TR18.8993

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

RECEIVED
21 MAY 2018
BY: Office of Hon Hipkins

Education Report: Potential Changes to Fees-Free Policy for 2019

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	21 May 2018	**Priority:**	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	**METIS No:**	1122008
Drafter:	John MacCormick, Chief Policy Analyst, Tertiary Education	**Phone:**	s 9(2)(a) OIA
Key Contact:	Julie Keenan, Policy Director, Tertiary Education	**Phone:**	
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	**Round Robin:**	No

Purpose of Report

This report discusses potential changes to fees-free policy settings and implementation for 2019, some of which will require Cabinet decisions in July when you report back on progress implementing the fees-free policy. We recommend that you:

Agree that officials develop advice on a limited set of change options for fees-free policy settings for 2019, consulting sector experts and reporting back with recommendations for a report to Cabinet in July.

Agree that an amendment to section 235 of the Education Act 1989 be progressed in the current Education Legislation Bill to require PTE fee protection trustees to pay fee refunds directly to the TEC when fees-free students withdraw from their courses.

Agree to forward this report to Ministers overseeing the fees-free policy.

Proactively Released

Summary

This paper discusses potential changes to the fees-free tertiary education policy for 2019. We are seeking your feedback, and your agreement that we now work with the TEC (and other partner agencies) to consult sector experts and develop advice and recommendations for Ministers (where within the parameters of existing Cabinet policy decisions) or by Cabinet when the Minister of Education reports back to Cabinet in July.

We propose to explore options to change the current fees-free policy settings for 2019

- these options are for limited change within the basic architecture of the 2018 fees-free programme, but some are more significant and complex than others
- we propose to explore these options and report with recommendations in time for Cabinet consideration in July, and quick implementation after this
- the options we will explore reflect experience implementing fees-free for 2018, and feedback from stakeholders.

We propose an amendment to section 235 of the Education Act 1989, requiring PTE fee protection trustees to pay fee refunds directly to the TEC when fees-free students withdraw from their courses or a PTE ceases operating. This can be included in a Supplementary Order Paper to the current Education Legislation Bill.

Alongside this report, the TEC is reporting to you on implementation of fees-free tertiary education for 2018, and options the TEC is considering to improve the way fees-free is operationalised for 2019. These changes are within the policy settings agreed by Cabinet, including changes to improve students' experience, streamline administration, and manage risks identified during implementation.

Recommended Actions

We recommend that you:

Exploring a limited set of potential policy changes for 2019

a. **agree** that the Ministry of Education and the TEC, with other partner agencies as appropriate, develop policy change options for 2019 to address the following issues, for your consideration in June and referral as appropriate to Cabinet in July:

i. industry training:
- addressing equity issues for trainees in shorter industry training programmes,
- clarifying eligibility when trainees change training programmes, or combine work-based training and provider-based study

ii. options to improve equity of fees-free support for people undertaking academic preparation programmes before beginning higher qualifications

iii. introducing an EFTS-based cap on fees-free support in any year - the TEC's proposed approach to managing carry-forward balances from 2019 provides a framework for this

iv. setting the "half year" limit on prior study for fees-free eligibility slightly above 0.5 EFTS or 60 credits, to reduce the numbers declined eligibility because they have marginally exceeded the limit

v. other minor policy adjustments that are necessary to roll over the fees-free policy for 2019, or to address issues and risks identified in monitoring

Agree / Disagree

Proactively Released

b. **note** that the TEC is reporting to you separately with advice on planned operational changes for fees-free in 2019, including the proposed approach for provider-based students to "carry forward" unutilised fees-free entitlements, consistent with Cabinet's previous decisions on the fees-free policy

c. **note** that officials will consult a small group of sector experts on both policy and operational change options, and will report back with recommendations for you to consider, and to refer to Cabinet for information or to seek decisions, as appropriate

A law change to allow PTE fee protection trustees to pay fee refunds to the TEC

d. **agree** to propose an amendment to section 235 of the Education Act 1989, in a Supplementary Order Paper to the Education Legislation Bill, to require PTE fee protection trustees to pay fee refunds to the TEC if fees-free students withdraw from their courses within the refund period or PTEs cease operating

Discuss

Agree / Disagree

Referral to Ministers

e. **agree** to forward this report to the Minister of Finance, Minister for Revenue, Minister for Social Development, and Associate Minister for Education Hon Tracey Martin for their information

Agree / Disagree

Release

f. **agree not to proactively release** this report until after Cabinet has considered options for 2019 changes to the fees-free policy (a Cabinet paper is planned for July).

Release / Not release (recommended)

Julie Keenan
Policy Director
Graduate Achievement Vocations and Careers

21 May 2018

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

29/5/18.

Proactively Released

Background

1. In November 2017, Cabinet agreed details of the fees-free policy implemented from 1 January 2018. Cabinet noted that the 2018 design is an interim solution, and invited you to report back

   "once initial data on 2018 uptake is analysed in June, with short-term changes to fees-free tertiary education to improve delivery and manage any emerging risks, and to set a plan for medium-term changes to delivery from 2019" [CAB-17-MIN-0515].

2. In February we reported with a broad outline of our fees-free tertiary education work programme for this year. You agreed to the broad approach, with four streams of work (Metis 1106249):

   - "in-flight adjustments" as TEC continues 2018 implementation
   - building our monitoring, performance measurement and evaluation systems
   - fine tuning of the current fees-free model for 2019, such as:
     - how the "carry-forward" of unused fees-free entitlements will work for 2019 (high priority: learners/providers need to know this for decisions this year)
     - clarifying eligibility and coverage for fees-free industry training
     - addressing any perverse incentives/behaviours identified during 2018
     - streamlining eligibility determination and funding, and contractual processes for learners and providers for 2019, including enforcement of funding rules and information flows between agencies and providers, and
   - longer term design and implementation planning to develop a stable future fees-free policy and delivery model, in time to implement this with a second year of entitlement from 2021 and a third year from 2024.

3. On 9 May, we reported with further detail of the work programme currently underway (Metis 1120897).

4. We are now analysing tertiary education organisations' April data returns, and information on student loans in the first quarter of this year. This data will inform policy analysis of the policy change options described in this report, and may identify additional issues for attention.

Potential Changes to Fees-Free Policy Settings and Implementation for 2019

5. This paper focuses on potential changes to policy settings for fees-free in 2019. These are options for minor change to current policy, based on experience and stakeholder feedback from implementing fees-free this year, and design opportunities we have had time to explore in more depth since the policy launch for 2018.

6. We propose to develop and assess these options, drawing on data now available from 2018 implementation, and test them with a small group of sector experts, before reporting to you in June with recommendations that you can refer to Cabinet in July.

7. We also propose to seek an amendment to the Education Act 1989 to require PTE fee protection trustees to pay fee refunds to the TEC when fees-free students withdraw from their programmes or PTEs fail. This requires a Supplementary Order Paper to include this change in the Education Amendment Bill. We will prepare advice on this in time for any Cabinet decisions before referral to Cabinet Legislation Committee in early August.

Proactively Released

8. Complementing this report, the TEC is reporting to you shortly with an update on the performance of the interim 2018 systems for fees-free study, and planned operational changes for 2019 (B/18/00332). The Ministry and the TEC have collaborated on these two reports and we recommend that you read them together.

Potential changes to fees-free policy for 2019

We propose to explore a limited set of policy changes for 2019 and consult sector experts before bringing advice to you in June for Cabinet consideration in July

9. We seek your agreement that the Ministry of Education and the TEC, with other partner agencies as appropriate, develop the policy change options for 2019 described in this section.

10. These options are to address immediate presenting issues with the fees-free model as implemented for 2018, and pick up issues that could not be addressed in time for 2018 implementation. They involve minor changes to policy settings within the architecture of the current fees-free delivery model. Data is now becoming available that will help us to identify issues and design improvements.

11. We will provide advice for your consideration in June, so that Ministers overseeing the fees-free policy can take advice and recommendations to Cabinet in July.

12. We will assess options in terms of

- Consistency with Cabinet's policy intent and keeping options open for more substantial change as government moves to extend fees-free to two and three years
- Urgency: changes most needed for 2019 to address current issues and risks
- Operational practicality
- Managing any costs within current baselines
- Quality of learner experience, consistent treatment of learners, and maintaining public confidence in the stability of policy settings
- Risk and compliance burden for tertiary education organisations.

13. More options may become apparent as we work on them and consult with sector experts.

i) Fees-free industry training: options to address equity issues and clarify eligibility

14. You have indicated interest in considering alternative funding and fees-free eligibility approaches for industry training. We recommend exploring options for interim changes to fees-free industry training, as short-term improvements for 2019, with more significant changes to be considered following the findings of the VET review.

Industry training counts as prior study that can affect fees-free eligibility, but most industry training is in shorter programmes that are not eligible for fees-free funding.

15. Only industry training programmes of 120 credits or more are eligible for the 2-year fees-free support offered to apprentices and other industry trainees.

16. Shorter industry training programmes were excluded from fees-free support to:

- ensure that fees-free funding is targeted to substantial qualifications that help people progress to the next step in their career path

Proactively Released

- prevent industry trainees from using up their fees-free entitlements on short programmes they must undertake as part of their current job, and that generally should involve little or no direct cost to trainees.

17. However, in assessing learners' eligibility for fees-free support, all credits achieved through industry training at Level 3 or higher count towards the 60-credit limit on prior tertiary study. This aims for consistent treatment of prior study undertaken as provider-based or work-based tertiary education. However, it means that learners can lose eligibility for future fees-free study by participating in low-level and short courses that take their accumulated credits over the 60 credit prior study limit.

18. Industry Training Organisations and some employer and industry groups have highlighted cases where they consider this is unfair and may interfere with firms' and workers' training choices. Some ITOs report that it is discouraging trainees (and their families and employers) from participating in low-level industry training courses. Examples of this include young people (often with future higher education ambitions) currently working as pool lifeguards, or in the retail, fast-food or hospitality sectors, who may lose the opportunity for future fees-free provider-based study for a diploma or degree. ITOs and employers are facing an obligation to warn trainees that completing industry training courses may affect their future fees-free eligibility.

19. The Industry Training Federation wrote to you in February setting out the ITOs' concerns with this situation. They proposed that the issue can be resolved by not counting training that does not itself qualify for fees-free funding when assessing people's eligibility for fees-free support. In your reply you noted that this is one option officials are considering to address the issue.

We are exploring several options to address this issue, but each is complex

20. Table One below describes five options that may help to resolve this issue. Each option is complex and needs further analysis. Some raise implementation challenges such as availability of data; some have potentially significant fiscal implications; and some may affect future options for longer-term design of the fees-free policy.

21. We will work to identify practicable solutions for 2019, for advice to Cabinet in July, and consider the other options in future work alongside the findings of the VET review.

Table One: Options to address issues with fees-free eligibility and industry training

Options to explore	Comment
1. Don't count industry training credits toward the 60 credit prior study limit for fees-free eligibility, if the training itself would not qualify for funding.	As proposed by the ITF. Could resolve the immediate issue with people losing fees-free entitlements by undertaking industry training tied to their current job. Potential implementation difficulties are: - assessing historical credits (e.g.: credits gained in industry training but assessed and reported by ITPs) - some credits can be gained in both short and longer training programmes (so would sometimes qualify for fees-free support and sometimes not qualify).
2. Set an "expiry date" after which lower-level credits do not count toward the 60-credit limit on prior study for fees-free eligibility	This would increase access to fees-free study for people with older low-level qualifications, enabling more support for mid-career retraining. This would not address the immediate issues for people intending to begin a tertiary qualification soon after undertaking industry training in their current job.

Proactively Released

Options to explore	Comment
3. Don't count *any* prior level 3 credits toward the 60-credit limit for fees-free eligibility (unless a fees-free entitlement was used to pay for it).	This could considerably expand the number of people eligible for fees-free study. People could still opt to use their fees-free entitlements for level 3 programmes if they wish, but no other study at this level would not affect their future entitlement to fees-free support.
4. Drop the "*use it or lose it*" rule for fees-free support, (at least for level 3-4 courses).	This would shift the policy from support for people's first tertiary education and training, to a more lifelong learning focus where people can choose to bank their fees-free entitlement to help with their future education and training ambitions. This may reduce costs to government in the short run, but will increase per student costs over time as fees-free entitlements are used on higher-cost courses. This would require good advice for learners about when they should choose to use their fees-free entitlement – potentially from government agencies, schools, tertiary providers, ITOs and employers. However, compared to a use-it-or-lose-it model, no learner would be worse off.
5. Exclude level 3 programmes entirely from the fees-free policy.	Level 1-2 programmes are already free, but level 3 courses not covered by the fees-free policy would require students to pay, creating potential inequities.

We need to clarify eligibility limits for trainees who switch between industry training programmes or combine training with provider based study

22. If an industry trainee stays in their apprenticeship or other eligible training programme for at least two years as intended, this will fully consume their fees-free entitlement.

23. However, some trainees leave their programme before completing two years. They may switch to another industry training programme or enrol in provider-based study. Others may combine part-time provider-based study with a fees-free eligible industry training programme. Our policy design work in 2017 did not fully address this range of scenarios.

24. We propose to clarify that the $12,000 cap on fees-free support should apply across all tertiary education, including for industry trainees. The November Cabinet papers and the ministerial letter of delegation to the TEC for the fees-free programme did not make this clear, and a cap on industry training support was not implemented for 2018.

25. We are working to clarify "carry forward" entitlements for fees-free industry trainees who withdraw from their programme within 2 years. This is part of broader work needed to fully connect our systems for tracking and determining eligibility for fees-free support across provider-based study and industry training.

Proactively Released

ii) Students using their fees-free entitlements on academic bridging programmes, or in programmes that were already fees-free

We propose to explore whether the options for industry training above could also help to address equity concerns for students in academic bridging programmes

26. People cannot "bank" their fees-free entitlement and apply it instead to any future, higher level and higher cost study they plan to undertake.

    - This rule fits with Cabinet's policy intent that the 2018 fees-free policy would target learners' *first* tertiary education at level 3 or higher.

    - It was also necessary to ensure that the policy could be implemented from 1 January 2018. Enabling and tracking optional use of fees-free entitlements would be much more complex for learners, tertiary education organisations and government agencies.

27. This "no banking" rule has raised concerns from some providers of academic bridging programmes, and students enrolling in these programmes. They note that students required to complete academic preparation certificates before beginning a higher-level qualification may receive less financial benefit from the fees-free policy than people beginning their tertiary study with direct entry to a diploma or degree where fees are generally higher[1]. This is arguably inequitable, in that students from more disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to begin their tertiary studies in lower-level (and cheaper) programmes including academic preparation or bridging programmes.

28. We propose to explore whether some of the options listed in Table One above for industry training could also be applied to address these equity concerns for students beginning provider-based tertiary study in academic preparation programmes. We note, however, that "foundation" certificates preparing for degree level study are at NZQF level 4-5 – well above the level 1-2 "foundation" programmes that are currently free to all learners, outside the fees-free policy.

29. The extent of any financial disadvantage or inequity will diminish proportionately as fees-free coverage is extended to 2 and 3 years of tertiary education.

People in programmes that were already free get no extra entitlement under fees-free policy

30. People participating in level 3+ programmes where a zero fee policy already applied, such as Maori and Pasifika Trades Training (MPTT) and Refugee ESOL, do not receive additional entitlements to free tertiary study under the fees-free policy.

31. This reflects Cabinet's decision that fees-free is to target learners' *first* tertiary education at level 3 or higher, and that both fees-free coverage and the eligibility limit of a half-year of prior study applies to all tertiary education at level 3 and above. The immediate policy objective was to give all eligible first-time tertiary learners a year of fees-free study, not to further expand entitlements for some[2].

[1] For example, a student going directly into a university science degree may save over $7,000 in their first year, while a student who must first complete some Level 4-5 academic preparation courses may save considerably less (Auckland University's 120 credit Level 5 tertiary foundation certificate has fees of just over $700).

[2] In cases of extraordinary personal circumstances, the TEC has discretion to grant fees-free eligibility to people who do not meet all the eligibility criteria. This has been applied in some cases to refugees who have undertaken more than 60 credits of prior study, including Refugee ESOL to prepare for higher level tertiary study.

Proactively Released

32. We do not propose to change this approach for 2019, but we will continue to monitor the effect of the fees-free policy for students and providers of these programmes. We will also look at future funding options for the MPTT programme, to maximise the effectiveness of MPTT funding, and ensure equitable support for MPTT students and those undertaking the same courses funded by fees-free support and general SAC funding.

iii) Consider introducing an EFTS-based limit on fees-free study in any year

33. We propose to explore options for implementing an EFTS-based cap on individual students' fees-free support in any calendar year. Using data now becoming available on 2018 fees-free uptake, we will assess whether an EFTS-based cap is appropriate to manage risks, ensure equitable levels of support, and future-proof the policy.

34. Cabinet intended that fees-free support would be available for a first year of full-time tertiary study, or an equivalent amount of part-time, part year study or industry training. However, Ministers agreed not to apply an EFTS-based cap to students' fees-free eligibility in the first year.

35. Entitlements are instead limited at present by the $12,000 (incl GST) cap on fees-free support, and by the TEC's oversight of providers' performance to manage risks of students taking excessive course loads. This choice was made because of practical difficulties in monitoring students' course enrolments and withdrawals in real time, and managing their fees-free entitlements in real time.

36. The TEC has now developed an approach for managing the "carry-forward" entitlements of fees-free students who have claimed less than one EFTS of fees-free support in their first year of fees-free eligible study. This approach is described in the TEC's report "*Update on the performance of the interim 2018 systems for fees-free study and planned operational changes for 2019*" (B/18/00332). The TEC's proposed approach is consistent with Cabinet's previous decisions and the policy intent of the 2018 first year fees-free policy. We recommend that you agree that the TEC proceeds to test this approach with sector experts and to implement it for 2019.

37. This approach to managing carry-forwards offers a potential basis for implementing an EFTS-based (or credit-based) cap on students' fees-free entitlements in any calendar year, from 2019. This may be desirable to:

- ensure equitable fees-free support for full-time and part-time students,
- manage the potential risks and costs of students enrolling in excessive course loads, or of providers gaming enrolments to maximise fees-free coverage, and
- future-proof the policy for future years, when extending to a second and third year of coverage will bring more high-cost programmes (such as 2nd year medicine, dentistry and veterinary) into the scope of the fees-free programme.

38. We are yet to analyse the 2018 data now becoming available to assess how the absence of a "within-year" EFTS cap may have affected enrolments.

39. If students' total first year fees-free entitlement is to be capped, a cap set slightly above 1 EFTS (120 credits) would be preferable. This will avoid impacting students undertaking a genuine and manageable study load (including some programmes that require students to take more than 120 credits in a first year), or who for a variety of legitimate reasons switch courses during the year and so "consume" more than 1 EFTS. A cap set at around 1.25 EFTS (exceeded by about 2% of students) would accommodate this,

Proactively Released

while also reducing system complexity and associated costs for learners, TEOs and agencies.

iv) Moving the "half year" prior study limit to slightly above the current 0.5 EFTS limit

40. Cabinet agreed that to qualify for fees-free support, people must have previously undertaken no more than a half year of equivalent full-time study. The fees-free policy aims to support people undertaking their *first* tertiary education at level 3 and above, but the Government did not wish to exclude people who had a small amount of prior study (which may include bridging courses, summer school programmes, or short industry training programmes required for their jobs).

41. To implement the fees-free policy, a half year of equivalent full-time study has been defined as exactly 0.5 EFTS – which generally equates to 60 credits.

42. Our 2018 implementation experience is providing some evidence that this 0.5 EFTS cut-off is a minor "pain point" in the policy: a significant number of people have prior study only slightly exceeding this. In some cases, this is because a programme the student has previously undertaken has been designed to be just over 60 credits, to qualify for student support.

43. We propose to explore the costs and benefits of setting a slightly higher prior study cut-off for fees-free eligibility (e.g. up to 0.55 EFTS or 66 credits). This would see fewer people being ineligible for fees-free support because of prior tertiary study that is marginally over the eligibility threshold. An initial analysis of 2017 enrolment data suggest that this would see the number of people in the pool of potentially eligible fees-free students who just exceed the prior study limit reduce by almost half from 1,900 people to 1,100 people, using a maximum estimate.

v) Other minor policy adjustments necessary to roll over the fees-free policy for 2019, or to address issues and risks identified in monitoring

44. Other changes to consider for fees-free policy for 2019 include minor wording changes to the current Cabinet and ministerial policy documents:

- redefining the school leavers eligible for "fast track" confirmation of fees-free eligibility to include 2018 and 2019 school leavers
- clarifying when an ongoing school enrolment restricts students from claiming fees-free support for tertiary study – for example to allow "incidental" part-time school enrolments when a student undertaking a tertiary programme is seeking to complete a few outstanding NCEA credits
- revising ministerial funding determinations for the funds covering fees-free programmes: placing as much fees-free policy detail as is practicable in the Minister's letter of delegation for the fees-free programme, so minor changes can be made without ministerial funding determinations to be revised and re-issued.

45. Other fine-tuning opportunities may be identified from our ongoing monitoring and analysis of 2018 data. This may include, for example:

- cases where the TEC identifies undesirable, unintended behavioural changes by tertiary education providers, or

Proactively Released

- students claiming fees-free support as first-time tertiary students in *postgraduate* qualifications (a small number is expected, via recognition of prior learning and special admission, but any significant fees-free postgraduate enrolments would require investigation).

A legislative amendment requiring PTE fee protection trustees to pay refunds directly to the TEC for fees-free students

46. We propose to seek to include in the Education Legislation Bill an amendment to section 235 of the Education Act 1989, to require Private Training Establishments' fee protection trustees to pay fee refunds to the TEC if a fees-free student withdraws from a course within the refund period.

47. Section 234E of the Act requires that PTE student fees must be deposited with an independent trustee.

48. Section 235(2) controls the payment of refunds after student withdrawal or provider failure (Section 235C refers) and currently states:

> *If the student withdraws from a programme or training scheme within the refund period, the independent trustee must refund all payments made to it by the private training establishment in respect of the programme or scheme—*
>
> *(a) to the trustee of the student's new education provider; or*
>
> *(b) if the fee has been paid for by student loan money, to* [the Ministry of Social Development] *; or*
>
> *(c) to the student, if neither paragraph (a) nor (b) applies.*

49. This means that if the TEC structures its fees-free payments to providers as a fee payment paid by or on behalf of a fees-free student, the funds would have to be held by trustees, but would be repaid to the *student*, rather than to the TEC if the student withdraws from the course within the refund period or the provider fails. Such an arrangement would create opportunities for abuse of the fees-free policy by students. For this reason, the TEC has structured payments to providers under the fees-free policy so that payments to PTEs are not required to be deposited with trustees.

50. We consider that it would be more appropriate for fees-free payments to be treated as payments on behalf of the student, and that for PTEs, these funds should be deposited with independent trustees. This would also provide greater protection for taxpayers' funds, allowing the TEC to recover fees-free support payments or redirect them to students' new provider in the event of a PTE failure.

51. We propose to include in the current Education Amendment Bill a simple amendment to s235(2) that would require trustees to make refunds to the TEC in the case of fees-free students, in the same way that they make refunds to MSD in the case of fees paid by Student Loans.

52. A Supplementary Order Paper would be required to insert a clause to this effect in the Bill. This would likely require Cabinet policy agreement before drafting instructions could be issued to Parliamentary Counsel. This can be sought either in the fees-free report-back to Cabinet in July, or if necessary to meet parliamentary timelines, in a slightly earlier July Cabinet paper covering other proposed changes to the Bill.

Proactively Released

53. Further legislative change related to the longer term future design of the fees-free policy and related policy settings (such as regulating fees and refunds, and defining course/programme start dates and withdrawal dates) can be considered in future legislation work, including the current Education Act rewrite project.

Financial Implications

54. There are no financial implications from the decisions sought in this report. However, some of the 2019 change options we propose to explore will have financial implications (both costs and savings). These will be small relative to the scale of the programme, and are likely to be manageable within baselines, given observed rates of fees-free uptake in 2018.

55. Significant policy changes with cost implications will require joint approval from the Minister of Finance and Minister of Education (and other Ministers if appropriations they are responsible for are affected), or if not within joint Ministers' delegations, from Cabinet. These can be considered in the October baseline update.

Next Steps

56. Subject to your agreement, we will proceed to work with the TEC to explore the policy options outlined in this report, including limited consultation with a small group of sector experts advising the TEC on operational issues.

57. We will report back to ministers overseeing the fees-free policy in June with advice on options for you to take to Cabinet for information or for decisions as appropriate.

Proactive Release

58. We recommend that this report is not released until after Cabinet has considered options for 2019 changes to the fees-free policy. A Cabinet report is currently planned for July. This delay is to ensure that Ministers and officials can develop and consider a full range of options (including on any legal and budget matters) without causing undue uncertainty for learners, tertiary providers and the general public.

Proactively Released