

# **NCEA Review**

## Discussion document

## Big Opportunities

### **Ministerial Advisory Group**



**Kōrero Mātauranga**  
Me kōrero tātou

**Have your say about  
the future of education.**

**Haere atu taku kete kōrero ki ngā  
tōpito o ngā motu, o te Ika whenua, o te**

**Ika pounamu, kia tae atu ki ngā  
whānau, ki ngā pou o te kāinga, o te  
kura hoki.**

**Kawea atu te kupu ki te hunga e tika  
ana, kī atu - tahuri mai, titiro mai.**

**He kaupapa tēnei mā tātou katoa.**

**Wānangahia, arotakengia, kōrerotia  
hei painga mō te hunga rangatahi.**

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# Introduction from Jeremy Baker

## Ministerial Advisory Group Chair



This discussion document and its companion paper, *Background to the NCEA review* are designed to enable New Zealanders to participate in an important discussion: how we can enable the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) to fulfil their potential to support success for all young New Zealanders.

The Minister of Education established a small advisory group to provide him and his colleagues with advice on how to do this. We have worked hard to respond to his challenge to be bold and propose ideas for discussion that we believe will take the NCEA from a good to a great qualification.

In response to the Minister's challenge we have identified six big opportunities:

1. Re-imagine NCEA Level 1 so it is focused on ensuring young people are prepared for further study, work, and life as citizens
2. Strengthen and clarify our expectations for literacy and numeracy attainment
3. Explicitly build into NCEA Levels 2 and 3 a requirement to prepare young people for further study, work, and life
4. Provide support for teachers, schools, and kura to enable real learning and coherent programmes

5. Strengthen and enhance the Record of Achievement so it provides a full picture of what young people have achieved
6. Remove barriers to achieving NCEA, starting with fees, the process for accessing Special Assessment Conditions, and access to quality curriculum support materials.

We think these opportunities are significant and make sense, and that pursuing them together would make a difference in the lives of young New Zealanders. But we don't claim a monopoly on good ideas or pretend we know everything that could be done to improve NCEA. It is vital that as many young people, parents, whānau, teachers, schools, kura, employers, and members of the community as possible take part in the discussion about the NCEA.

We are looking for discussion about these ideas, as well as new, additional, or alternative ideas. Together as a community we can provide our young people with a national school qualification worthy of their potential.

**Jeremy Baker**

Chair of the NCEA Review Ministerial Advisory Group

# Who are we?



## Jeremy Baker

Jeremy is Chief Insight Officer at Beef and Lamb NZ. He has participated in a range of senior education system advisory and working groups and has education sector experience including positions held with the Industry Training Federation, Learning State and Lincoln University.



## Charles Darr

Charles is a senior researcher and manager of the Assessment, Design, and Reporting (AD&R) team at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). He has led the development of assessment tools published by the Council and is part of the leadership team for the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA). Charles is a member of the Technical Overview Group Assessment for NZQA.



## Arizona Leger

Arizona works for Auckland University of Technology. She presented at Auckland Museum's TEDxYouth event in 2013, speaking on multiculturalism and youth voice. She was Epsom Girls' Grammar Head Girl in 2013 and has also served on the Auckland Museum Youth Advisory Group.



## Jonathan Gee

Jonathan provides a strong youth perspective, particularly relating to tertiary study and secondary-tertiary transitions. He is currently National President of the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations, a role in which he also served in 2017. Jonathan was President of Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) in 2016 and has served as a youth representative on the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board of Auckland Council and as co-chair of the local youth council. He brings significant expertise in the experiences of young people in tertiary education across a wide range of settings.



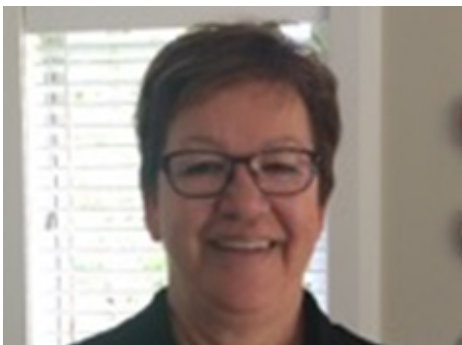
### **Michelle Dickinson**

Michelle is founder of Nanogirl Labs Ltd, a social enterprise designed to increase student confidence in science and technology. After a decade teaching engineering at the tertiary level she is now focused on increasing understanding around the impact of digital technologies on effective pedagogy for enhanced student learning.



### **Barbara Cavanagh**

Barbara is the principal of Huntly College. She was the foundation principal of Albany Senior High School and has served as principal of Te Awamutu College and Ngāruawāhia High School. She was a member of the Ministerial Forum on Raising Student Achievement and she chaired the Professional Learning and Development Advisory Group.



### **Pauline Waiti**

Pauline is Te Rārawa and has had extensive experience in the education sector, primarily as a secondary school science teacher. Her teaching experience, in both Māori and English medium sectors, led to her involvement in curriculum development, assessment writing, resource development and teacher professional development in the areas of Pūtaiao and Science, and Hangarau and Technology. Her most recent work in this area has been as the Panel Lead for teams writing Pūtaiao and Hangarau Achievement Standards.



# Section 1

## **Introduction**



# Our Vision

**The Minister of Education, Hon Chris Hipkins, asked the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) to identify innovative opportunities to strengthen NCEA.**

Around 120,000 learners gain an NCEA every year. Success in NCEA builds a path to further study, to employment, and to reaching their aspirations. Most secondary schools and wharekura offer NCEA – as do some tertiary providers. NCEA shapes how they teach and their programmes of learning.

Young people with passion, agency, and savvy strengthen New Zealand's bi- and multi-cultural identity, democracy, and prosperity. That makes it vital that learners have as many opportunities as possible to become bright, engaged citizens.

A strong NCEA provides learners with these opportunities.

**NCEA needs to make space for the powerful learning needed for success in further study, work, and life in the community.**

NCEA offers choice and recognises learning in many different ways. Its flexibility as a school-leaving qualification is unmatched, as is its potential to make personalised learning and assessment possible for every learner. We want to build on these strengths.

At the same time, we recognise that NCEA can get in the way of good teaching. Constant assessment over three years can overshadow the curriculum and limit learners' agency over their education. The result is that not every learner gets the same opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to succeed – from traditional reading, writing, and mathematics through to deep subject knowledge, critical thinking, digital literacy, collaboration, and resilience.

If the NCEA review is to address these issues we need to listen and understand how New Zealanders experience NCEA. This means hearing from as many voices as possible, including learners, families, whānau, teachers, schools leaders, tertiary and industry training organisations, employers, and iwi.

We have six **Big Opportunities** that we want to explore. These set out how we might change NCEA to ensure that every young person can access the learning they need to succeed. We've also thought about a set of **implementation priorities**: how the education system might support teachers, schools, kura, and the wider community to make this change real.



# Big Opportunities

Big Opportunity	In a nutshell
1. Creating space at NCEA Level 1 for powerful learning	<p><b>What?</b> Rebuild Level 1 as a 40 credit qualification – 20 for literacy and numeracy and 20 for a project.</p> <p><b>Why?</b> Reduces overall NCEA assessment workload, while giving learners a more engaging, relevant qualification, reflecting vital skills, knowledge, capabilities, and attitudes.</p>
2. Strengthening literacy and numeracy	<p><b>What?</b> Benchmark literacy and numeracy at the level needed for success in further learning and employment.</p> <p><b>Why?</b> Gives confidence that every learner with an NCEA has the literacy and numeracy they need to flourish.</p>
3. Ensuring NCEA Levels 2 and 3 support good connections beyond schooling	<p><b>What?</b> Introduce pathways opportunities to NCEA Levels 2 and 3, giving every young person access to learning relevant to their pathway (e.g., from a community action project, work placement, research essay, or an advanced tertiary course).</p> <p><b>Why?</b> Helps prepare learners for the transition to work or further education, regardless of their pathway.</p>
4. Making it easier for teachers, schools, and kura to refocus on learning	<p><b>What?</b> Shift culture from achieving as many credits as possible to encouraging quality teaching and learning.</p> <p><b>Why?</b> Prioritises courses with deep learning, which help learners develop powerful knowledge, skills and capabilities, and attitudes.</p>
5. Ensuring the Record of Achievement tells us about learners' capabilities	<p><b>What?</b> Enhance the Record of Achievement with better summary information and space for learners to detail achievements outside of NCEA.</p> <p><b>Why?</b> Makes the Record of Achievement better at explaining what learners are capable of.</p>
6. Dismantling barriers to NCEA	<p><b>What?</b> Make NCEA more equitable, starting with making it easier for learners to access Special Assessment Conditions and removing fees to enrol in NCEA.</p> <p><b>Why?</b> Gives every learner access to NCEA, regardless of their learning support needs or socio-economic status.</p>

## Just how 'big' are these opportunities?

A big part of the NCEA review is testing with you how our Big Opportunities can best be made to work in practice. For each one we've given a high-level sense of how they compare on these measures:

### Complexity



From straightforward proposals to those that will need careful thought and design.

### Likely cost



From inexpensive proposals to those requiring major investment.

### Timeframe



While some changes could be in place before 2020, many will require five or more years to successfully deliver.

# What's happening in secondary education?

Part of the need to review NCEA now is because of changes in education, including:

- ▷ The increasing use of innovative teaching and learning environments and approaches with a greater focus on cross-curricular learning, collaboration, and learner-led inquiry.
- ▷ Digital technologies transforming how teaching and learning happen, from small changes like the use of personal devices in classrooms, to microcredentials (mini-qualifications) and artificial intelligence.
- ▷ A growing understanding that what learners need to succeed in the modern world is changing. This has been described internationally – such as through the OECD's *Education 2030* and APEC's *Education Strategy and Action Plan* – and in New Zealand with the Employability Skills Framework.

High-performing secondary schools and wharekura are already responding to these trends, but in other ways our schools aren't yet ready. NCEA is playing a role in making this change harder than it should be.

## New Zealand's curriculum is world-leading and focused on the most important learning...

Our National Curriculum is well placed to prepare our schools and kura for the future of education. Two documents form the starting point for teaching in secondary schools and wharekura in New Zealand: *The New Zealand Curriculum* (for English medium teaching), and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (for Māori medium teaching).

Together these documents make up our National Curriculum. They aren't translations of each other and recognise different approaches to learning, and to assessment (or aromatawai) in te reo Māori and English. In both documents, a successful education means that learners develop:

- ▷ A set of core attitudes and competencies needed for success in everything they do. In *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* these are described as overarching principles, values, and attitudes, and in *The New Zealand Curriculum* as the vision, principles, values, and key competencies.
- ▷ Fundamental skills, knowledge, and capabilities across a wide range of Learning Areas or Wāhanga Ako – like English, Mathematics or Science, or Te Reo Māori, Pāngarau, or Pūtaiao. This includes literacy and numeracy and, at higher levels of the curriculum, lets learners follow their passions.

The education system trusts local communities, schools, and kura to weave together the principles, values, attitudes, and competencies with subject-specific knowledge to make sure learners develop what we're calling **capabilities and attitudes for lifelong learning**. These capabilities and attitudes include:

- ▷ Deep, subject-specific knowledge and capabilities
- ▷ Thinking skills like creativity, critical thinking, and managing self
- ▷ Social skills like empathy and collaboration
- ▷ Practical skills like digital and financial literacy
- ▷ Values like a sense of personal and cultural identity, motivation, resilience, and respect for diversity.

When learners are developing these capabilities and attitudes, they're experiencing **rich** or **powerful learning**.

## ...but NCEA's current structure can be a barrier to rich learning.

In theory, this strong curriculum should give every learner an entitlement to rich learning. Much of the time, NCEA supports this vision:

- ▷ NCEA's flexibility means that schools and kura can build courses relevant to their communities while working towards a meaningful NCEA qualification.
- ▷ Because learners can pick from a range of standards within and across subject areas, NCEA allows for significant personalisation.

But some features of NCEA can get in the way:

- ▷ Constant assessment can leave little time to focus on rich learning, discourage innovation and risk taking, or crowd out space to try new things.
- ▷ By breaking learning up into standards, NCEA can fragment teaching and learning. This discourages coherence and linking learning across courses.
- ▷ Support is focused on standards rather than the curriculum, so teachers often have to resort to building courses starting with assessment, which means rich learning can be lost.

NCEA is far from the only barrier here. Some secondary schools and wharekura already create space for young people to control their own learning programmes, such as by personalising or co-designing courses, creating time for projects, and focusing on progress against the curriculum.

This approach can be reflected and recognised in a learner's NCEA, but schools and teachers take on significant extra workload to make this possible.

## Rich learning at senior secondary can take a range of forms

For the first ten years of schooling, powerful learning is about making progress across the whole curriculum – to make sure every learner has plenty of options. By senior secondary, learners are starting to specialise into a range of pathways.

Some learners' pathways mean that conventional approaches like learning mainly in subject blocks, with a specialist focus on interest areas, work well.

## Where do learners achieve NCEAs?

Most people will be familiar with NCEA as a secondary school qualification – but learners achieve NCEA in a range of different settings:

- » NCEA is available in nearly every English and Māori medium school and includes unique achievement standards for Māori medium education
- » Alternative education settings
- » Tertiary providers (mainly for foundation education), including private training establishments
- » Workplaces
- » Youth justice programmes, and education within the corrections system.

As we progress through the NCEA review, we want to ensure those who deliver NCEA in these settings feel that NCEA is responsive to their practice.

Other learners may complete all or part of their NCEA outside a school or kura, whether through a foundation tertiary course or a secondary-tertiary programme (a hybrid of secondary, tertiary and workplace learning) such as a Gateway programme or 3+2 arrangement (see sidebar). Secondary-tertiary programmes may draw in part from the National Curriculum and in part from relevant industry or occupational skills or knowledge. Our flexible education system, which allows for part-time or dual-enrolment in both secondary and tertiary settings, and our targeted programmes like Gateway, help make this possible.

We think that more learners on all pathways could benefit from opportunities for hands-on, practical learning connected to the community and wider world, like projects, research, or work experience. These opportunities can both engage learner passions and help them translate their in-class learning to life after school.

## **NCEA can make rich learning more accessible**

NCEA allows these diverse programmes to all result in a single qualification. We're dedicated to ensuring that NCEA maintains and strengthens this flexibility. At the same time, we want to ensure that, regardless of how a learner gains their NCEA, they have access to a high quality programme of rich learning.

Achieving this means creating more space around NCEA for effective teaching and learning based on the curriculum, or on relevant industry knowledge. It also means ensuring that New Zealanders can have confidence in the quality of every NCEA.

We also need to push back against structural inequities in education, and ensure NCEA helps make these opportunities available to every learner equally.

By strengthening NCEA, we can both improve how it encourages effective teaching and learning today, and how ready it is for the further shifts in education that technology will bring over the next decade – like anywhere, anytime external assessment, and better digital tools to understand how learners are progressing.

It also means we need to think differently about the role of NCEA in capturing what young people have learnt.

### **Secondary-tertiary pathways**

Many learners now complete all or part of their NCEA outside of a school or kura. A lot of these pathways are delivered through a partnership between secondary schools or wharekura, tertiary education providers, industry training organisations, and employers:

- » Gateway – structured workplace learning, integrated with school-based learning
- » Trades Academies – occupational learning run in partnership between schools or kura, tertiary providers, and industry
- » 3+2 – having learners enrolled part-time in school and part-time at a tertiary provider or employer.

Learners, alongside their parents, whānau, schools, and kura, can also work out their own arrangements – dependent on these parties working together to make these opportunities possible.

# Access to rich learning

How can we ensure that NCEA makes space for rich, curriculum-based learning?

NCEA is made up of three separate qualifications – NCEA Levels 1, 2, and 3. At the moment, no two NCEAs are alike. One learner might build their NCEA from only achievement standards and curriculum-based learning; another might build their qualification from only unit standards and industry-based learning.

We don't want to compromise NCEA's flexibility. But we need a clear, shared understanding of what every NCEA graduate is ready and able to do if NCEA is to be a robust, useful qualification.

Because of this, we want to sharpen our shared expectations of NCEA graduates – and the learning every learner will access before they receive an NCEA – to focus the qualifications on what matters. We've developed six **Big Opportunities** that we think will help ensure every NCEA graduate has:

- ▷ Literacy and numeracy sufficient for life, work, and lifelong learning
- ▷ Opportunities to develop both key skills and knowledge across the curriculum and to begin following their passions into a specialisation
- ▷ Opportunities to develop the capabilities and attitudes that are best learned through self-directed, meaningful and collaborative learning like projects and work placements.

## Focus questions

*What is the purpose of NCEA?*

*What are our expectations for graduates with an NCEA?*

## Purpose and outcome statements

At the end of the NCEA review, new purpose and outcome statements will be registered for each NCEA.

Usual New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) purpose and outcome statements contain four components:

- » **Purpose statements** explain the point of gaining a qualification.
- » **Graduate profiles** identify the capabilities a graduate can be expected to have.
- » **Education pathways** signal other qualifications a graduate might enrol in once they've completed the qualification.
- » **Employment pathways** help a graduate and others understand the work opportunities the qualification opens up.

These will be developed following public consultation, based on feedback on this vision. We will provide further opportunities to consult on the proposed purpose and outcome statements.





# Section 2

## **Big Opportunities**



# Big Opportunity 1



## Creating space at NCEA Level 1 for powerful learning

**NCEA Level 1 should give all New Zealanders the opportunity to become lifelong learners – but it's hard for every school and kura to do this because of assessment workload. NCEA Level 1 should be refocused on ensuring every learner has a chance to develop these vital capabilities and attitudes. We'd do this by making it a 40 credit qualification with two components – literacy and numeracy, and a project.**

### Our proposal

Rebuild NCEA Level 1 as a 40 credit qualification with two parts:

- ▷ Literacy and numeracy, to make sure every learner can flourish in our society (see Big Opportunity 2).
- ▷ A project. Ideally it will be driven by learners' passions – it could be collaborative, community-based, subject-based, or based on an extracurricular interest. The key thing is the focus on rich learning and key capabilities and attitudes.

These changes reflect that NCEA Level 1 should be more than an 'easier' NCEA Level 2. It should offer learners a broad, foundation qualification to prepare them for Levels 2 and 3 where the focus shifts to specialisation and transitions.

Across these two sets of requirements would be captured a wide range of capabilities and attitudes – from digital literacy and civic participation to self-management and critical thinking. Alongside these capabilities, learners would continue to develop subject-specific knowledge and skills.

Recognising learning through these projects would probably involve revising (and perhaps retiring) the Level 1 achievement standards to develop new ones suitable for projects, as well as getting rid of the need for external exams. The new or changed standards would enable learners to pick a project that reflects their identity, language, culture, and aspirations.

The rebuilt Level 1 wouldn't replace the wide range of courses currently offered – and we expect that it will remain an option, rather than a mandatory step for all learners. However, these courses could focus less on credit accumulation and assessment and more on rich learning. For many learners, their favourite courses will be at the heart of their projects and could be a basis for developing literacy and numeracy.

### The future

NCEA Level 1 opens up opportunities for new, innovative courses across the curriculum. From Year 9 and 10, learners experience deep and broad learning. Some learners might start on Level 1 early if they're ready.

Learners still have their pick of a range of courses across the curriculum – including both traditional subject areas and cross-curricular courses. But there's less exam pressure and unnecessary stress on learners, and teachers have less work moderating assessment.

Teachers, parents, and whānau support learners to build projects they're passionate about and that develop the right capabilities. Learners feel that their education responds to who they are. Learners with NCEA Level 1 have developed capabilities and attitudes for lifelong learning, and everyone can have confidence in their readiness for life.

**9.1%**  
of school leavers  
only have Level 1,  
and 10.6% receive  
**NO NCEA**  
qualifications.

*"It wasn't till I had to build a staircase that all that stuff about trigonometry finally made sense and I could do it!"*

## Opportunities

1. Reduces assessment – including exams – at Level 1, addressing pressure and stress on learners.
2. Creates space for rich learning aligned to learner passions.
3. Encourages teaching and learning that develops capabilities and attitudes for lifelong learning.
4. Makes it easier for employers, tertiary providers, and others to understand what learners can do through projects tailored to their strengths and interests.
5. Makes it easier to reflect learners' diverse identities in their NCEA.
6. Recognises more of the contributions many learners already make to their communities through projects.

## Challenges

1. Teachers and school leaders will need support to deliver these projects.
2. Ensuring that project workload doesn't just add to existing workload.
3. Avoiding narrowing opportunities for learners to develop across the Learning Areas or Wāhanga Ako.
4. Ensuring that Level 1 credibly reflects learners' capabilities and attitudes.
5. Ensuring equitable access to rich, high-quality projects for all learners.
6. Avoiding the replacement of NCEA Level 1 achievement standards with other qualifications – and supporting schools that start combined Level 1 and Level 2 programmes early.

## Supplementary options

Option	Commentary
Through the review of achievement standards (due to start in 2019), encourage a shift from external assessments being exams to using other forms of assessment – like 'take home' or open-book tests, projects, portfolios, or reports.	<p>This would achieve our goal of reducing exams and exam-related pressure on learners. But it wouldn't necessarily reduce overall NCEA workload – and in some cases may increase the workload of teachers, who would now need to support learners to do more assessment in class.</p> <p>This change wouldn't work with our suggested approach above at NCEA Level 1, but could be applied to Levels 2 and 3 alongside the above changes to NCEA Level 1.</p>
Remove NCEA Level 1 altogether.	<p>This would remove a year of assessment, lowering teacher and learner workload and (ideally) making more room for the curriculum.</p> <p>However, around 20% of school leavers either achieve no qualification or only achieve Level 1 and these learners may be denied a real shot at obtaining a qualification before leaving school. We also know that many learners, parents, and whānau value some formal assessment at Level 1 so some schools may feel obliged to replace Level 1 with other qualifications.</p>

## How might we implement it?

Strengthening the literacy and numeracy component of NCEA Level 1 is subject to agreement about what this looks like (see Big Opportunity 2).

Changes to NCEA Level 1 will shape how schools and kura build courses, which will have flow-on effects for Levels 2 and 3 (see Big Opportunity 3) and flow-back into teaching in Years 9 and 10.

A shift this big needs to be accompanied by support to change teaching practice and education culture if we're to offer real personalisation (see Big Opportunity 4).

It'll be important to work with our schools and kura so they feel supported to deliver this change. If existing achievement standards are removed, something will need to replace the resources courses are currently based on.

This would need to include opportunities for professional learning and development, which may extend to employers and community organisations who may be helping learners to complete their projects.

Over time we may also want to make changes to curriculum expectations, for example, requiring progress across all or most Learning Areas or Wāhanga Ako through to Year 11.

### Focus questions

*What might projects look like?*

*What would need to change to make this work for you?*

*How much specialisation should NCEA encourage at Year 11?*

**Now**

20 credits Lit-Num

60 credits  
from any  
standards

**In  
Future**

20 credits Lit-Num

20 credits project

**Only 23%**  
of secondary teachers say  
their learners **"quite often"** or  
**"most of the time"** work on  
**projects or activities**  
that could make a difference  
to the community.

# Big Opportunity 2



## Strengthening literacy and numeracy

**Confidence in understanding and using numbers and language in a technology-rich world is a vital part of the journey into life after schooling. NCEA's literacy and numeracy requirements should both reflect the capabilities needed for later life and be based on the progress learners are expected to make before NCEA. We would clarify literacy and numeracy requirements, review how they are assessed – and consider the role of other literacies in NCEA, particularly digital literacy.**

### Our proposal

So that it's clear what levels of literacy and numeracy are needed by NCEA graduates, and to make it easier to assess this reliably, we would:

- ▷ Clarify and reset expectations about the literacy and numeracy requirements for NCEA Level 1.
- ▷ Change how these requirements are assessed by reviewing all the achievement and unit standards that can currently assess literacy and numeracy, to ensure the process is simple and robust.

We seek your views on whether our understanding of literacy and numeracy should be limited to reading, writing and mathematics, or should also encompass skills like digital, financial, or civic literacy and, if so, whether these should be recognised alongside reading, writing, and mathematics in NCEA's requirements.

We also want to improve the current approach to assessing these capabilities. At the moment different standards set different benchmarks and don't all explicitly assess literacy and numeracy.

We understand that the Minister of Education has appointed an Advisory Group on Progress and Achievement. Part of this group's mandate is to look at the literacy and numeracy skills learners need to succeed in further education and the future of work. NCEA's requirements should be benchmarked in line with this.

While literacy and numeracy should still integrate with the rest of learners' education, we want to make the standard clearer and more consistent. This is likely to involve revising the commonly-used assessment standards.

If Level 1 requires core literacy and numeracy, we want to hear views on how Levels 2 and 3 might show learners' increasing sophistication in exploring and understanding their primary language and numbers.

### Current literacy and numeracy requirements

The current literacy requirements can be met through either:

Specified achievement standards – available through a range of subjects (at Level 6 of the National Curriculum) – for English medium, Māori medium, and in some cases both

OR

Unit standards – all three literacy unit standards are required (at step 4 of the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy) – for English medium only

OR

English for Academic Purposes unit standards 22749, 22750, and 22751 (Comparable to the Common European Framework of Reference mid B2).

The current numeracy requirements can be met through either:

Achievement standards – available through a range of subjects (at level 6 of the National Curriculum) – for English or Māori medium

OR

Unit standards – all three numeracy unit standards required (at step 5 of the Learning Progressions for Adult Numeracy).

## The future state

From the start of schooling, everyone will have clear expectations about the levels of literacy and numeracy learners will have by the time they receive an NCEA. Parents, whānau, teachers, school leaders, and others can track progress, identify early if learners are off-track, and work together to bring them up to speed.

In Year 9 and 10 learners who are ready may have the chance to get a head start on their assessment of literacy and numeracy for Level 1. Others may need deliberate support from specialist teachers integrated into their learning programme – which means every learner gets real access to the literacies and numeracy they need to succeed.

When learners graduate with an NCEA, employers and tertiary providers can be confident that they have the levels of literacy and numeracy – including potentially digital, civic, and financial literacy, needed to make it after school.

## Further information

Most NCEA students currently have good literacy and numeracy skills. PISA 2015 – an international evaluation of educational performance – shows that our 15-year-olds' average achievement in mathematics and reading remains above the OECD average but is declining over time. PIRLS 2016 – another international study focused on literacy for Year 5s – found a small but statistically significant decrease in New Zealand's performance from 2011 to 2016.

## How might we implement it?

Addressing access to literacy and numeracy isn't just a challenge for NCEA. If we want to ensure every learner can access literacy and numeracy, changes from primary education will be needed.

NZQA has already developed a digital tool to assess two of the current unit standards. This would need to be reviewed alongside the new expectations, to align it with the agreed benchmark.

If tertiary providers don't believe that this level of literacy prepares learners for the next steps in their education, a review of University Entrance literacy requirements may also be needed.

If you tell us that we should ensure learners continue to develop their literacy and numeracy skills at Levels 2 and 3, we could consider building requirements for language, use of numbers, communication, or critical thinking into pathways (see Big Opportunity 3).

## Opportunities

1. Improve confidence that every learner with an NCEA is sufficiently literate and numerate to succeed in the 21st century.
2. Learners aren't held back from success by insufficient literacy and numeracy.
3. Reduce confusion and ambiguity created by the current range of options.
4. Encourage learners to show off their wider literacies – like digital literacy, and communication and language skills – as they build their NCEA.

## Challenges

1. Making the literacy and numeracy requirements more robust may result in more learners failing to achieve an NCEA in the short term.
2. Ensuring the new means of assessment are reliable.
3. Ensuring sufficient support and resources so that every learner can reach the required level.
4. Ensuring that the means of assessing literacy and numeracy are equitable.
5. Balancing depth of 'traditional' literacy in English and te reo Māori with the growing need for other literacies – particularly digital literacy.

***"You get people with NCEA who don't have the basics of literacy and numeracy."***  
- Employer

## Focus questions

*Should literacy and numeracy requirements get tougher for each level of NCEA?*

*What should we include when we assess literacy and numeracy (e.g., digital literacy)?*

# Big Opportunity 3



## Ensuring NCEA Levels 2 and 3 support good connections beyond schooling

**Young people's learning beyond the classroom – through self-directed projects, extracurricular activities, community work, or employment – can be undervalued by NCEA. Levels 2 and 3 need a sharper focus on encouraging these learner-driven experiences and better connecting them to NCEA and a wider programme of learning. Each NCEA Level 2 and 3 should have to include credits from a 'pathways opportunity', such as a research or community project, progress towards an out-of-school qualification, industry training or a work placement.**

### Our proposal

To build on our new Level 1 foundations, and to ensure smooth pathways on to further education, work, and life in the community, we'd require at least 20 credits within the 80 credits for NCEA Levels 2 and 3 to be based on new pathways opportunities.

Pathways opportunities will complement school-centred courses and build on the capabilities and attitudes shown in the Level 1 project. We want these to be about developing the specialist knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for each learner's next step.

For those thinking about progressing to degree-level study (including university), this might mean a research project or paper; for those wanting to enter a trade or occupation straight after schooling, it might mean the first stages of their training. For some, it might be both. We would support schools to offer a range of opportunities to be tailored to the interests of every learner.

At the moment, learners can use 20 credits from Level 1 to meet the Level 2 requirements, and from Level 2 to meet Level 3 requirements – and separately have to meet Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements. We'd merge these so the Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements are a requirement at both Level 2 and Level 3.

### The future state

As learners work through Level 1, they will have support from their teachers, school leaders, family, and whānau to understand what they need to do to keep their pathway as open as possible, and how they can prepare for their next steps.

Before starting Level 2, some learners signal to their school or kura what pathways opportunity they want to pursue – and either link up with or ask for help finding a community partner, like a local expert, tertiary education organisation, business, hapū, iwi, or training provider.

Those who don't have a sense of their next steps can access advice while keeping their options open – and have chances to move between pathways as they sharpen their plans.

In some cases, learners may work in school with input from community partners like a university lecturer or an employer; others may spend time out-of-school on a work placement or at a tertiary provider. Where this learning happens is tailored to each learner.

When learners leave school – whether after Level 2 or Level 3 – they have a sense of how to succeed, and how to connect to the people and communities they will need. They have a clearer sense of their next steps and the expectations they're likely to face – so find it easier to progress on their pathway.

***We missed out on so much. Why didn't they offer us that First Aid course the Gateway kids got?"***

## Further information

Most learners studying towards NCEA Level 2 or 3 – whether in school full-time or part-time, or with another education provider – are beginning to specialise.

We're all familiar with what this looks like in most schools and kura: learners take a narrower range of subjects and have more choice about what they study.

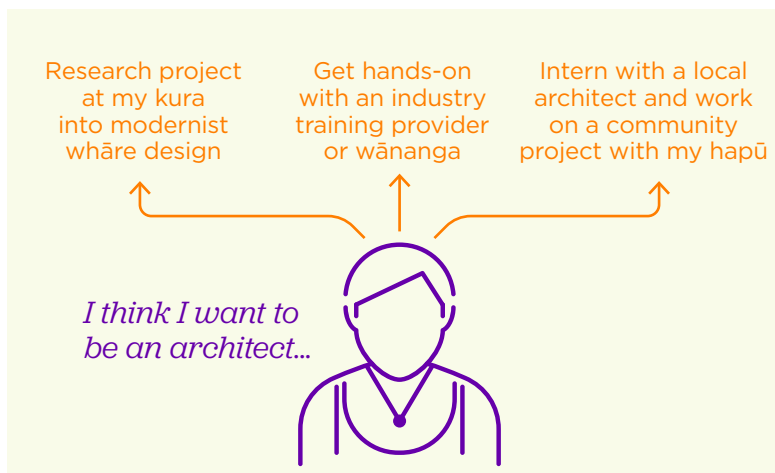
As part of this specialisation, some learners get access to a wider range of opportunities, many of which sit alongside and complement learning in-school – such as Trades Academies, Gateway (integrated workplace learning), industry or tertiary partnerships, STAR-funded courses (tertiary study 'tasters'), work experience, industry training, and extracurricular learning.

A number of schools and kura also make projects and long-form projects available to learners who want to pursue them through existing assessment standards. Practice is diverse.

But these programmes are often limited to only learners on certain pathways, and can be perceived as less 'academic'. This means some learners who would benefit from an opportunity to better prepare for the world outside school miss out.

***"It's all about deeper, richer learning with real-world examples for kids."***

***- Teacher***



## Opportunities

1. Creates opportunities for more learners to get ready for work or further study before finishing NCEA – improving their chances of success and reducing how many learners struggle with their next steps.
2. Makes it easier for schools, kura, and providers to deliver innovative programmes in partnership with the community.
3. Opens up a wider range of pathways through NCEA for more learners.
4. Gives greater reassurance to employers, tertiary providers, iwi, and members of the wider community that learners are ready to transition.
5. Discourages devaluing out-of-school learning, or streaming some learners into incoherent, out-of-school programmes, by encouraging every learner to have these experiences.

## Challenges

1. Teachers and school leaders will need support to reshape learning programmes.
2. Ensuring equity of access for all learners, across all settings.
3. Ensuring that the mechanisms behind this change support diverse options, which are personalised to learners' pathways.
4. Ensuring that offerings are high quality with sufficient support and pastoral care to help learners succeed.
5. Other groups in the community will likely be given more responsibility to support learners in school. This won't be an easy practice shift.
6. Ensuring that support is provided so that pathways opportunities don't just add to existing workload.



## Supplementary options

Option	Commentary
Consider whether the New Zealand Scholarship Award could be reviewed (as a next step following this review) to integrate the specific learning programmes needed for Scholarship into NCEA. This would make it an option for learners who prefer a traditional, academic approach to have pathways opportunities. This could include working with tertiary providers to peg Scholarship to first year degree-level content, offering a shortcut to the second year of tertiary for these learners.	This might make it easier for students for whom the current system works well to keep accessing programmes focused on classroom learning. This is good for flexibility, but may deny these learners access to out-of-class opportunities.

### How might we implement it?

As with the changes that Big Opportunity 1 proposes to NCEA Level 1, this shift would require major support and resources for schools and kura, teachers, and providers.

Support would have to be extended to others – as employers, tertiary organisations, and community groups would be asked to take a bigger role in helping learners transition to further education and work.

The education system would have to work closely with a diverse range of New Zealanders to sketch out a new agreement as to how we work together to prepare learners for life after schooling.

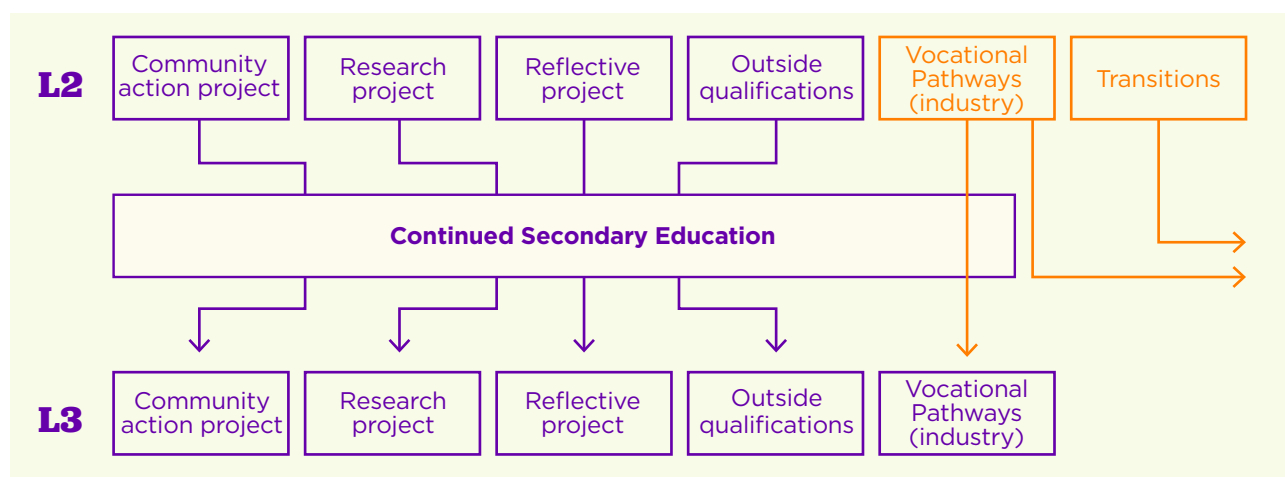
### What other changes might this affect?

Just as practice at NCEA Level 1 will affect NCEA Levels 2 and 3, changing Levels 2 and 3 may encourage more community partnerships and out-of-classroom experiences at NCEA Level 1 (see Big Opportunity 1).

As with NCEA Level 1, a shift of this magnitude would need to be accompanied by changes in practice and culture if we're to offer meaningful opportunities to every learner (see Big Opportunity 4).

This will have flow-on effects for credit inclusion and recognition, and recognition of prior learning, which are the current mechanisms for learners to have learning out of usual settings recognised in their NCEA.

There would be major implications from this change for tertiary providers, employers, and for the University Entrance and Scholarship Awards.



### Focus questions

*What might different pathways opportunities be?*

*Should they be compulsory?*

*How can we make sure every learner gets access to great, personalised pathways opportunities?*

# What might change look like?

## Big Opportunities 1, 2, and 3



### HENARE

- ▷ Highly motivated and engaged
- ▷ Driven to go to university and become a doctor

#### L1

Henare starts Year 11 ahead, having already completed Level 1 Maths and obtained his numeracy credits. His teachers encourage him to stretch and take Statistics and Digital Technology at Level 2 – Henare uses this learning as the basis for a project, making a medical data-tracking app.

English

Statistics

Digital Technology

Science

Visual Art

#### L2

Henare can't easily get work experience in a real medical environment – but finds he can work part-time at a local GP's, and decides to take up a tech internship as his pathways opportunity. He can only go for half a day a week, but spends the rest of the day on a research project on managing medical data.

Internship / research project

English

Chemistry

Biology

Physics

#### L3

Henare's major focus at Year 13 is making sure he gets UE – but he's confident he'll manage that, so decides to return to the same firm two days a week working when they take on a project developing a new piece of medical software. Henare's now pretty sure that he wants to study a double degree in Medicine and Data Science at Auckland University – and now can't decide whether he wants to be a doctor, a medical data specialist, or a biotechnology developer.

Chemistry

Biology

Physics

Internship

Henare continues with a 'typical' English course to keep up his interest in films and theatre.

10 literacy credits

In the course of his project, Henare finds himself fascinated by the technological side of medicine.

20 project credits, 12 L2 credits

Henare's school doesn't offer the specialist science subjects at Level 1, but his teachers encourage him to read widely outside of class and he gets in-class support to extend himself and explore interest areas through mini-projects.

Henare doesn't think he's fantastic at art but really enjoys it – and can keep it up without having to worry about needing to get credits.

40 L1 credits  
= (incl. 10 numeracy credits from Year 10)

Henare's tech firm provides input into his research and reports regularly on how he's going.

20 pathways credits

Henare's school offers him a course focused on English for professional communication without credits – which helps him prepare for a medical career.

Henare thinks about moving on to Level 3 Statistics or Digital Technology – but is happy making progress in his internship, and decides to broaden out his science education to prepare for medicine.

16 credits  
12 credits  
14 credits

94 L2 credits  
= (incl. 20 literacy and numeracy from L1, and 12 L2 credits he gained in Year 11)

Henare's teachers are confident he'll achieve in all the standards he needs for UE – so pare back the number of standards he sits so he can focus on preparing for Scholarship.

14 credits  
14 credits  
14 credits

After plotting out his course load, Henare chats with his parents and teachers together about whether his workload is manageable – particularly with three Scholarship subjects. They agree they're all important opportunities for Henare and commit to regular catchups – including the employer he's interning with – to make sure he's feeling supported and in control.

40 pathways credits

102 L3 credits  
= (incl. 20 literacy and numeracy from L1)



## NGĀHUIA

- ▷ Has learned in Māori medium from kōhanga reo
- ▷ Loves performing arts and wants to study further at Toi Whakaari

### L1

Ngāhuia is excited to start Year 11 and take more control of her learning. Her kaiako and whānau encourage her to keep her options broad, while finding ways to explore her interests in design and performing arts.

Te Reo Māori

Pāngarau

Pūtaiao

Toi Ataata

Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia

### L2

Ngāhuia initially plans to focus more on Ngā Toi and performing arts, but finds herself drawn into helping a neighbouring English medium school develop a te reo Māori course because of her language skills. This becomes her pathway opportunity while she continues to progress towards achieving UE for Year 13.

Te Reo Rangatira

Pāngarau

Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia

Toi Ataata

Te Reo foundation project

### L3

After her Level 2 pathways opportunity, Ngāhuia decides to further build her leadership skills with a role on the ākonga performing arts leadership team. In that role she manages the year's performing arts programme with support from the lead kaiako. At the same time she stretches her te reo Māori skills through a first-year course at the local wānanga.

Te Reo Rangatira

Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia

Toi Ataata

First-year te reo course  
– wānanga-based

Performing arts project  
management

Ngāhuia's language skills are excellent, so she studies towards Level 2 te reo Māori in Year 11.

**10 literacy credits, 8 L2 credits**

**10 numeracy credits**

**= 40 L1 credits**

Ngāhuia is part of a team designing and painting sets for the senior school production.

**20 project credits**

Ngāhuia's te reo Rangatira and Pāngarau courses don't change much – but she doesn't feel as pressured to snap up credits.

**20 credits**

**14 credits**

Ngāhuia opts for a zero-credit course and not to be assessed in Toi Ataata to keep her workload manageable while still pursuing her interests.

**82 L2 credits**  
(incl. 20 literacy and numeracy from L1, and 8 L2 credits she gained in Year 11)

Ngāhuia spends a day a week working with one of her kaiako and two other ākonga building course materials – and often visits the English medium school to work alongside their teachers.

**20 pathways credits**

Ngāhuia knows that she needs to gain credits across these subjects to gain UE – meaning she doesn't need to worry about getting Level 3 credits in te reo Māori and can focus on her wānanga course.

**14 credits**

**18 credits**

**14 credits**

**86 L3 credits**  
(incl. 20 literacy and numeracy from L1)

Ngāhuia mostly learns and works independently, but has supportive kaiako at her wharekura who review her assignments and support her with some of the tougher content. They keep her whānau updated on her progress.

**Tertiary credits**

Ngāhuia spends a day a week working with one of her kaiako and two other ākonga building course materials – and often visits the English medium school to work alongside their teachers.

**20 pathways credits**



## DARREN

- ▷ Rugby is his passion
- ▷ Values learning but hates assessments with lots of writing
- ▷ Great people skills through his part-time job

### L1

Darren isn't sure about life beyond school so focuses on subjects he enjoys and keeps his options open.

English with a reading focus

Maths in Construction

Core Science

Hard Materials Technology

Physical Education

### L2

Darren really enjoyed working on his kicking tee. With feedback and help from his 1st XV mates, he keeps working. He also begins to think about how he could make a business out of his passion.

English with a reading focus

Construction Trades Academy  
(2 days per week)

Maths foundations

Physical Education

Young Enterprise Programme  
(YEP)

### L3

Darren does really well at the Trades Academy but with his literacy improving he wants to pivot towards business. He enrolls for a Hospitality Certificate through his part-time job, which would provide enough Level 3 credits for him to pick up a Level 2 Business Studies course and still attain NCEA Level 3.

English with a reading focus

Maths in Construction

Business Studies

Physical Education

NZ Certificate in Hospitality

Darren focuses on functional literacy, with an emphasis on reading and gets his 10 literacy credits.

**10 literacy credits**

When problems are set in a context he recognises, maths begins to fall into place.

**10 numeracy credits**

Darren still has classes for each subject, without exams, and carries out his project to design and manufacture a new kicking tee.

**20 credits (project)**

All three teachers help with aspects of his project.

**=** 40 L1 credits  
(incl. 10 literacy and 10 numeracy credits)

Darren continues to expand his reading range and skill so he doesn't feel as pressured to snap up credits.

**10 credits**

Darren thinks he may want to become a builder. His school partners with the polytech and he spends two days a week on a construction course via the Trades Academy scheme, earning 44 credits.

**44 pathway credits**

Darren continues with mathematics, recognising its use in construction. He also contextualises some of what he learns in further developing his kicking tee.

**14 credits**

He negotiates with his PE teacher to decide which standards he will enter since he's only in school 3 days a week.

**12 credits**

Darren starts work on a business plan for his kicking tee, with support from a local businesswoman. He doesn't get NCEA credits but it goes on his Record of Achievement.

**Micro-credential**

**=** 80 L2 credits  
(plus a YEP micro-credential)

Darren continues in these subjects as he recognises the usefulness they provide across all his potential pathways.

**14 credits**

**18 credits**

Darren takes Level 2 Business Studies because he's new to it. He uses his kicking tee as a case study.

**19 credits (Level 2)**

The Biomechanics in the Level 3 course is really interesting for Darren. He now has the numeracy and literacy to manage it with confidence.

**14 credits**

This is organised through his employer, and his teachers help him understand how to apply his at-work learning in other contexts.

**40 credits**

**=** 86 L3 credits  
(incl. UE requirements)



# Big Opportunity 4



## Making it easier for teachers, schools, and kura to refocus on learning

**NCEA should enable teachers to design and deliver a range of high quality, coherent courses drawn from across the curriculum. Shifts in resourcing and support, moderation, quality assurance, and accountability could help make this vision easier. This would support teachers to lead these shifts from the ground up and strengthen teaching practice, while reducing workload and stress.**

### Our proposal

We want teachers and school leaders to feel supported to co-design coherent courses with learners, families, and whānau that respond to their interests, passions, and needs. While just one part of the wider picture, features of NCEA don't currently make this easy.

We'd work with the Ministry of Education and the education sector to understand changes needed to make this innovation – which many teachers are already leading – easier. These might include:

- ▷ Providing resources (including digital tools) to design coherent courses with NCEA assessment integrated
- ▷ Tools for school-wide changes in timetabling and course construction
- ▷ Developing a course approval process to get NZQA /ERO to 'sign off' courses as being high quality (which could be either an available service or a requirement)
- ▷ Reviewing the achievement standards to support coherent courses by making each worth more credits (to avoid fragmentation), and limit or provide guidance on the amount of evidence to be submitted
- ▷ Streamlining moderation and shifting accountability from a focus on standards to a focus on quality and coherence
- ▷ Requiring that every school and kura has a pathways strategy to help learners to shape their learning and work towards their aspirations.

### The future state

Teachers will be able to access high quality resources and tools, and can feel more confident innovating and building cross-curricular courses in partnership with learners, their families, and whānau. Teachers have space to collaborate and try new things in-school, across subject associations, and through other networks.

As they work through their courses, teachers find there are achievement and unit standards to reflect rich learning and that they're easy to integrate. Learners find assessment less obtrusive and more connected to their learning.

Moderation imposes a lower workload on teachers, and constructive feedback on moderation practice and course design can be brought forward to the next year's teaching. Good teaching is encouraged and poor practice supported to change.

When schools report to the education agencies – including NZQA and ERO – they can focus more on coherence and course quality. In exchange, they get due credit for building strong courses and feel accountability mechanisms reflect the value they add to learners' educations. This flows through to how teachers report to their school leaders, and how schools and kura report to their communities.

**More than  
1/2  
of teachers  
think NCEA has  
narrowed the  
curriculum.**

*There are too many barriers that prevent teachers from being innovative with their programmes of learning."*  
-Teacher

## Opportunities

1. More coherent and student-driven learning in schools and kura, motivating learners and teachers and improving outcomes.
2. Reduced teacher workload with less 'busy work' – teachers are better supported to keep doing great work.
3. Reporting to parents and the community is more meaningful.
4. Fewer learners receive low quality education or NCEAs that are not coherent.

## Challenges

1. Cultural change on this scale can be hard to achieve.
2. Changing expectations about what's needed to receive an NCEA may mean some learners need more support to achieve.
3. Ensuring the supports and resources provided to put this change into practice are those schools, kura, and others need.

## How might we implement it?

These changes could be made using a number of different approaches, including:

- ▷ Using support, professional learning and development, funding, resources, and tools to encourage practice shifts in schools and kura
- ▷ Encouraging Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako to replace achievement objectives like "X% of learners will achieve NCEA Level 2" with objectives relating to coherence and rich learning, or to transitions
- ▷ Changing reporting or accountability requirements on schools, such as through annual reporting, ERO reports, or National Education Learning Priorities (NELPs).

This idea connects closely to changes to NCEA Levels 1, 2, and 3, which are themselves likely to affect teaching practice and could prompt these shifts (see Big Opportunities 1 and 2).

University Entrance is outside the scope of the NCEA review but may require review to align with these changes.

*"School should be more practical, more fun, and more real for us."*  
- Learner

## Supplementary options

Option	Commentary
Require NCEA providers to prepare summaries of courses for quality assurance by ERO, NZQA, and / or the Ministry of Education, who would check that courses are coherent. This accreditation would likely be based, at least in part, on alignment with the National Curriculum or a coherent body of industry knowledge.	At the moment, some schools report (either through annual reporting or through ERO) on the overall quality and coherence of their courses – but there's no requirement that specific courses be "checked off". This would involve an increase in the education agencies' role quality assuring individual courses.  This approach could encourage innovation, because teachers could be assured that courses are high quality and coherent before they are delivered. However, it would also impose an administrative burden to create or vary courses.

## Focus questions

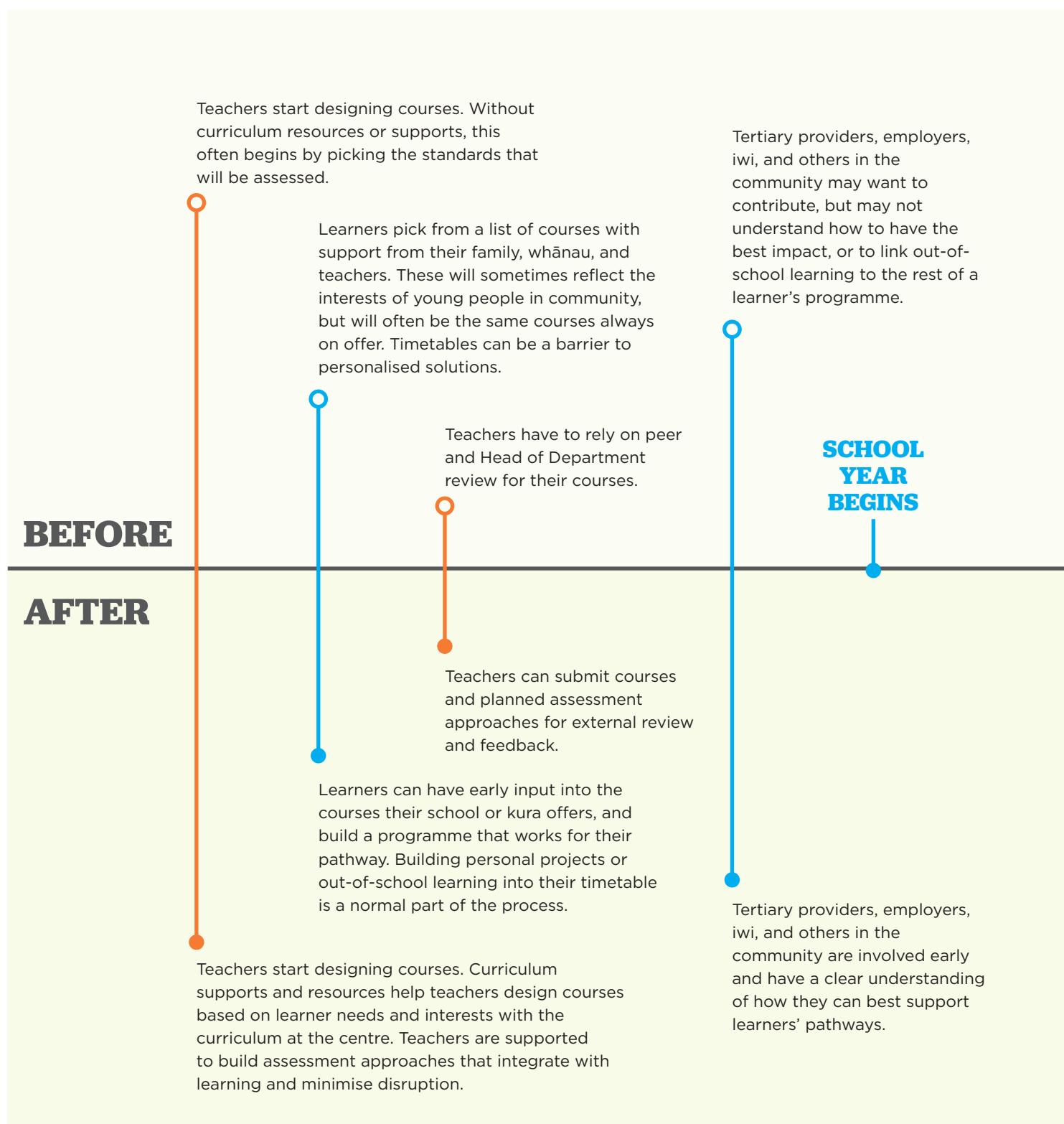
*How could we support teachers and school leaders to feel empowered and supported to practise this way?*

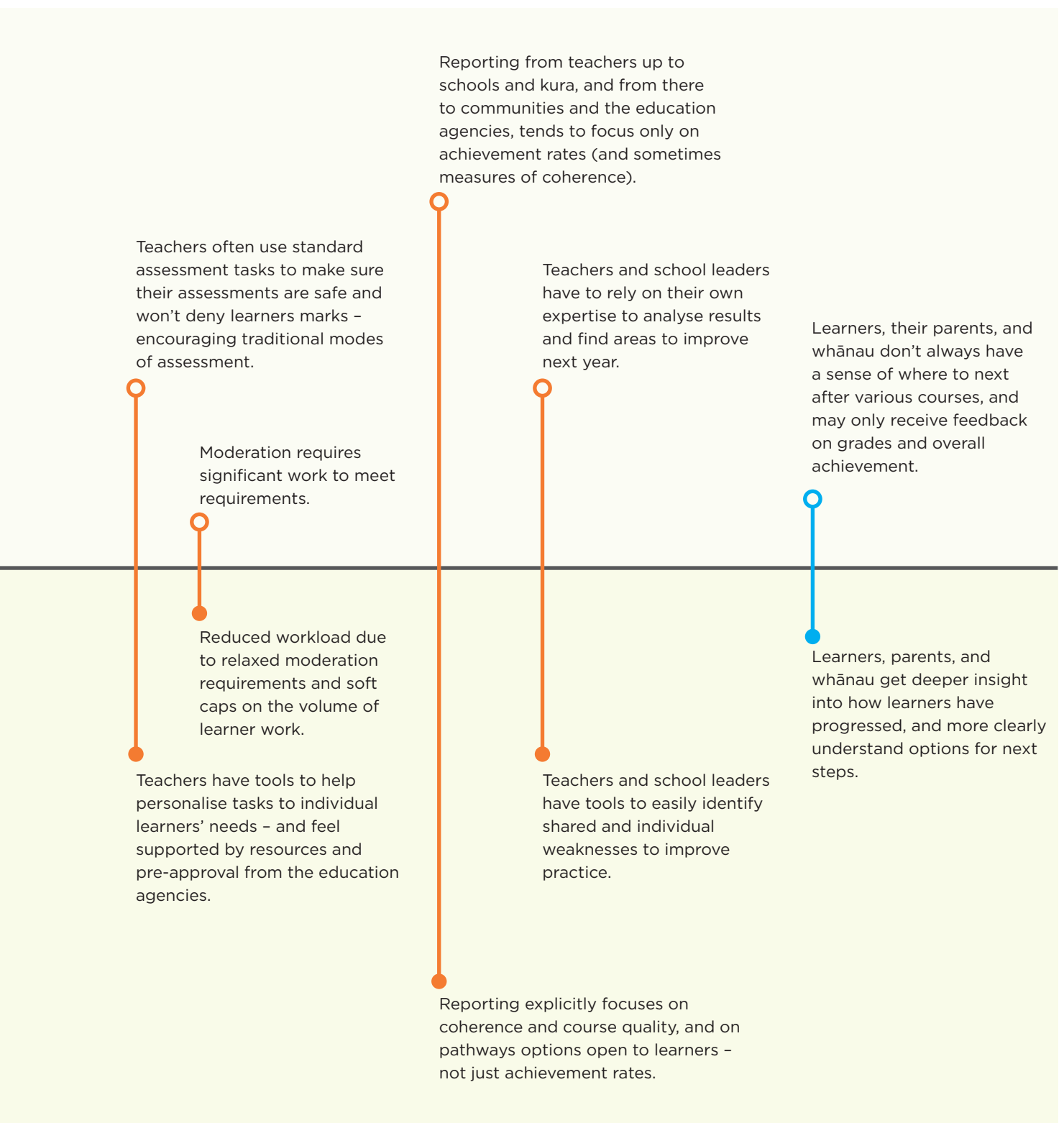
*Should all courses be quality assured?*

*How could we help the wider community feel more comfortable getting involved with senior secondary education?*

# What might change look like?

## Big Opportunity 4





# Big Opportunity 5



## Ensuring the Record of Achievement tells us about learners' capabilities

**The Record of Achievement currently includes NCEA results – but doesn't give a full picture of what a young person has learnt and achieved. To signal the value of all this learning – much of which doesn't result in credits – we need a Record of Achievement that acknowledges and values things like employment, community work, extracurricular activities, and cultural contributions. This would help learners make better pathway and career decisions, and provide a basis for communicating a diverse range of achievements to parents and whānau, employers, tertiary organisations, and their community.**

### Our proposal

We'd transform the Record of Achievement into a 'digital learning portfolio', combining:

- ▷ A clear summary of what learners have achieved – including information like qualifications and courses completed or 'badges' signalling particular achievements
- ▷ Information personalised by the learner, such as extracurricular activities and community work.

This redesign will consider the needs of a wide range of users, including:

- ▷ Learners, families, and whānau, to let learners show off their capabilities and achievements
- ▷ Teachers and school leaders, so they know what learning each young person has experienced
- ▷ Employers, tertiary providers, and the wider community, to ensure they can readily access clear information.

We'd recommend this new Record of Achievement be designed with the input of employers and tertiary providers to make sure that it provides information that is genuinely useful for those learners will be pitching themselves to.

### The future state

The Record of Achievement will be an interactive, living document owned by the learner.

The front page of the Record of Achievement will show the qualifications, courses, and endorsements a learner has achieved.

Each of these will include a statement of what someone who has completed the qualification or course will be able to do, along with an overview of the transferable skills and capabilities that the learner has gained alongside subject specific knowledge.

The Record of Achievement will also include a checklist of capabilities, and room for learner or third party-submitted content, so they can evidence a wide range of formal and informal learning. This will reflect achievement in a range of areas, including those relevant to each learner's identity, culture, and community.

### The Record of Achievement now

Currently, a learner's Record of Achievement is automatically generated by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), based on assessment standards achieved. The Record of Achievement is available online and learners can customise it to some extent by rearranging or hiding detail.

But the Record of Achievement only shows the qualifications, standards, and Vocational Pathways achieved. It doesn't showcase things like critical thinking, cultural savvy, or resilience that we know are needed to succeed after schooling.

### How could we quality assure learner content?

One challenge in taking this approach would be that the Record of Achievement would include two kinds of information: NZQA-generated information about qualifications and learner-generated content.

There are a few ways we could ensure that learner-generated content is quality:

- » Clearly mark it as learner generated
- » Have schools or kura approve the content
- » Limit learner choice in building the content.

## Opportunities

1. Captures a broad range of achievement and provides a holistic picture of a learner.
2. Provides learners, parents, whānau, tertiary organisations, and employers with a clear picture of what has been achieved.
3. Signals the value of learning outside the classroom, e.g. community work, cultural groups, and leadership activities.
4. Gives learners ownership of their own Record of Achievement.
5. Provides the basis for pathway and career planning.

## Challenges

1. Ensuring that people reading the Record of Achievement identify quality-assured information and student-developed content.
2. Ensuring student-developed content is credible and appropriate.
3. Making this revised Record of Achievement responsive to diverse perspectives on how to recognise and 'pitch' achievements, including ensuring that every learner is supported to build content that sets out their strengths and speaks to their identity.
4. How (and whether) the Record of Achievement can maintain 'shelf life' and continue to be relevant for some time after learners leave school.

*"I can't gauge somebody's level of smarts. I don't understand NCEA."*  
-Employer

Each learner, with teacher and whānau support, picks out their strength areas and can highlight evidence of those strengths. They can also show off key learning from outside schooling.

### Record of Achievement [Name]

#### Capabilities & Attitudes



**Collaborator**  
Was project manager for a community project to redesignate a wall of the Town Hall for public art.



**Innovator**  
Built a web program to help track people contributing to a video game mod (L1 Project).



**Action Oriented**  
"Mikhaila is great at making designs under pressure - she's always willing to do her part!"  
- Sarah Chu, L3 Design, [School]

#### Achievements

- Captain, Dragon boating  
- 3rd place team, Regional debating championship  
- Mentor, [Local primary school]

*\*This section has been Student-developed and curated*

#### Qualifications

##### NCEA Level 1

Endorsed with Merit  
- [Course]  
- [Course]  
- [Project]

##### NCEA Level 1

- [Course]  
- [Course]  
- [T. Opport]

##### NCEA Level 3 (UE)

- [Course]  
- [Course]  
- [Course]  
- [T. Opport]

Badges could recognise certain achievements like:

- Subject expertise (# of credits)
- Vocational Pathway
- Scholarship

Hovering over each course or project would show a school-provided summary of the course graduate outcome. Further pages could give detail on specific standards achieved.

## Supplementary options

Option	Commentary
<p>The Record of Achievement is replaced by a fully interactive platform similar to social media sites such as LinkedIn. The NZQA-populated section is secure and quality assured, but learners can customise the remainder of the content as they choose. The site can be accessed by key partners like employers or tertiary providers, who can view content and provide attestations or references if they wish.</p>	<p>This approach is similar, but would have a more 'living' character – we would expect young people to update this content more regularly and perhaps use it to network with employers.</p> <p>This is a supplementary option because it would require more investment (to develop and maintain the platform) and would require learner buy-in – it would be easier for young people to customise their Record of Achievement once per year than maintain a live profile.</p>

## How might we implement it?

There are a range of frameworks describing what young people need to transition successfully into further education, training, or the workforce – the principles, values, attitudes, and key competencies from the National Curriculum; the Employability Skills Framework; and a range of frameworks used in the private sector.

The Ministry of Education would need to work with schools, learners, employers, and community organisations to identify the capabilities, which should be captured in the Record of Achievement, and provide appropriate guidance or build this into the design.

The achievement standards review could also provide an opportunity to make the achievement standards easier to interpret – such as by providing 'graduate outcomes' for each standard.

School leaders, teachers, and career and guidance professionals will need support to integrate the Record of Achievement into pathway and career planning discussions.

There might also be opportunities to build a clearer story of learner progress from Year 7 onwards, building into the Record of Achievement in future, if the new approach is found to be valuable.

### Badges might include:



Certificate and course endorsements



Achievement in specific Learning Areas or Wāhanga Ako



Achievement in pathways opportunities

### Focus questions

*How should NZQA and learner-made content be balanced?*

*What could help the Record of Achievement communicate what learners can do?*



# Big Opportunity 6



## Dismantling barriers to NCEA

**NCEA should allow all learners to achieve their full potential. But some still face barriers to achieving an NCEA, including a lack of support for their learning needs, financial barriers to entry, or a lack of curriculum materials. Equitable access to success in NCEA for every learner is not a problem easily solved through NCEA alone. We'd start by making Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) – which provide young people with learning support needs with fair assessment conditions – more accessible, removing fees from NCEA, and developing better curriculum support materials for priority learning areas; but we also want to hear from you what else could be done.**

### Our proposal

We know that there are a range of barriers to success in NCEA for various learners – and that most are not directly related to the qualification's structure. We want to hear about these barriers, particularly those that we could lower or remove through changes to NCEA. We have identified three ideas to tackle first.

#### Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)

The SAC system provides learners who have disabilities or learning support needs with modifications to assessment conditions – like braille papers or computers – to give them an equal shot at success.

We'd further revise the SAC system to make it less complex and easier to navigate, particularly for learners, parents, and whānau who aren't familiar with the process. This would include:

- ▷ Ensuring the application process is readily understandable and evidence requirements are clear
- ▷ Introducing a process to allow accredited school leaders to determine learners' SAC eligibility.

At the same time, we would extend supports similar to those used for SAC to learners who speak English as a second language, where English language skills are not meant to be part of the assessment. This would make sure that learners aren't 'capped' by their English fluency when we're assessing other learning.

#### NCEA fees

We would remove the requirement for learners and their families to pay NCEA fees – including Scholarship entry fees. This would end the issue of learners not receiving their NCEA because they weren't able to pay fees, and could improve access to Scholarship for learners in low-decile schools.

#### Curriculum support materials

We'd have the Ministry of Education work with the education sector to identify areas where there aren't currently enough curriculum support resources (such as in some Wāhanga Ako and in new and emerging subjects and contexts). This would mean fewer teachers having to design programmes from scratch in each secondary school or wharekura. This may include working alongside subject associations, where appropriate.

By developing these resources alongside the sector, teachers would have more time to meaningfully personalise learning and assessment.

In 2016, a learner in a **decile ten** school was **3x** more likely to receive SAC support than one in a **decile one** school.

**1 in 6** learners (**almost 27,000**) received financial assistance to pay NCEA fees in 2016.

## The future state

### Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)

Parents, whānau, and teachers will help learners identify learning support needs early in their education.

It will be easy to apply for SAC support for NCEA, and whānau and schools aren't held back by unnecessary evidence requirements. SAC support is seamlessly integrated so learners don't feel called out. All learners can be active participants in NCEA and can build pathways that reflect their identity and aspirations. This support will also be aligned with the improvements over time to how we support those with additional learning support needs, and our vision of a world where accommodations and support for inclusive learning are widely understood and accepted.

Once schools have a track record of effectively evaluating learners' SAC needs, they can do so largely independently.

### NCEA fees

Learners can enter NCEA for free, and parents and whānau don't need to stress about paying fees on time. Schools and kura no longer have to collect fees.

More learners are encouraged to take a shot at Scholarship to motivate and stretch them. This encourages a stronger culture and teaching practice for Scholarship in every school.

### Curriculum support materials

Teachers are less likely to have to build new courses without core materials – meaning they can have confidence in their content and instead focus time on innovation and personalisation.

Every learner has access to more pathway options, because course choice isn't as constrained by the materials available from school to school and across different settings.

## Further information

### Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)

SAC are modifications to assessment conditions (internal and external) to ensure that learners with a wide range of learning support needs have fair access to assessment.

Only students approved by NZQA can use SAC. Applications are made by schools on behalf of learners. SAC applications are checked by NZQA to ensure the modified assessment conditions do not provide an unfair advantage over other candidates.

SACs can include access to enlarged or braille papers; access to a reader, writer, or assistive technology; separate accommodation; and additional time or rest breaks to complete assessments.

While designed to provide all learners with equitable access to assessments, the complex process means there are still access barriers for some.

### NCEA Fees

Each domestic NCEA student is charged \$76.70 per year to have their NCEA results recorded and to receive certificates, with an additional charge of \$30 for each Scholarship Award entry. Payment of these fees can be a significant barrier to some families with limited financial means.

Financial assistance is available to those who qualify, reducing fees to \$20 per student or \$30 per family. But factors like not knowing about financial assistance, or feeling uncomfortable applying, may make this support insufficient.

Non-payment of fees can bar learners' progress to further study or employment as NCEA credits can be excluded from their Record of Achievement. Learners from less well-off families also face the stress of having to pay a fee that is added to existing financial pressures.

## Opportunities

1. Greater use of SAC by students in low-decile and Māori medium schools could improve equitable access and achievement.
2. More learners who have achieved the requirements of an NCEA see it on their Record of Achievement and know they have a qualification.
3. More learners from low-decile schools are able to enter Scholarship.
4. Reduced stress for less well-off families with learners studying towards an NCEA.
5. Less administration required from schools, and less confusion amongst students and their families.

## Challenges

1. Ensuring greater use of SAC by those students who have a genuine need, without providing unfair advantage.
2. Ensuring learners with SAC support can communicate with employers and others about their capabilities.
3. Managing the workload for teachers involved in applying for and administering SACs.
4. Replacing NCEA fees could be costly, which could involve trade-offs with other changes or spending.
5. Removing fees alone is unlikely to significantly improve the performance of learners in low-decile schools in Scholarship.

*“You’re sitting in a test and **not knowing** how to read it or how to spell the words you need.”*

*– Young person with a learning disability*

## Supplementary options

Option	Commentary
Instead of retiring all fees for NCEA, lower the reduced NCEA fees (for those who apply for financial assistance) to \$0.	This option would be less costly than removing all fees, as most learners would still pay NCEA fees. However, it could mean that families and whānau who don’t know to apply for financial assistance continue to struggle and schools’ administration requirements would not be reduced.

### Focus questions

*What other barriers do we need to lower?*

*Should we remove all NCEA fees?*

*How can we help low-decile schools access SAC?*

# Implementation

The support, resources, and tools to make change achievable

**The Big Opportunities in this document identify quite significant potential changes to NCEA, which would have major impacts on how teachers and school leaders deliver the qualification – and on senior secondary education more widely. Just making changes to NCEA can’t bring about the changes in behaviour and culture that we’re aiming for. A well-developed change leadership programme, backed up with support for successful implementation, will be needed.**

The NCEA review will only succeed if implementation is done well, regardless of the changes the Government ultimately decides upon.

Past experience with changes to the education system – including the introduction of NCEA – tells us that technical shifts in qualifications mean little if there’s not enough investment in the change and implementation process.

Teachers and school leaders, parents and whānau, employers, tertiary providers, iwi, and the wider community will all need more support to make these changes – if agreed – successful. This is particularly vital given that teacher workload has been raised as an issue.

A ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to this implementation won’t be effective. The education system will have to grapple with major challenges like:

- ▷ Avoiding unintended consequences like inequitable prior-achievement ‘streaming’ in the development of projects and pathways opportunities
- ▷ Ensuring relevant resources are available for every school, kura, and learner to develop shared expectations and collaborate to build great NCEA programmes
- ▷ Unlocking genuine personalisation in every school and kura for every learner
- ▷ Ensuring the benefits of these changes are available to all learners – including those who may face social or geographic barriers to building projects or pathways opportunities relevant to their aspirations.

If changes to NCEA are agreed, we want to apply a best-practice approach to implementing them – meaning an extensive revision to the support and resources provided to teachers and school leaders to deliver senior secondary education.

This support also needs to encourage the use of data and information to inform change and promote a strong student voice to disrupt and challenge thinking.

We could also support this through a curriculum advisory service, which could provide guidance to teachers and school leaders (including live through a phone or email service) to design and deliver curriculum-based teaching and learning programmes.

## What makes for good support?

We know that support has to be:

- » Accessible to all teachers, providers, and leaders in all settings
- » Well-resourced
- » Continuous and provided over a long period of time
- » Universal, with additional support targeted in the areas that matter most
- » Focused on the learner as the most important stakeholder in their own education.

We’ll have to work closely with tertiary providers and other non-school providers of NCEA too, to understand how these changes will affect their practice – and how best to support them.

*“We are at the dawn of an amazing opportunity and we shouldn’t let it pass us by.”*

*– Māori medium school leader*

## Focus questions

*What support might you need to implement the changes identified by the Big Opportunities?*

*Would a curriculum advisory service help?*

# Implementation

## What might change look like?

### Year 1

- » Focused on co-designing and developing detailed approaches to implementing changes to NCEA
- » Some further consultation or engagement on complex topics – like the details of how Levels 1, 2, and 3 might change
- » Confident schools, kura, providers, and communities can start to drive teaching practice changes if they feel ready
- » Resources and tools to support the change start to become available
- » No major changes come into effect – but some minor administrative shifts may become possible.

### Year 2

- » Legislative and regulatory changes start to be finalised and processed
- » The details of major changes are confirmed following Year 1 consultation, and co-designed implementation programmes kick off
- » Resources and tools to support the change process are readily available for all schools and kura
- » Pilots or prototypes of less structural changes – like to the Record of Achievement or SAC – are tested.

### Year 3

- » Initial changes to legislation, regulation, and qualification structure – including to Level 1 – come into effect with transition periods where appropriate
- » Schools, kura, and providers who feel confident are supported and equipped to start shifting practice and adopt the strengthened qualifications before they need to
- » New tools and resources to deliver the strengthened qualification become available.

### Year 4

- » Any changes to Level 2 come into effect, with a transition period if appropriate
- » Further resources and tools are made available to respond to emerging needs, and existing tools are updated and improved based on feedback
- » All schools, kura, and providers begin their change processes and receive targeted support where appropriate to shift practice.

### Year 5 and beyond

- » Final legislative, regulatory, and qualification structure changes – including to Level 3 – come into effect
- » Continue embedding practice changes and providing targeted support to schools, kura, and communities that are still facing barriers to successful practice shifts
- » Phase out majority of transition support, to be replaced with permanent new resources, tools, and support for everyone involved in education to collaborate and deliver on the vision of NCEA.







**Kōrero Mātauranga**  
Me kōrero tātou

**Have your say about  
the future of education.**