



Have your say on the proposed repeal of Communities of Online Learning, and changes to correspondence education

Background

In 2017 the previous Government passed legislation relating to online distance learning, called Communities of Online Learning (COOL). The COOL legislative provisions are not due to come into effect until 31 December 2019. Under the provisions, any school, tertiary institution, or private entity could apply to become a COOL. Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) was to become a COOL. Any school-aged student would be able to study at any COOL, including Te Kura, on a full time or part time basis.

The education sector were not consulted when the COOL policy was developed. Thus, when the changes were before Select Committee, people and organisations that provided feedback raised a number of concerns.

The Government agrees with the concerns raised, including: the ability of private sector bodies, who are not education bodies, to become accredited as COOL; that tertiary and other private sector bodies would not be required to teach the national curricula or to employ registered teachers; that online learning could become an option for any student who chooses it (open enrolment) even if it is not the best option for them; and that schools could use COOL to 'off-ramp' at-risk students.

Online learning is already taking place in schools across the country and is continuing to grow. Virtual Learning Networks (VLNs) deliver significant learning opportunities to primary and secondary school students. These students enjoy all of the benefits of being enrolled in a school, such as being able to access teaching expertise and pastoral supports, while at the same time accessing additional opportunities to learn, online.

In addition, non-school organisations, like universities, are already supporting schools to provide parts of the curriculum in areas where there is a shortage of teaching expertise. This is taking place without the need for a legislative framework.

This approach is consistent with the findings of research commissioned by the Ministry of Education, where students describe online learning as an integral part of their learning, utilised as and when it's required. Students see the availability of online learning as the education system's ability to respond to their learning needs, and to different learning contexts.

The Government is of the view that the development of online learning can be better supported through the curricula, the funding system, and by supporting capability development in the teaching workforce. The Government considers that the contribution of online learning is better positioned within a strategic discussion with the education sector.

Proposals for change

The Government is proposing to:

- repeal the COOL legislation
- consider the approach to online learning within a broader strategic discussion with the education sector, such as through the 30 year vision for the education system
- redevelop the legislative framework for distance education, to modernise it, including returning Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu as a school that enrolls students who cannot access a face-to-face school, and provides supplementary tuition to students enrolled in schools, for various reasons (such as where a teacher is not available)
- enable full-time students who would otherwise only be able to access Te Kura, to be able to access their online learning with any state school (or network of schools). This would give students who are distance education students, some choice in the system.

The Ministry is now consulting with stakeholders on the above proposals.

Questions

1. What are your views on the repeal of COOL?
2. What should the Government consider to support the effective development of high quality online learning?
3. What do you see as the opportunities and barriers to enabling any state school to provide distance education, if they have the infrastructure to do so?
4. How can online learning, and in particular, online distance learning, be used to improve education outcomes for children and young people at risk of disengaging or in need of additional learning support?

How to have your say

You can email your submission to consultation@education.govt.nz or write to:

Education Consultation
Ministry of Education
PO Box 1666
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

Submissions close on **13 April 2018**.

Personal information and confidentiality

Submissions and documents associated with the consultation process meet the definition of official information, and are therefore subject to the Official Information Act 1982.

Please clearly indicate in your submission if you do not want your name to be included in any summary of submissions that we may publish.

Further information

If you have any questions about making a submission, or would like more information, please email consultation@education.govt.nz.