Cabinet Paper material
Proactive release

Minister & portfolio  Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
Name of package    Changes to strengthen NCEA
Date considered     6 May 2019

These documents have been proactively released:
   Cabinet Paper: Changes to strengthen NCEA
   Date considered: 1 May 2019, Social Wellbeing Committee
   Author: Ministry of Education
   Document publicly available.

   Social Wellbeing Committee minute – SWC-19-MIN-0045
   Date considered: 1 May 2019
   Author: Cabinet Office

   Cabinet minute – CAB-19-MIN-0203
   Date considered: 1 May 2019
   Author: Cabinet Office

Material redacted
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.
Changes to Strengthen NCEA

Portfolio Education

On 1 May 2019, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC):

1 noted that National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is a fundamentally sound qualification, but that through the Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga and NCEA Review, the Minister of Education (the Minister) has identified opportunities to strengthen the qualification to better realise its potential;

2 noted that the changes proposed are intended to:
2.1 improve the structural coherence of NCEA assessment to more efficiently capture the key knowledge, skills and capabilities that students need to succeed;
2.2 reduce teacher and student workload;
2.3 promote culturally responsive, coherent teaching and learning;
2.4 improve the tools and support available to teachers and tertiary educators delivering NCEA-related learning;
2.5 improve the information and support available to students and whānau to enable more informed decision-making in relation to NCEA;

3 agreed to end all NCEA fees for domestic students, including for Scholarship, as funded in Budget 2019;

4 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, which the Minister intends to present to SWC in December 2019;

5 agreed in principle, subject to the report-back in paragraph 4, to make NCEA more accessible by:
5.1 ensuring achievement standards are accessible by design, so students are not unfairly impeded by disability or additional learning support needs;
5.2 identifying existing Special Assessment Conditions that can be reasonably extended to all students – such as additional time or large-text papers;
5.3 for other forms of Special Assessment Conditions, simplifying the application and evaluation process where possible to facilitate access;

6 agreed in principle, subject to the report back in paragraph 4, to retain NCEA Level 1 as an optional level;

7 agreed in principle, subject to the report back in paragraph 4, to make NCEA’s literacy and numeracy requirements more robust by:

7.1 replacing NCEA’s current literacy and numeracy requirements with a more consistent and robust benchmark that can be assessed against when students are ready;

7.2 developing tools for teachers and tertiary educators to make consistent, reliable judgments about literacy and numeracy, such as exemplars and digital tests;

7.3 developing new standards, which are externally graded, as a co-requisite to assess the benchmark in paragraph 7.1;

8 agreed in principle, subject to the report back in paragraph 4, to simplify NCEA’s structure to clarify workload expectations by:

8.1 removing the ‘carry over’ credits and make each Level of NCEA a 60 credit qualification;

8.2 clarifying the expected number of credits that a student should enter each year;

8.3 restricting resubmissions (further attempts at an assessment without a new assessment task) to increasing a Not Achieved grade to an Achieved grade only;

9 agreed in principle, subject to the report back in paragraph 4, to refocus on fewer, larger standards within coherent courses by:

9.1 rebuilding the achievement standards towards fewer, larger standards that reflect the National Curriculum, particularly the most important content in each Learning Area, Wāhanga Ako or subject;

9.2 strengthening industry-derived standards to support high-quality packages of vocational education and training within NCEA, including closer alignment with the National Curriculum;

9.3 expanding course endorsements to include “Achieved” grades and requiring registered courses to include a brief course description;

10 agreed in principle, subject to the report back in paragraph 4, to ensure parity of mātauranga Māori in NCEA by:

10.1 integrating mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori explicitly into the outcome statements for NCEA, and into the design of assessment standards;

10.2 ensuring parity of support for ākonga Māori in all settings, and for Māori medium NCEAs;
agreed in principle, subject to the report back in paragraph 4, to signal clearer pathways to further education and employment by:

11.1 drafting a graduate profile for NCEA Levels 2 and 3 that balances offering a broad and holistic education with opportunities to specialise for all young people;

11.2 investigating developing a Vocational Entrance Award, to enable direct entry into higher-level vocational education and training;

11.3 rebuilding the Record of Achievement to emphasise clear, summary information;

noted that the Minister’s report-back to SWC by December 2019 will include full information on the potential impacts of change, including financial implications, following detailed design work and testing implementation implications;

noted that, subject to Cabinet’s approval of a final package of changes, implementation could occur alongside the scheduled review of achievement standards, with changes phasing-in between 2020 and 2024.

On 6 May 2019, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee for the period ended 3 May 2019:

SWC-19-MIN-0045  Changes to Strengthen NCEA  CONFIRMED
Portfolio: Education

Redactions made as content out of scope of Minister's portfolio responsibility
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Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

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Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee