

## Cabinet Paper material

### Proactive release

Minister & portfolio Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education  
Name of package Implementation of the new, strengthened NCEA  
Date considered 17 February 2020

#### These documents have been proactively released:

##### **Cabinet Paper - Implementation of the new, strengthened NCEA**

Date considered: 17 February 2020

Author: Ministry of Education

##### **SWC-20-MIN-0001 Cabinet Minute**

Date considered: 12 February 2020

Cabinet Office

##### **CAB-20-MIN-0023 Report of the Social Wellbeing Committee**

Date considered: 17 February 2020

Cabinet Office

#### Material redacted

Some deletions have been made from the documents in line with withholding grounds under the Official Information Act 1982. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

The applicable withholding grounds under the Act are as follows:

Section 9(2)(f)(iv) to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials

Some deletions have been made from the documents as the information withheld does not fall within scope of the Minister's portfolio responsibilities, and is not relevant to the proactive release of this material.

You can read the Official Information Act 1982 here:

<http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1982/0156/latest/DLM64785.html>

Budget Sensitive

Office of the Minister of Education

Chair, Social Wellbeing Committee

## Implementation of the new, strengthened NCEA

### Proposal

1. I seek Cabinet's agreement to a package of changes to strengthen the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and create barrier-free access to a future focussed secondary education for all New Zealanders. This constitutes final agreement to the changes Cabinet agreed to in principle in May 2019, § 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
2. The Change Package responds to what we heard from New Zealanders about NCEA through the NCEA Review and Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga, and will:
  - 2.1. Make NCEA more accessible, including by ending NCEA fees
  - 2.2. Ensure mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori - Ensure parity of mātauranga Māori in NCEA
  - 2.3. Make NCEA's literacy and numeracy requirements more robust
  - 2.4. Refocus on fewer, larger standards within coherent courses so that there can be a focus on the most important learning
  - 2.5. Simplify NCEA's structure to clarify workload expectations for both teachers and students
  - 2.6. Signal clearer pathways to further education and employment, and
  - 2.7. Retain NCEA Level 1 as an optional level.

### Executive Summary

3. In May 2019, I sought your in-principle agreement to seven key changes to NCEA which would strengthen our key school-leaving qualification [SWC-19-MIN-0045; CAB-19-MIN-0203]. The seven key changes were the means by which the five principles of the review - wellbeing, inclusion and equity, coherence, pathways and credibility – would be implemented.
4. These principles interplay with one another, and the Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministerial (MAG) and Professional Advisory Groups (PAG), has had to balance them in order to strengthen the qualification as a whole. For example, in order to ensure that the credibility of the qualification is strengthened and maintained, the changes we agreed in-principle will encourage students to participate in external assessments.
5. Since the announcement of the NCEA Change Package in May, the Ministry of Education has been working with the education sector and New Zealanders to unpack what the detailed design and implementation implications of these changes would be. I am now

seeking your final agreement to implement these changes, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

6. These changes will deliver a shift towards our vision for quality public education that puts learners at the centre, removes barriers to access, and prepares young New Zealanders for the future of learning and work.
7. Once fully implemented:
  - 7.1. young people of all backgrounds and abilities will have access to a wider range of good, coherent pathways with fewer dead ends; NCEA will have fewer assessment points (reducing over-assessment); and NCEA qualifications will better reflect who young people are, what matters to them, what they can do, and where they want to go
  - 7.2. families and whānau will find NCEA much easier to understand and will be empowered to engage in important decisions around pathways and programmes of learning, with the support of new and improved resources
  - 7.3. teachers, school leaders and providers of foundation tertiary education will have better support to deliver quality, future and curriculum-focussed learning programmes, backed up with NCEA credits, and workload will be reduced so that they can spend more time on teaching and learning and less on preparing assessment tasks, marking, and compliance
  - 7.4. tertiary and industry will find young people better prepared for the world of work and further study, with both a better breadth of knowledge and skills across our National Curriculum, and more meaningful specialisation, including for further vocational learning, and for Māori and Pacific pathways
  - 7.5. our communities, including iwi, will have more opportunities to meaningfully contribute to secondary education, particularly in supporting schools to develop their local curriculum.
8. To achieve these goals, I intend to make some minor modifications to the changes agreed to in-principle in May, based on the feedback I have heard since then;
  - 8.1. to shift expectations around when young people may attempt the NCEA literacy and numeracy assessment from Year 7 to no earlier than Year 9
  - 8.2. to recognise the possibility that some alternative pathways for literacy and numeracy may be required, for example, for young people learning English for Speakers of Other Languages
  - 8.3. to delay the implementation of the changes to rules on resubmissions and Achieved-grade course endorsements from 2020 to 2021.
9. While I only recommend three alterations to the Change Package, I also heard a wide range of views about how change and implementation needs to be managed. These points of feedback have formed the basis of my proposed change and implementation plan for 2020 to 2025.
10. Since the public announcement of the NCEA Change Package in May, I have directed the Ministry to work with the PAG to ensure that a number of specific questions had satisfactory answers. The PAG has provided advice and assurance on the issues of fewer, larger

standards, resubmissions and the widened scope of Level 1. The changes below therefore represent the joint view of both the Ministry and the PAG.

11. To build on the relationships and trust established through the NCEA Review process to date, I will ensure that New Zealanders remain at the heart of the qualification's design throughout implementation, with authentic involvement of family and whānau, students, and the sector. In particular, I expect teachers and experts to lead in developing new Achievement Standards to underpin NCEA in each subject over the next 3 to 5 years.
12. To advance our vision for NCEA, existing NCEA practice and in-school systems will need to change. Some disruption to the trend of increasing student attainment, particularly in Merit and Excellence grades, may result. This rebalancing is expected and desirable to address pressures on the rates of Merit and Excellence in internally assessed standards which have been increasing, a trend which occurs in systems over time. I have directed the Ministry of Education to work closely with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and schools, kura and foundational tertiary providers to ensure that young people working towards an NCEA during the transition years will not be unfairly disadvantaged. In, particular careful monitoring of the impact of the strengthened literacy and numeracy requirements, and of the impact of reduced opportunities for "credit farming", will be needed to ensure timely responses.
13. Overall, I am confident that the more important measures – young people's wellbeing, how much they are learning, and how well prepared they are for their next steps and later life – will be strengthened by these changes. I anticipate that all material changes to NCEA will be made by 2025, but that the Ministry will continue to invest in implementation, maintenance and continuous improvement over the years following to ensure NCEA remains a world-leading qualification, and to prevent the issues that led to this NCEA Review arising again.

## Background

14. On 13 December 2017 [CBC-17-MIN 0066] Cabinet approved the Terms of Reference for the NCEA Review. Cabinet agreed that the review will be framed by five key principles: wellbeing, equity and inclusion, coherence, pathways and credibility. The interplay and balancing of these principles has been a key concern of the Ministry throughout the design process, as there are often tensions between them (e.g. improvements to the credibility of NCEA must be considered against the opportunity to improve wellbeing by removing sources of student stress and anxiety). The review was scoped to be inclusive of all facets of NCEA's performance, but excluded some related components of NCEA from scope, such as the University Entrance award.
15. Through the NCEA review process, I received independent advice from the Ministry of Education, and from the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) and Professional Advisory Group (PAG). All three provided me with highly aligned advice, reflecting the themes heard during the 2018 engagement, during which we had over 16,000 points of feedback.
16. In May 2019, Cabinet agreed in-principle to a Change Package arising out of that advice, subject to the Ministry engaging with stakeholders on the detailed design and implementation implications. Through this period, the Ministry ran over 100 engagements, including 30 regional NCEA public workshops. Through this, an additional 12,000 individual pieces of feedback was received which has supported the development of this advice
17. The NCEA Review is a 'big review' within my Education Portfolio Work Programme. It will advance our objective of a high quality, inclusive public education system. However, some of the deep-rooted challenges identified through the NCEA Review – for example, inequity of

access to high quality learning opportunities and disparities of esteem between pathways – will require coordinated effort across the education portfolio.

18. A lever for managing the majority of the work stemming from the NCEA Review will be carried out as part of the Review of Achievement Standards (RAS), which had already been scheduled (and was deferred to coincide with the Review) and will take place between 2021 and 2025. As part of RAS, all of the Achievement Standards will be removed and replaced year by year with new, larger standards. This work will begin by unpacking the National Curriculum to ensure a focus on curriculum and learning, rather than assessment, underpins the new standards. New standards will then be drafted and made widely available, from 2022 (Level 1), 2023 (Level 2) and 2024 (Level 3).
19. The RAS work will be intrinsically driven by the profession, as the Subject Expert Groups (SEG) are comprised primarily of teachers, as well as industry and tertiary representatives. Recognising that RAS will be driven by and impact on the sector, I have made sure to test residual concerns with the PAG. Their suggestions and overall assurance are reflected throughout this paper and throughout the Change Package.
20. RAS is crucial as Achievement Standards are the primary interaction that students have with the NCEA qualification, and they therefore present the best opportunity for achieving most of the stated goals of the review. As an example, a key aspect of improving parity for mātauranga Māori and equity for ākonga Māori is to ensure that the new Achievement Standards are drafted to be inclusive of a Māori worldview.

#### **How NCEA will be strengthened**

21. I continue to believe that the seven key changes Cabinet agreed to in-principle in May are the best levers to strengthen NCEA. However, following further discussions with students, family and whānau, and the education sector on the detailed design and implementation implications of these changes, I intend to make minor changes to some of the proposals.

#### ***Change 1: Make NCEA more accessible***

22. This change seeks to break down the barriers that many New Zealanders reported seeing in their education. These barriers can be difficulties created by disability or circumstance, as well as structural flaws that stem from the exclusionary way assessment standards are designed and delivered. Change 1 will widen access to the tools that improve accessibility in the short run, while designing a qualification that is accessible by design in the long run.
23. I do not intend any substantive changes to *Change 1: Make NCEA more accessible* from the proposal agreed in-principle by Cabinet. Some aspects of this change have already taken effect:
  - 23.1. student fees to access NCEA have been removed
  - 23.2. a range of simplifications to the Special Assessments Conditions (SACs) system have been implemented, or are being trialled, to improve access.
24. In the longer term the RAS will be critical to delivering on a more accessible NCEA, by ensuring that new Achievement Standards are fit-for-purpose for all New Zealanders, particularly those with learning support needs or disabilities. Achievement Standards will also be free from contexts that limit engagement and disadvantage those with Māori and Pacific worldviews. My vision is for inclusive assessment to become the norm, assisted by technology as appropriate, so that the need for SACs is reduced significantly over time.

## **Change 2: Parity of mātauranga Māori in NCEA**

25. This change is about removing the inequities for Māori in the current qualification system, with the ultimate goal of parity for te ao Māori. Key aspects of this change include developing ways of credentialing mātauranga Māori, building teacher capability, and improving the resourcing and support for ākonga Māori and the incorporation of te reo Māori and te ao Māori into senior secondary programmes of learning.
26. I do not intend any substantive changes to *Change 2: Mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori (parity of mātauranga Māori in NCEA)* from the proposal agreed in-principle by Cabinet.
27. Having discussed the Change Package with kura, iwi, kaiako Māori and ākonga Māori, I have identified the need to encourage and provide for more localised support for NCEA, involving iwi as kaitiaki of their local mātauranga more than they currently are. This will include:
  - 27.1. improved support for localised iwi curricula and learning programmes
  - 27.2. new subjects for English-medium settings grounded in te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori (e.g., Māori performing arts).

## **Change 3: Make NCEA's literacy and numeracy requirements more robust**

28. This change will ensure that students with an NCEA have achieved a level of literacy and numeracy that will enable them to engage with the world, particularly when it comes to employment and further education. A 20-credit co-requisite will be developed that students will be able to attempt in English or te reo Māori. This will sit outside the NCEA qualification, but will be required to receive an NCEA. It will be externally graded, and set against a clear benchmark derived from our National Curriculum.
29. I intend to make two substantive changes to the details of *Change 3: Make NCEA's literacy and numeracy requirements more robust* that I announced in May 2019 (rec 6.1 and 6.2):
  - 29.1. The Technical Advisory Groups on Literacy and Numeracy for English- and Māori-medium settings have advised that it would be inappropriate for students to attempt the new literacy and numeracy assessment in Years 7 and 8. I have also heard this message clearly from parts of the education sector, particularly primary and intermediate teachers and school leaders. I therefore expect that the new literacy and numeracy assessment will only be offered to students no earlier than Year 9.
  - 29.2. I have heard clearly from some communities that a single benchmark, without any alternative pathways, may make it unfairly difficult for some young people to attain an NCEA – particularly young people learning English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). I have therefore agreed that the Ministry of Education and NZQA may explore limited exceptions to the single benchmark where appropriate, so long as any alternative pathways are levelled at or above the benchmark, and with the benchmark assessment to remain the only way to achieve the literacy and numeracy credential for the overwhelming majority of students.
30. Because of the different ways that literacy and numeracy manifest in English and te reo Māori, the Ministry is continuing to explore with technical experts how to best assess literacy and numeracy in each setting, aligned appropriately to principles of assessment and aromatawai. My objective is to ensure that the new assessments are able to be seamlessly integrated into local curriculum derived from either the *New Zealand Curriculum* or *Te*

*Marautanga o Aotearoa*, and that the assessments will be extensively tested to ensure that they are free of bias.

31. The Technical Advisory Groups have emphasised that a system shift will be required to ensure learners are successful in meeting a new literacy and numeracy external requirement, s 9(2)(f)(iv)
32. I will regularly review the sector's readiness for the change to literacy and numeracy and s 9(2)(f)(iv)
33. I will direct the Ministry to invest further time into understanding the landscape of literacy and numeracy in the Māori-medium sector, and to co-design the implementation of the new requirements as they relate to Māori-medium with the sector. My objective is for the change to support Māori-medium priorities and be consistent with aromatawai practice.
34. Strengthening the NCEA literacy and numeracy requirements is part of a wider Ministry work programme relating to foundational skills. While robust assessment and support in secondary school will help ensure young people with NCEAs have the skills they need, it will be critical that we continue to focus on early learning and the crucial early primary years for foundational literacy and numeracy development via the wider Education Work Programme.

#### ***Change 4: Refocusing on fewer, larger standards within coherent courses***

35. The current suite of Achievement Standards (of which there are more than 1,000) are not fit for purpose, and many local curricula include incoherent, fractured courses due to picking and choosing between standards, and the inconsistent weight that these standards carry. A qualification based around fewer, larger standards will credential the most important significant learning in a learning area or subject.
36. I do not intend any substantive changes to *Change 4: Refocusing on fewer, larger standards within coherent courses* from the proposal agreed in-principle by Cabinet.
37. An aspect of this change is the rebalancing of internal and external credits within a subject to a 50:50 ratio where appropriate. This even balance between internal and external credits is intended to address the increasing trend of students having fewer external credits – a trend that could undermine the qualification as students may not be learning the important knowledge that is assessed externally. Larger standards will be inclusive by design, and encourage critical thinking, digital literacy, creativity and collaboration through richer, more engaging tasks. The internal/external rebalancing is also a key measure by which the Change Package reduces teacher workload by having half of standards marked by external markers.
38. These new standards will require teachers and kaiako to change their practices, to focus on effective pedagogy and learning aligned to the National Curriculum. To ensure these standards do not become a barrier for students, I have directed my Ministry and NZQA to begin working with schools to build their capability to design local curricula suited to the content of the new standards, and to ensure they closely track student progress towards the new NCEA qualifications. This, combined with active monitoring of attainment levels will be key to ensuring the strengthened NCEA drives the intended outcomes – higher quality learning.
39. Some stakeholders have expressed concern that fewer, larger standards will feel 'higher stakes' for students, and may increase anxiety. The PAG has advised that they expect this

to be offset by a reduction in overall assessment workload and pressure by reducing the number of assessments students have to undertake. This will provide students with more time and energy to invest in each individual assessment. Both students and teachers will likely have greater opportunity to identify areas where more support is required as young people progress, and then work together to build student understanding prior to the submission for marking. The PAG has also noted that any increase in the stakes of the assessments would still leave them with lower stakes than other equivalent qualifications.

#### ***Change 5: Simplify NCEA's structure to clarify workload expectations***

40. This change is about making NCEA easier to understand by reducing its complexity, and making changes to address concerns about excessive workload. The little-understood carry-over will be removed, and the resubmission of assessments (further attempts at an assessment without a new assessment task) will be restricted to increasing a Not Achieved grade to an Achieved grade only. A simpler NCEA will be more accessible for students, teachers and families, which will improve agency and support.
41. I intend to make one substantive change to the details of *Change 5: Simplify NCEA's structure to clarify workload expectations* that I announced in May 2019 (rec 6.3).
42. Cabinet agreed in-principle to limit resubmissions and to expand course endorsements from 2020. However, after considering feedback from the sector, I seek Cabinet's agreement to instead have these changes start from 2021. While the resubmissions change will reduce teacher workload, delaying the change for a year will allow more time for the sector to prepare, and provide opportunity for the Ministry and NZQA to further support effective formative assessment practice, which will ensure the change does not raise stakes for students disproportionately.
43. With a delay to the resubmissions change, an extension of course endorsements to include Achieved would be the only change to be implemented in 2020. As this change will not have material impact alone and teachers have already begun course planning for next year, I recommend we plan to implement this from 2021.
44. The PAG agreed with the overall approach to limiting resubmissions, noting that "While resubmission opportunities provide an avenue for students to correct genuine errors or demonstrate their learning, changes are needed to reduce teacher workload driven by student and parental requests for resubmission opportunities, which often transgress the current rules. It is also an opportunity to make NCEA more fair and consistent as students in different schools and kura currently have very variable access to resubmission opportunities "
45. A minority of the PAG expressed reservations about the changes to resubmissions on the basis they may unfairly deny students opportunities to stretch themselves and obtain higher grades when they resubmit work. I intend to progress limiting resubmissions to the Not Achieved-Achieved grade boundary to ensure that teacher workload remains manageable, but will instruct the Ministry to carefully consider how to ensure students retain opportunities to improve and seek feedback on their work, to perform to the best of their potential.
46. As mentioned in relation to Change 5, the PAG has expressed the opinion that the overall workload for both teachers and students will be reduced by the Change Package due to the steps to reduce credit farming, the rebalancing of internal and external credits and the clarification of workload expectations.



### ***Change 6: Signal clearer pathways to further education and employment***

47. This change is about ensuring students get access to clear, quality pathways, and the information to be able to make good decisions about their future. This is exemplified by developing a Vocational Entrance Award, to have parity with University Entrance.
48. I do not intend any substantive changes to *Change 6: Signal clearer pathways to further education and employment* from the proposal agreed in-principle by Cabinet.
49. With the Reform of Vocational Education progressing, I anticipate that the Review of Achievement Standards will create opportunities to strengthen vocational subjects and programmes in schools, including those based on the existing Vocational Pathways, which will be reviewed as the other changes are implemented. This may include developing new vocational subjects alongside those traditionally supported by the Ministry of Education, expanding supports for industry derived standards-based courses which are currently widely offered, and exploring ways of allowing Achievement Standards to be delivered as part of work-based learning programmes (e.g., under the Gateway programme). A key objective of these changes is to enable more young people to begin meaningful progress towards vocational education while enrolled in school, including apprenticeships.
50. To help ensure that links to further education and employment respond better to the needs of Māori students and communities, the Ministry and I will work with Te Taumata Aronui. This group has been established to support government to design tertiary education system settings to help ensure the system is more responsive to the needs of Māori learners, communities and employers, and help improve learner and community outcomes.
51. A risk that the PAG identified is that schools concerned about student attainment may channel those they do not expect to succeed in achievement standards-based courses into inappropriate courses, which can limit their future options and mean they miss out on valuable learning. The PAG has recommended that unit standards should be similarly reviewed to determine which unit standards are suitable to be offered in schools. This will avoid a potential criticism of low coherence alternatives to the new achievement standards. The Ministry intends to work with the Workforce Development Councils through the Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) to ensure the development of vocational standards and packages of learning that are appropriate for delivery to students enrolled in school, but which are still industry relevant.

### ***Change 7: Retain NCEA Level 1 as an optional level***

52. Though we considered abolishing Level 1, we heard that for many students Level 1 has great value as a foundational qualification. Schools and kura will still have the option of not doing NCEA Level 1, reflecting the needs of their communities and students.
53. I do not intend any substantive changes to *Change 7: Retain NCEA Level 1 as an optional level* from the proposal agreed in-principle by Cabinet.
54. A foundational NCEA Level 1 will require that young people have access to wide courses which emphasise connections across our National Curriculum, and opportunities to avoid narrowing their pathways unduly early.
55. To achieve this, the Ministry of Education has used the Review of Achievement Standards to explore the narrowing of the range of subjects available at NCEA Level 1. The Ministry has worked closely with experts in each subject and discipline to explore how this might be done, ensuring a balance between breadth and depth, and recognising the merits of some

specialisation for young people who have identified clear pathways. The provisional subject list was based on seven criteria.

55.1. Criterion 1: How the subject fits with the policy vision of a broader, foundational NCEA Level 1 with increasing specialisation from Level 2.

55.2. Criterion 2: All foundational learning derived from the New Zealand Curriculum at Level 6 is available

55.3. Criterion 3: Supporting pathways

55.4. Criterion 4: Ensuring coherency and pathways in local curricula

55.5. Criterion 5: Demand and Sector Capability

55.6. Criterion 6: Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori

55.7. Criterion 7: Credibility

56. I recommend that the Ministry begin public engagement on the list of subjects (included as Annex 1) to ensure transparency and that diverse voices are heard, to be undertaken in February 2020.

57. While the range of subjects available to students at NCEA Level 1 has narrowed (not including for subjects derived from *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*), I anticipate an expansion of the range of subjects available at NCEA Levels 2 and 3, particularly for disciplines which are vocational, grounded in Māori or Pacific knowledge bases, or which reflect modern disciplines and pathways. The refocusing of Level 1 into a broad, foundational qualification that leads to greater specialisation at Levels 2 and 3 is supported and endorsed by the PAG.

### Approach to implementation

58. Effective implementation of these changes will require comprehensive support for schools, kura and foundational tertiary providers to support them to shift practice and change their systems, while at the same time supporting family and whānau to engage with their children's schooling in general and the NCEA qualification in particular.

59. We know that system changes of this scale have not always been resourced to the extent the education sector has felt was necessary to achieve the intended outcomes and help families and whānau be part of the change. The review process gives us an opportunity to do things differently. The implementation plan will detail how this will be done, and include teacher-only days, support materials, and ongoing Ministry assistance, and partnerships with iwi and community.

60. The implementation of the Change Package represents a significant shift in the way that NCEA is delivered and experienced. Understandably, there is some anxiety in the sector, particularly given other changes underway. This is why I have directed the Ministry to ensure that there is adequate support and resourcing for schools, kura and foundational tertiary providers for the entire implementation process.

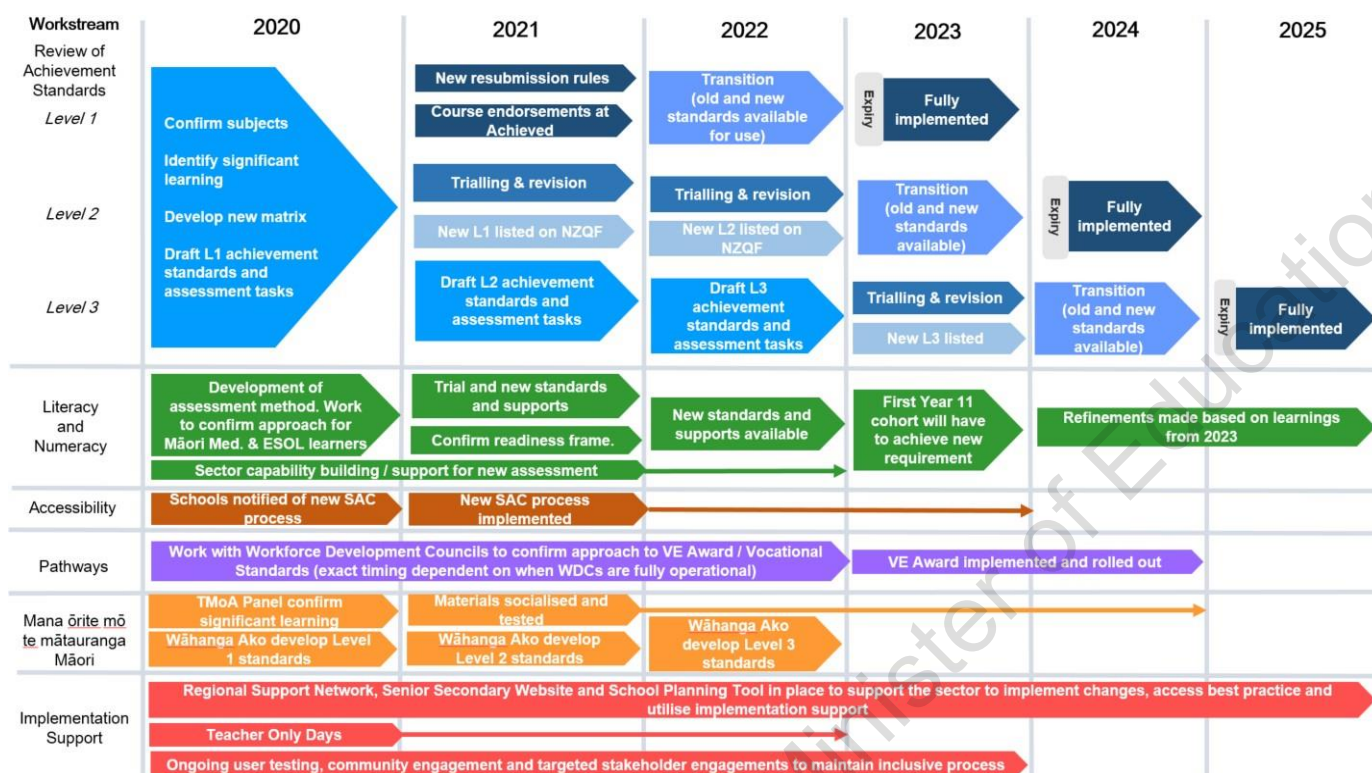
61. To ensure this is done right, I have directed the Ministry to:

61.1. develop self-evaluation tools to help schools, kura and foundation tertiary providers identify areas where development is needed, including the development of the relationships with communities, families and whānau, and the world of work. These connections must extend outside the school gate. These tools will be paired with

adaptive tools that will help schools develop change plans and local curricula, as well as Ministry and NZQA resources and supports

- 61.2. support these tools with a regional support network which will ensure schools and foundation tertiary providers have access to on-the-ground support throughout the period of implementation
  - 61.3. continue working with the Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) to provide support through the Accord Teacher-Only Days (agreed to as part of negotiations with the PPTA) to facilitate subject experts to share best practice and adapt to strengthened curriculum guidance, and for schools and kura to revise their approaches to subject offerings, timetabling, and best practice
  - 61.4. develop an NCEA Whānau Toolkit which will provide parents and whānau with the necessary information about NCEA and how they should be involved in their child's education
  - 61.5. ensure that best practice guidance and tools are reflective of the diversity of practice and communities across New Zealand, ensuring that every school and kura has access to resources which reflect their attitude and approach to education.
62. Our overarching approach also reflects the sector's consistent feedback that the process for implementing the changes over the coming years must be responsive to the needs of our education system and respect the complex and high stakes nature of NCEA. As such, we will be continuing to engage with the sector and user test the changes, and may need to revisit design or timelines to ensure successful implementation of the Change Package.
63. Aligning the implementation of the changes to NCEA with the implementation of other education initiatives (including RoVE and Curriculum, Progress and Achievement) will be important going forward. I have instructed the Ministry to ensure that the implementation plans for these and other initiatives align, so that these changes can be made efficiently and with minimal disruption to students' schools and kura.
64. In light of the above, I recommend an annual report back to Cabinet ahead of confirmation of the changes for each school year to ensure the implementation will meet the needs of the education sector.
65. In regards to the two largest aspects of the Change Package, there will need to be differing timelines for implementation due to specific implications and design challenges of these changes.
66. The next step in the *Review of Achievement Standards* is due to begin in April 2020, with the drafting of new Level 1 Achievement Standards to be completed by October 2020 in advance of trialling in select schools in 2021. This is an ambitious work programme which will involve co-designing the new standards with around 400-500 teachers as part of around 55 Subject Expert Groups, and starting with Subject Expert Groups for the proposed NCEA Level 1 subjects (Annex 1 refers).
67. I am also conscious that this work must be done at a pace that the education sector can absorb, so the Ministry can respond if there are any unanticipated challenges for a sector also responding to other changes within the wider Education Work Programme.

68. As a result, as with the original implementation of the NCEA qualifications, consideration each year as to whether implementation processes (e.g., new Level 1 standards) should be extended for an additional year to provide the sector additional time to respond.
69. I am cognisant of the fact that the impact of the changes will not be felt evenly across all who are affected. In particular, there are a number of key groups who will be of particular focus:
- 69.1. **Ākonga Māori** have faced a number of challenges from the current system, including racialised streaming into low-value courses, and an inability to use Māori contexts and worldviews in their studies. Throughout the review process, engagement with Māori has been of great importance, and a key goal is to ensure that ākonga Māori have access to an inclusive and equitable qualification, and whānau have the confidence to engage with their children's' education.
- 69.2. **Pacific** students face similar challenges to Māori, including a tendency by schools to stream them into low-value courses that do not lead to meaningful pathways. Additionally, many in the Pacific community told us that NCEA is not well understood, making it hard for parents and families to engage with schools to assist students in making good choices. Ministry and school engagement with Pacific communities has traditionally been poor, and a key goal of this process is to bring them along for the change journey.
- 69.3. **Disability and learning support communities** – in the past students who are disabled or in need of learning support have not been included in the design of system change and implementation, with their needs instead being addressed after the fact. To ensure that the implementation of the new NCEA makes meaningful improvements to the experiences of these students, we have made sure to engage with the disabled and learning support communities, and we will consult and work with the Disability Commissioner. A key principle of the Change Package continues to be a commitment to making NCEA accessible by design.
70. To ensure advocacy and consideration for these groups continues throughout implementation, NCEA Panels are being established to provide targeted advice and input at critical points in the design and implementation of the NCEA change package, based on their respective expertise, knowledge and experience.
71. The groups being established are the Māori NCEA Panel, Pacific People NCEA Panel, Disability & Learning Support NCEA Panel, and the Pathways NCEA Panel. Specific Realm Nation Panels, in the Cook Islands and Niue, are also being established to provide advice on how the changes need to be implemented to meet their unique needs.
72. An outline of the implementation plan is included on the following page:



## Risks

73. There is a risk that the changes to NCEA will result in a lower level of attainment from previous years. We know from engagement that many students are being funnelled through low-value courses designed to feed them enough credits to pass. By limiting the ability of schools to do this overall pass rates may decrease in the short run, though this should be considered against the value of improving the credibility of the qualification as a whole, and raising the quality of learning occurring. The PAG has considered this risk and concluded that the sector will adjust, and that the changes are necessary to ensure that young people are experiencing quality teaching and learning.
74. I have also instructed the Ministry of Education to ensure that implementation support for schools, kura and foundation tertiary begins well before new requirements come into force. This is to minimise any risk that the first cohorts of students subject to the new requirements will be disadvantaged. s 9(2)(f)(iv)
75. Some parents and whānau have shared that they do not understand the Change Package. There is a risk that this could undermine the effort to tighten the connections between schools, whānau and students. Parental and whānau understanding of NCEA has always been lower than we would have liked, and feedback from engagement indicated that this stems largely from the complicated nature of the qualification. As the overall trend with the Change Package is one of simplification, it is expected that after the initial transition period, overall understanding of NCEA will increase.
76. Previous changes to NCEA – both when it was first implemented in 2002-2004, and during the realignment to the National Curriculum in 2009-2012 (New Zealand Curriculum) and 2012-2019 (Te Marautanga o Aotearoa) – highlight lessons for significant changes to our secondary qualifications. It is clear that to ensure change is not unduly disruptive, and

achieves the goals intended, more support needs to be provided to schools, students, family and whānau both before and during the transition. The implementation plan will detail how this change process has been designed with New Zealanders in mind, based on the information and guidance obtained through the extensive engagement process the Ministry undertook.

77. The Ministry of Education has taken significant steps to ensure that issues with the rollout of previous changes are not repeated. Part of the justification for the extensive engagement and consultation process has been to acclimatise and familiarise the sector with the changes being made ahead of time. Additionally, there is significantly larger investment in PLD and staff training. Finally, the Change Package itself is designed to simplify the qualification. We expect that this will make understanding and engaging with NCEA much easier for students and families.

## Consultation

78. When preparing this paper I have considered the feedback gathered directly in over 100 engagements between May 2019 and November 2019. Through this process, an additional 12,000 individual pieces of feedback was received which has supported the development of this advice. This builds on the feedback gathered in the initial engagement phase of the NCEA Review, which ran from May to October 2018.
79. There are a number of groups who have not always had their voices heard by the education system, including:
- 79.1. Māori, including iwi, rangatahi Māori and Māori peak bodies
  - 79.2. Pacific communities, including those in Niue and the Cook Islands
  - 79.3. youth with additional learning support needs and learning support organisations;
  - 79.4. disabled youth;
  - 79.5. teen parents;
  - 79.6. Rainbow youth and the LGBTQI+ community;
  - 79.7. Alternative Education groups;
  - 79.8. youth in Corrections institutes;
  - 79.9. young people and staff in Oranga Tamariki-run youth justice residences.
80. The Ministry made a commitment to connect with these groups via a targeted engagement programme consisting of focus groups, interviews, workshops and hui, as well as appointing representatives on Ministry panels and advisory groups where possible.
81. Refugees, migrant communities, and ethnic minority communities were also supported to engage via focus groups and public workshops.
82. Further engagements with many of these groups have occurred in 2019, focused on the detailed design and implementation implications of the changes.
83. I have also consulted with the education spokesperson for the National Party and leader of the ACT Party respectively. This reflects my commitment to engage with the Opposition throughout the review.

84. In addition, the following agencies were consulted on the proposed changes in this paper:

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority	The Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment
Tertiary Education Commission	Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children
Education Review Office	The Department of Corrections
Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand	The Department of Internal Affairs, including the Office of Ethnic Communities
Te Puni Kōkiri	The Treasury
The Ministry of Pacific Peoples	The Office of Disability Issues
The Ministry of Women	State Services Commission
The Ministry of Social Development	
The Ministry of Youth Development	

85. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet was also informed.

### Treaty Statement

86. The changes to NCEA also promise to ensure that governance of our senior secondary education system better reflects the Crown's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. They offer an opportunity to meaningfully deliver on kāwanatanga through NCEA – ensuring that Māori have equitable access to a school-leaving qualification which reflects their culture, identity, language and aspirations – and to better ensure Māori shape Māori pathways through NCEA. I expect that over time, these changes will narrow the achievement gap between Māori and the wider student cohort in English medium settings, and continue to build on ākonga Māori success in Māori medium settings. This will go some way towards addressing historic and present inequities in access to qualifications, further education, and employment opportunities.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

87.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

88.

88.1. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

88.2.

88.3.

89.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

90. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

91. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

### **Legislative Implications**

92. The changes in this paper do not require changes to primary legislation to implement. The changes to NCEA will involve modifications to NZQA Rules, which they will progress through appropriate legislative channels

### **Impact Analysis**

93. The changes in this paper do not require changes to legislation or regulations, and so are not subject to the Regulatory Impact Assessment requirements.
94. However, reflecting the significance of the changes, the Ministry has undertaken impact assessment as part of its own policy programme, and using the outcomes of the Ministry's engagement on detailed design and implementation implications. This has informed the contents of this paper.

### **Human Rights**

95. There are no human rights implications arising out of the proposed changes included in this paper. The proposed Change Package is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

### **Gender Implications**

96. The vast majority of young New Zealanders of all gender identities participate in NCEA. No specific gender impact analysis has been undertaken. Instead, care has been taken to ensure that the perspectives of all genders, and gender-diverse people, have been able to influence the outcomes of the Review via public engagement and focus group activities.

### **Disability Perspective**

97. Inclusive education is an important component of the New Zealand Disability Strategy; in particular Indicator 1.4 in the New Zealand Disability Strategy is that "Disabled people achieve and progress in education."



98. Through targeted engagement activities (focus groups, interviews, workshops and hui), we specifically engaged with youth who are disabled or have additional learning support needs, and learning support organisations. I anticipate that the changes to NCEA – particularly those to improve access to Special Assessment Conditions and ensure all Achievement Standards are designed inclusively – will ensure that disabled young people have full, equitable access to an NCEA that sets them up for entering the workforce or further education.

## Publicity

99. There will be considerable interest from our education sector around the finalised NCEA Change Package. I intend to announce Cabinet's decisions in late February.
100. Officials are preparing targeted information for different stakeholder groups impacted by the changes, including school leaders, teachers, students and the wider community. This will be done so as to ensure as wide a reach to these groups as possible. It will also include some pre-briefings with the main education peak bodies to ensure they have the opportunity to be briefed on the final decisions before they are announced.
101. I expect the proposals will attract media attention. I will work to ensure that media engagement across government is coordinated and that it conveys the Government's priorities that led to these proposals.

102. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

## Proactive Release

103. I propose to release this paper proactively following my announcement of Cabinet's decision in early December. Release will be subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

## Recommendations

The Minister for Education recommends that the Committee:

1. **note** that in May 2019 Cabinet agreed in principle to a package of changes to strengthen NCEA [SWC-19 MIN-0045; CAB-19-MIN-0203]
2. **note** that the changes proposed are intended to:
  - 2.1 give young people of all backgrounds and abilities access to a wider range of good, coherent pathways with fewer dead ends
  - 2.2 make NCEA much easier to understand for families and whānau, and empower them to engage in important decisions around pathways and programmes of learning
  - 2.3 support teachers and school leaders to deliver quality, curriculum-focussed learning programmes backed up with NCEA credits
  - 2.4 reduce teacher and student workload, so they can spend more time on learning and less on preparing assessment tasks, marking, and compliance
  - 2.5 better prepare young people for the world of work and further study

- 2.6. give communities, including iwi, more opportunities to meaningfully contribute to secondary education, particularly in supporting schools to develop their local curriculum
- 2.7. improve the structural coherence of NCEA assessment to more efficiently capture the key knowledge, skills and capabilities students need to succeed
- 2.8. promote culturally responsive, coherent teaching and learning
3. **note** that Cabinet agreed to the Ministry of Education engaging with stakeholders on the detailed design and implementation implications of the proposed Change Package, to inform a final Change Package, and that I would present back to Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on the outcomes of this engagement
4. **note** between May 2019 and November 2019 the Ministry led over 100 engagements, including 30 regional NCEA public workshops and that through this, an additional 12,000 individual pieces of feedback was received which has supported the development of this advice
5. **note** that this engagement informed and is reflected in the final package presented for Cabinet approval in this paper
6. **confirm** the in principle agreements from May 2019, subject to the following modifications:
  - 6.1. The earliest year that students may attempt the literacy and numeracy benchmark assessment will be moved from Year 7 to Year 9
  - 6.2. Further work will be done to explore the possibility that some alternative pathways for literacy and numeracy may be required, for example, for young people learning English for Speakers of Other Languages
  - 6.3. The changes to rules on resubmissions and achieved-grade course endorsements will take effect in 2021, instead of 2020;
7. **note** that implementing the NCEA Change Package will require existing NCEA practice and in-school systems to change, and that some disruption to the trend of increasing student attainment, particularly in Merit and Excellence grades, may result
8. **note** that risks identified in recommendation 7 above have been presented to my Professional Advisory Group, and that they have endorsed the proposed approach
9. **note** that implementation of the NCEA Change Package will occur alongside the scheduled Review of Achievement Standards, with changes phasing-in between 2021 and 2025, s 9(2)(f)(iv)
10. **note** that a system shift will be required to ensure learners are successful in meeting a new literacy and numeracy external requirement, and this may require additional resourcing
11. **note** that I will regularly review the sector's readiness for the change to literacy and numeracy
12. **note** that the Ministry will invest further time into understanding the landscape of literacy and numeracy in the Māori-medium sector, and will co-design the implementation of the new requirements as they relate to Māori-medium with the sector

13. **note** that the provisional subject list for NCEA Level 1 will be distributed for public engagement beginning in February 2020
14. **note** that from 2025 onwards the Ministry will transition to ongoing maintenance of NCEA funded out of baseline, which includes continued standard redevelopment, fitness tests, and quality control
15. s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]
16. **agree** that the Minister of Education release this paper proactively, coinciding with announcements relating to Cabinet's decisions s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted] subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982

s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]

17. s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]

18. [Redacted]

19. [Redacted]

- 19.1. s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]

19.2. [Redacted]

19.3. [Redacted]

20. s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]

21. [Redacted]

22. [Redacted]

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister for Education

## Annex 1: Provisional subject list

1. Table 1 shows the Provisional Subject List for NCEA Level 1 subjects derived from *The New Zealand Curriculum*

Learning Area (NZC)	New Subject list
English	English
Te Reo Māori	Te Reo Māori
The Arts	Dance
	Drama
	Music
	Visual Arts
	Māori Performing Arts
Health and Physical Education	Health and Physical Education
Learning Languages	Cook Island Māori
	New Zealand Sign Language
	French
	German
	Japanese
	Korean
	Tongan
	Mandarin
	Samoan
	Spanish
Mathematics and Statistics	Mathematics and Statistics
Science	Science
	Agricultural and Horticultural Science
Social Sciences	History
	Geography
	Commerce
	Social Studies
	Religious Studies
Technology	Materials Technology
	Design and Visual Communication
	Digital Technologies
	Food Science

2. Table 2 shows the relationships between the subjects in the current state and the subjects in the target state sorted by Learning Area.

Learning Area	Current subject list	Target subject list
English	English	English
Te Reo Māori	Te Reo Māori	Te Reo Māori
The Arts	Dance	Dance
	Drama	Drama
	Music	Music
	Visual Arts	Visual Arts
	Art History	Not included
	-	Māori Performing Arts
Health and Physical Education	Health	Health and Physical Education
	Physical Education	
	Home Economics	Food Science
Learning Languages	Cook Island Māori	Cook Island Māori
	New Zealand Sign Language	New Zealand Sign Language
	French	French
	German	German
	Japanese	Japanese
	Korean	Korean
	Tongan	Tongan
	Mandarin	Mandarin
	Samoan	Samoan
	Spanish	Spanish
	Latin	Not included
Mathematics and Statistics	Mathematics and Statistics	Mathematics and Statistics
Science	Biology	Science
	Chemistry	
	Earth and Space Science	
	Physics	
	Science	
	Agricultural and Horticultural Science	Agricultural and Horticultural Science
Social Sciences	History	History <sup>1</sup>
	Classical Studies	
	Geography	Geography
	Economics	Commerce <sup>2</sup>
	Business Studies	
	Accounting	
	Social Studies	Social Studies <sup>3</sup>
	Media Studies	
	Psychology	
Technology	Technology	Integrated through new Technology subjects
	Construction and Mechanical Technology	Materials Technology
	Design and Visual	Design and Visual Communication

1 Art History and Classical Studies only supported as possible contexts within history to a low degree.

2 Note that Level 1 Commerce is likely to have very little Accounting content due to the practical constraints of the subject and the ability to access the subject directly at Level 2 in most settings.

3 Media Studies and Psychology only supported as possible contexts for Social Studies.

	Communication	
	Digital Technologies	Digital Technologies
	Processing Technologies	Food Science (with Home Economics see above)

3. Table 3 shows the subjects derived from *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* which are under development:

Te Reo Rangatira	Hangarau
Pāngarau	Ngā Mahi ā Te Rēhia
Tikanga ā-lwi	Toi Ataata
Pūtaiao	Toi Puoro
Hauora	



# Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

## Minute of Decision

*This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.*

### Implementation of a New, Strengthened NCEA

**Portfolio**                      **Education**

On 12 February 2020, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC):

- 1        **noted** that in May 2019, SWC agreed in principle to a package of changes to strengthen NCEA, subject to the Ministry of Education engaging with stakeholders on the detailed design and implementation implications of the proposed change package, to inform a final change package [SWC-19-MIN-0045];
- 2        **noted** that the changes to NCEA are intended to:
  - 2.1      give young people of all backgrounds and abilities access to a wider range of good, coherent pathways with fewer dead ends;
  - 2.2      make NCEA much easier to understand for families and whānau, and empower them to engage in important decisions around pathways and programmes of learning;
  - 2.3      support teachers and school leaders to deliver quality, curriculum-focussed learning programmes backed up with NCEA credits;
  - 2.4      reduce teacher and student workload, so they can spend more time on learning and less on preparing assessment tasks, marking, and compliance;
  - 2.5      better prepare young people for the world of work and further study;
  - 2.6      give communities, including iwi, more opportunities to meaningfully contribute to secondary education, particularly in supporting schools to develop their local curriculum;
  - 2.7      improve the structural coherence of NCEA assessment to more efficiently capture the key knowledge, skills and capabilities students need to succeed;
  - 2.8      promote culturally responsive, coherent teaching and learning;
- 3        **noted** that, between May 2019 and November 2019, the Ministry of Education led over 100 engagements, including 30 regional NCEA public workshops and through this an additional 12,000 individual pieces of feedback was received which were supported the development of the advice in the paper under SWC-20-SUB-0001;

- 4 **agreed** to the following modifications to decisions taken by SWC in May 2019 [SWC-19-MIN-0045] that:
- 4.1 the earliest year that students may attempt the literacy and numeracy benchmark assessment will be moved from Year 7 to Year 9;
  - 4.2 further work will be done to explore the possibility that some alternative pathways for literacy and numeracy may be required, for example, for young people learning English for Speakers of Other Languages;
  - 4.3 the changes to rules on resubmissions and achieved-grade course endorsements will take effect in 2021, instead of 2020;
- 5 **noted** that implementing the NCEA Change Package will require existing NCEA practice and in-school systems to change, and that some disruption to the trend of increasing student attainment, particularly in Merit and Excellence grades, may result;
- 6 **noted** that the risks identified in paragraph 5 above have been presented to the Minister of Education's Professional Advisory Group, which has endorsed the approach;
- 7 **noted** that implementation of the NCEA Change Package will occur alongside the scheduled Review of Achievement Standards, with changes phasing in between 2021 and 2025, s 9(2)(f)(iv)
- 8 **noted** that a system shift will be required to ensure learners are successful in meeting a new literacy and numeracy external requirement, which may require additional resourcing;
- 9 **noted** that the Minister of Education will regularly review the sector's readiness for the change to literacy and numeracy s 9(2)(f)(iv)
- 10 **noted** that the Ministry of Education will invest further time into understanding the landscape of literacy and numeracy in the Māori-medium sector, and will co-design the implementation of the new requirements as they relate to Māori-medium with the sector;
- 11 **noted** that the provisional subject list for NCEA Level 1 will be distributed for public engagement beginning in February 2020;
- 12 **noted** that from 2025 onwards the Ministry of Education will transition to ongoing maintenance of NCEA funded out of baseline, which includes continued standard redevelopment, fitness tests, and quality control;
- 13 s 9(2)(f)(iv)
- s 9(2)(f)(iv)
- 14 s 9(2)(f)(iv)



15 s 9(2)(f)(iv)

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Vivien Meek  
Committee Secretary

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**Hard-copy distribution (see over)**

**Present:**

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern  
Hon Kelvin Davis  
Hon Dr Megan Woods  
Hon Chris Hipkins  
Hon Andrew Little  
Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Chair)  
Hon Dr David Clark  
Hon Stuart Nash  
Hon Jenny Salesa  
Hon Kris Faafoi  
Hon Tracey Martin  
Hon Willie Jackson (part item)  
Hon Aupito William Sio  
Hon Poto Williams  
Jan Logie, MP

**Hard-copy distribution:**

Minister of Education

**Officials present from:**

Office of the Prime Minister  
Officials Committee for SWC  
Office of the Chair of SWC



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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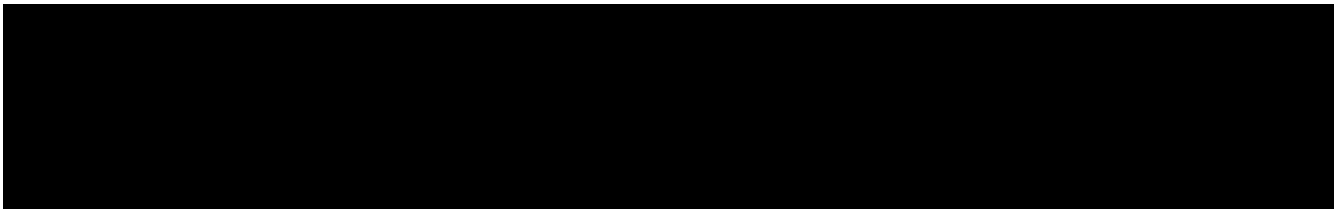
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### Report of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee: Period Ended 14 February 2020

On 17 February 2020, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee for the period ended 14 February 2020:

SWC-20-MIN-0001    **Implementation of a New, Strengthened NCEA**    CONFIRMED  
Portfolio: Education



Redactions made as content out of scope of Minister's portfolio responsibilities

Michael Webster  
Secretary of the Cabinet

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**Hard-copy distribution:**  
Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee