



NCEA Change Package and Pacific communities

What's happened so far?

Mālō e lelei, Bula Vinaka, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Fakatalofa atu, Kia orana, Mālō nī, Talofa lava, Tēnā koutou katoa

Last year, we asked New Zealanders to share their views and experiences of NCEA – the challenges, the successes, and what we can do better. We wanted to make sure that everyone's voice was heard, especially the perspectives of communities and groups who have not been served well by the education system.

We engaged with Pacific students, parents, families, teachers and communities across New Zealand as well as in Niue and the Cook Islands. Our engagements included focus groups, interviews, radio campaigns, workshops, fono and talanoa.

Kōrero

Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou

What we heard from Pacific communities

Pacific communities shared that they saw NCEA as a strong and valuable qualification. In most cases, NCEA helps young people to get a good education and sets them up for further study or employment after school. However we also heard that for many Pacific students, this is not always the case.

Wellbeing was highlighted as extremely important for Pacific communities and their view of 'wellbeing' often included physical and emotional safety, as well as cultural safety. A lot of Pacific students shared examples of racist and biased practices during NCEA, which made it harder for them to experience quality learning and pursue meaningful pathways. These practices also negatively impacted their wellbeing.

Parents and caregivers want to be able to support their children to make good choices about their education and future, but at the moment this may not be happening as well as it could be. Many Pacific parents and caregivers shared that they found NCEA confusing and were not always sure what their child is or should be doing.

We also heard that many students felt increasingly stressed with the amount of assessment they were doing throughout the year, and in some cases this was affecting their family and life at home.

Pacific communities value the flexibility of NCEA but identified that some schools and providers do not necessarily use the flexibility of NCEA effectively to provide relevant opportunities, content and contexts for students learning. We heard that some teachers had lower expectations for ākonga Māori and Pacific students and didn't put the same effort into supporting them to do well in NCEA.

Some families struggle to pay the fees for NCEA, and others found that NCEA isn't inclusive of their languages, cultures, identities, disabilities, genders, or sexualities.

As well as talking to schools, and family and whānau, we also asked employers and tertiary educators how we could strengthen NCEA. They told us that they feel some students are leaving school without the levels of literacy and numeracy needed to succeed in further education and work.

Where do we go to from here?

The feedback we received from our Pacific communities was invaluable and we are sincerely grateful to all the Pacific parents, teachers, young people and communities who shared their experiences and ideas of how we can strengthen NCEA.

On Monday 13 May, the Minister of Education announced seven changes to NCEA to make it more robust, consistent, inclusive and accessible for all learners. The feedback we received last year is at the heart of the changes, and we are confident that each of them is well-supported by what we heard about peoples' experiences with NCEA.

We heard a lot of difference perspectives which highlighted specific issues faced by Pacific communities within the wider education system that often fell outside the scope of the NCEA Review. Whilst the seven changes focus on how NCEA can be improved to address the relevant issues and barriers learners face within NCEA, we are working across the Ministry to respond to the broader issues identified by Pacific communities

What are the seven changes to NCEA?

1. Make NCEA more accessible

“Change the NCEA fees ... [make it] free.”

— Pacific Youth, Focus Group

- ▶ Families will no longer have to pay fees in order for their children to receive their NCEA.
- ▶ The removal of fees for NCEA as well as Scholarship subjects also means that many students who may not have previously considered this as an option, will now be able to access these Scholarship subjects. This will encourage all students, including more Pacific students into different pathways.
- ▶ We will simplify the application and evaluation process for SAC (Special Assessment Conditions) so that students with disabilities or learning support needs will have better access to the support that they need.
- ▶ There will also be more resources and support for students who have a disability or learning support needs. Where possible, we will make some existing SACs such as large-text papers available for anyone.
- ▶ We are also going to make learning and assessments in NCEA more inclusive of Pacific knowledges, languages, cultures and identities where appropriate.

2. Mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori (Equal status for mātauranga Māori in NCEA)

“There is flexibility in New Zealand curriculum and NCEA are good and allow for creativity and flexibility but NCEA demands stop us from teaching and learning about culture.”

— Pacific fono, Christchurch

- ▶ Mātauranga Māori in NCEA will be valued equally, meaning greater opportunity for Māori students to experience success as Māori. This will be done by creating more quality assessment resources and teaching and learning guides for Māori education, new mātauranga Māori achievement standards that are recognised by NCEA, and greater teacher capability around Mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori.

3. Strengthen literacy and numeracy requirements

“NCEA English has not prepared us enough for university English/ literacy.”

— Pacific Youth, Pacific Fono

- ▶ We heard that for some students, they were graduating with a level 2 NCEA but did not necessarily have the literacy levels they need to succeed in life, work and study after school.
- ▶ Because there are over 700 standards that assess literacy and numeracy, it can be confusing for students, their parents, families and teachers to determine where students can best learn and build their literacy and numeracy capabilities.
- ▶ This change will design new standards for literacy and numeracy which will be available from year 7. Students will be able to do these standard whenever they are ready.
- ▶ This learning is required in order to achieve any NCEA. It will be marked by external markers, not by the student's teacher.

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4. Have fewer, larger standards

“Every single one of my friends who were encouraged not to take NCEA subjects left school and ended up taking NCEA accredited courses so they could gain entry to tertiary level study. Not only did my school have no faith and very low / no expectations of Pasifika, they were very careful of who they would let take these subjects in case they would fail the exams. Out of the 10 that were chosen to take NCEA subjects, every single one of us girls passed NCEA Levels 1, 2, 3. The following year our school boasted of having the highest Pasifika and Māori pass rates in [the ... region].”

— Pacific Tertiary Student, Quick Survey

- ▷ We heard very strongly that the delivery of NCEA and the choice of standards used, often limited the opportunities for Pacific students to engage in a variety of learning and therefore limited students' pathways. The disproportionate streaming of Pacific students into lower level courses and away from more academically challenging standards is disadvantaging Pacific students.
- ▷ This change means that there will be fewer achievement standards for each subject but they will cover a broader range of knowledge, skills and capabilities. This will help students learn the key things they need in order to set them up for success, instead of choosing smaller disconnected standards just to get the credits.
- ▷ There will also be fewer assessments each year, which should help stress levels both at school and at home.
- ▷ We also heard from Pacific students that they do not see themselves reflected in what they are learning. Where appropriate, different sources of knowledge will also be reflected in the new achievement standards.
- ▷ Course endorsements will be expanded to include Achieved as well as Merit and Excellence grades.

“Give students the option of doing internals or externals - different ways suit different students.”

— Pacific Students, Focus Group

- ▷ All registered courses will need to have a course description explaining its focus, and how it might fit into the student's future pathway and overall learning. This will improve the coherence of courses and give employers and tertiary providers a clearer indication of what a student knows and can do.
- ▷ We're going to promote vocational education and training in NCEA so that it's seen as being just as important as traditional 'academic' learning.

5. Simplify NCEA's structure

“Tele aoga ma faiaoga e lē fautua lelei le fanau auā o mataupu e tatau na aveva mo le NCEA e maua ai tusi pasi e ulufale ai i le iunivesite, pe maua ai ni galuega lelei.”

“There are many schools and teachers who are not giving the children the right advice on subjects to study for NCEA, and how the qualifications lead to university entrance and employment.”

— Pacific NCEA Graduate, Submission

- ▷ Pacific communities highlighted that the complexity of NCEA presented major barriers to parents, families, and communities trying to support their children in their education.
- ▷ Students will only need 60 credits to pass any level and should not really be entering more than 120 credits for Levels 1 and 2, 100 for Level 3.
- ▷ Students will no longer need the 'carry-over' 20 credits from one level to the next. This will simplify how the qualification is structured and give clarity on what a student awarded each level of the qualification is able to do and know.
- ▷ We heard that for some teachers there was a lot of pressure to allow students multiple resubmissions which placed an extra workload on both teachers and students around assessment. We heard that some schools applied the rules around resubmission inconsistently e.g. some schools allowed multiple opportunities to resubmit while other schools did not allow multiple resubmission opportunities which is unfair.
- ▷ To help manage teacher and student workload and ensure a more equitable and fair NCEA, resubmissions will only be allowed where a minor error can be corrected to take a student from a 'Not Achieved' to 'Achieved'.

6. Show clearer pathways to further education and employment

“The whole system is too different from university, so transition is difficult. It does not work for Pacific peoples in the long term—the system allows for students to enter university but does not prepare them for the way the university system works.”

— Pacific NCEA Graduate, Submission

- ▷ For Students who are studying vocational education and training, we are going to set up a Vocational Entrance Award to show that they're ready to move onto higher-level vocational education training after NCEA.
- ▷ Achieving a Vocational Entrance Award will show that a student has done the necessary learning required by industry, employers and tertiary education organisations, and is ready for direct entry into higher-level vocational education training after NCEA.
- ▷ The Record of Achievement will be clearer in showing what students know and can do. It will include what they have achieved through NCEA, including certificate endorsements, course endorsements at Achieve, Merit and Excellence and a series of brief course descriptions.

7. Keep NCEA Level 1 as an optional level

- ▷ NCEA Level 1 will continue to be an optional level for schools who want to offer this qualification. Others would be free to adopt alternative approaches to Year 11, in a way that best meets the needs of their students.
- ▷ We heard that, for many students, Level 1 is a vital part of NCEA. It introduces them to the format of NCEA assessment and prepares them for their next step. Many school leaders wanted to keep Level 1 as it keeps their students motivated by giving them a goal to work towards.
- ▷ For around 10% of students, NCEA Level 1 will be their highest level qualification. Removing it as an option has the potential to disadvantage this group of students.

How will the changes to NCEA support Pacific Learners?

Some changes like removing fees for NCEA and NZ Scholarship will happen immediately. This year you will not have to pay fees, and schools will give refunds to those parents who have already made payments in 2019. This will mean families have more money in their pockets, and all children will have an equal chance to achieve a qualification.

Other changes will take more time, and won't impact students who are currently doing NCEA. These changes need to be designed and rolled out in schools over the next 5-6 years. As things are changing, all schools or wharekura will be supported and included along the way.

The changes will strengthen NCEA and education as a whole in New Zealand. They will help Pacific students and their parents and families to make more informed choices about what they should study, and what their next steps will be after school.

Student's workload will be more manageable, which will be good for their mental health. There will be fewer assessments each year, which means teachers will get more time to teach, and students more time to learn.

These changes will mean that students, their parents, families and teachers can be confident in an NCEA, that it is a strong, credible qualification that equips students with the knowledge and skills they need for a successful life.

