moving to 4 standards per subject worth 4-6 credits each (but do not definitively recommend). Explore external marking of internal assessments. MAG: Acute focus on standards / supports for project-based learning. Ministry and MAG: Move to few larger standards (e.g., 4-5 standards of 4-6 credits per subject) so only what is really important is assessed, and to emphasise the front half of the National Curriculum. Introduce a Vocational Entrance award to ensure parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways through schooling.
Record of Achievement	Redesign the Record of Achievement to make it clearer what NCEA graduates know and can do.	No significant differences.
Learning support and SACs	Make SAC easier to access for more learners	No significant differences.
Fees	Remove all NCEA fees including Scholarship.	No significant differences.

From here, the planned process is:

