



# Qualification system changes

## NCEA is being replaced

The secondary school qualifications system is being updated alongside changes to the senior curriculum so that every student has the opportunity to learn core knowledge and skills giving them a strong foundation in each subject area they study.

These changes mean students will benefit from a strengthened assessment system that is nationally consistent and internationally comparable, setting all students up for success, no matter what school they go to.

The new system aims to give every student a knowledge-rich learning programme, and a qualifications structure that aligns with what the curriculum expects them to know and do.

Ministry-led and industry-led learning will sit within a single qualification pathway. The new system will be clearer, fairer, and more consistent for students, teachers, parents, whānau and employers.

### How is the new qualification system being developed?

The new qualification system is being developed in two tranches:

- Tranche one – is the key **structural design** of the new qualifications as outlined below.
- Tranche two – includes further detail on the new qualifications for Years 12 and 13, focusing on qualification and assessment design.

## What are the key changes to the structure of the qualification system?

### 1. New qualifications

- NCEA Levels 1, 2, and 3 are being replaced.
- There will be new subject-based qualifications for Years 12 and 13.
- Assessment will shift from collecting individual standards to subject-based achievement, using a set of required assessments for each subject.
- Subjects will be either Ministry-led or industry-led, but both will be equally rigorous and contribute equally to the qualifications.

### 2. Introducing a new Foundational Award

- Reading, writing and mathematics in our daily lives are important life skills needed for all pathways – whether that be further education, training or employment.
- Introducing a new Foundational Award focused on literacy and numeracy, drawn from Year 11 English | Te Reo Rangatira and Mathematics | Pāngarau curricula.
- The Student Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Tool (SMART) will be available to monitor student progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 3-10. This will

help provide the student feedback on progress towards the Year 11 level needed for the Foundational Award.

- Students will also be able to use achievement in relevant Year 12 and 13 subjects (English and Mathematics) to meet the requirements for the Foundational Award, because this will be more than equivalent to Year 11 literacy and numeracy.

### **3. Year 11 becomes curriculum only**

- Deeper, curriculum-driven learning will be the focus in Year 11, preparing students to move into the new qualifications in Years 12-13.
- From 2028, all Year 11 students will be required to study English | Te Reo Rangatira and Mathematics | Pāngarau.
- Students will still choose other curriculum subjects as offered by the school.

### **4. One integrated pathway**

- Ministry-led and industry-led learning will sit within a single qualification pathway.
- Industry-led subjects will be developed with Industry Skills Boards and give students real, credible vocational options.

## **When will the new qualification system be introduced?**

The new qualifications system will be phased in from 2028.

- 2028: Foundational Award introduced.
- 2029: New Year 12 qualification starts.
- 2030: New Year 13 qualification starts.

The first students to participate in the new qualification system are the current Year 9 cohort. No student will need to switch between NCEA and the new qualifications system during their schooling.

## **How will leaders and teachers be supported to prepare for the new qualification system?**

Between now and 2028 the Ministry of Education will be designing implementation support. We'll be working closely with kaiako and leaders, including using our Networks of Expertise and Curriculum Advisory Service to provide schools and kura with on-the-ground support and strengthened subject matter expertise.

This includes guidance and other resources that help teachers and leaders understand what the final changes mean for them and their students, so they can be confidently implemented.

## **What are the next steps?**

Detailed design of assessment criteria for the new qualifications in Years 12 and 13 is in progress and further information will be available in the coming months. The Ministry will be engaging the sector and technical experts to work through this.

In addition, the Ministry will be consulting on the detailed draft curriculum for Year 11-13 in three tranches starting in May, then June and July. The refreshed curriculum will align with the new qualifications. A list of senior secondary subjects can be found here for the New Zealand Curriculum and here for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.