
Briefing: Enrolment-based Measure of NCEA and University Entrance Attainment

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
From:	Dr Karen Poutasi, Chief Executive, NZQA Dr Craig Jones, Deputy Secretary Evidence, Data and Knowledge, Ministry of Education
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Reference:	CR 17807

Purpose

1. This briefing is to advise you of the outcome of the consultation with schools on the new enrolment-based measure of NCEA and University Entrance (UE) attainment, and the next steps.
2. NZQA proposes to proactively release this briefing as part of the next publication of documents.

Background

3. A new NCEA and UE enrolment-based measure of attainment (“the measure”) has been developed [CR17158 refers; joint NZQA Ministry briefing]. This measure is for use by the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for public reporting, and by schools for planning and evaluation purposes. The measure will replace NZQA’s current roll-based and participation-based measures of NCEA and UE attainment.
4. The measure is an improvement on existing measures of NCEA attainment currently published by NZQA. It involves matching National Student Numbers (NSNs) across NZQA and Ministry data systems to create a more complete student population for the purposes of deriving NCEA and University Entrance attainment rates. The measure provides a more precise view of secondary schooling attainment. It is based on a total count of domestic students on a school’s roll in a given year, including students who leave early in the year.
5. The new measure was introduced to the sector and schools in late June 2018, and schools were consulted on how school-level attainment is to be reported [METIS 1127163 refers]. Specifically, schools were asked about how long students should be attending a school before they were counted in that school’s statistics (the proposed time was 70 days). Schools were also asked about the usability of the new reports accessible to schools via NZQA’s secure extranet, and for any other feedback.

6. The implementation date for the measure is January 2019, when the first reporting on 2018 NCEA and UE attainment is provided to schools.

Outcome of Consultation

Engagement

7. The consultation period ran from 28 June to 9 August 2018. Feedback was sought via an online survey. In addition, NZQA and the Ministry received feedback about the new measure at a range of meetings held with Peak Bodies and Principals, and through contact between schools and their NZQA School Relationship Managers. A total of 25 responses were received from schools via the online survey. A further 20 emails were received questioning aspects of the measure. The response and engagement to date from schools has been more limited than anticipated. However, we expect further questions from schools about the measure over the coming months, and when the 2018 statistics are released from January 2019, from schools and from the media. NZQA and the Ministry have the appropriate support in place to respond to these.
8. Information on the new measure was provided to the media. There was very limited reporting of the change at the time but we are expecting more when the 2018 statistics are released.

Key themes from the consultation

9. There were a number of key themes arising from the feedback received. These are described below:

Having a single measure and retiring the participation-based¹ measure of attainment – this was generally positively received and there is agreement that it is confusing to have two measures. However some schools commented that participation-based reporting when used appropriately can give a truer measure of what a school has accomplished for those students who are on an NCEA pathway. For example, participation-based reporting would not include students who leave school partway through the year to enrol in a tertiary course or an apprenticeship. These students are regarded as ‘not achieving’ under enrolment-based reporting.

Some schools that offer non-NCEA qualifications also raised concerns about the difficulty in comparing their schools’ NCEA attainment with that of schools that only offer NCEA if the participation-based measure is no longer published.²

70 day attendance rule for inclusion of students in a school’s statistics – there was broad support for the principle of only including students in a school’s statistics after they are enrolled at the school for a defined period of time.

Feedback from schools was mixed on whether 70 days was long enough to engage students in their learning. Some schools commented that a longer period would be more reasonable, and suggested 90 days or two terms.

Inclusion of students in school statistics who are not following typical NCEA attainment pathways – there was strong feedback from the survey and from interactions with schools against the inclusion of students who are not following typical NCEA attainment pathways. Some schools noted that the measure should recognise that many

¹ The participation-based measure of NCEA attainment is a measure of the proportion of students attaining an NCEA qualification divided by those students entered for sufficient credits to attain the qualification.

² Note that the Ministry’s School Leaver measure of NCEA attainment includes non-NCEA qualifications.

schools enrol and support these students. This includes alternative education, activity centres, health units, teen parent unit (TPU) students, transient students, and ORS³ funded students. Principals also raised concerns about the way school NCEA attainment figures are published in the media without context and explanation for why attainment rates may be different between schools.

Presentation of data in the new reports – there was positive feedback from most respondents about the way the school and student level data are presented and made accessible via the interactive reports NZQA has produced for schools, with most agreeing or strongly agreeing that the reports were easy to navigate and use, presented the data transparently and allowed schools to access the information they needed for their reporting requirements.

Consultation response

10. NZQA and the Ministry have carefully considered the feedback received. The consultation response will cover the points below.

The 70 day rule will be implemented

11. When reporting national statistics, all students who are enrolled for more than one day are included. The 70 day attendance rule for inclusion of students in a school's statistics was the focus of the consultation with schools. 70 days was selected because it is roughly equivalent to one term which, NZQA and the Ministry consider a fair and reasonable time period for inclusion in the statistics. It also aligns with the Ministry's School Leaver measure.

12. Schools strongly supported only including students in a school's statistics after they are enrolled at the school for a defined period of time. Feedback was mixed about the length of time being 70 days.

13. We recognise that there are schools who experience considerable fluctuation in their rolls due to transience. Their attainment rates are significantly affected under the new measure because there are large differences between their roll as at 1 July, and their roll taken over the whole year, even with the 70 day rule applied. These schools provided strong feedback that 70 days was too short a time period. One option could be to extend the time to 90 days, or two terms. On balance however, the feedback received did not provide a sufficiently strong steer to apply a longer time period for exclusion from a school's statistics than 70 days.

Communications when school-level attainment statistics are released publicly

14. redacted s9(2)(f)(iv)

15. NZQA will also work with the Ministry to identify schools that offer non-NZQF educational qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate, Cambridge or Accelerated Christian Education in addition to NCEA, and ensure these schools are identified in any attainment data released with a note that the NCEA and UE attainment presented does not reflect the total educational attainment of the school and its students.

³ The Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) provides support for students with the highest level of need for special education to join in and learn alongside other students at school.

16. NZQA and the Ministry do not condone any form of league tables comparing schools.

Teen Parent Unit (TPU) students will not be included in the host school's statistics

17. Host schools raised concerns about the inclusion of TPU students on the basis that they take enrolments from across their region. While they are not schools in their own right, TPUs have their own unique identifier in our systems and can be separately identified. This prompted us to revisit the decision to include these students in their host school's statistics. TPU students will no longer be included in their host school's statistics and will be treated as a separate school for this statistical purpose. Host schools with attached TPU units will be able to report separately on the attainment of TPU students. This is consistent with the Ministry's approach with the School Leaver's measure.

Students on non-NCEA pathways will continue to be included in their enrolling school's statistics

18. This was the most challenging aspect of the engagement with schools because we recognise that attainment statistics do not necessarily reflect the contribution schools make to student achievement. Measures of attainment are an important indicator of whether students have access to the full array of options available to them after they leave school. Attainment statistics, however, only tell part of the achievement story because they tend to be more reflective of the characteristics of the students who schools enrol than the performance of the school per se.

19. The Ministry has been very clear in its communication to schools that we need to develop better measures of the value schools add to student achievement to help them plan and report to their communities. This was universally well received by the groups of principals we talked with and there was a call for this work to start immediately. To do this, the Ministry would require more granular data on the progress students make through the curriculum. This is being discussed by the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement Ministerial Advisory Group.

20. While we recognise the limitations of attainment measures, there will be no change to the inclusion of students on non-NCEA pathways in the calculation of the enrolling school's attainment statistics. The measure is an inclusive one, which captures all enrolled students.

21. To take Alternative Education as an example, the Ministry's Alternative Education policy is that enrolling schools (the students' originating schools) are accountable for the achievement of their students attending alternative education. This strengthens accountability and incentivises all schools to retain accountability for their at-risk students. The principle behind this policy is that it is the enrolling school's choice to refer their students to Alternative Education and these students may at some point return to their original school (unlike teen parent unit students).

22. The Ministry is working with Associate Minister Martin on education provision for at-risk students, including Alternative Education, Activity Centres and Teen Parent Units. redacted s9(2)(f)(iv).

Schools can customise their reporting

23. The reports have been built in such a way that schools can customise their reporting for their boards and communities through the application of a variety of filters to include or exclude student populations, e.g. international students, and alternative education students. In the student lists schools have access to, schools can filter for only those students who are entered for sufficient credits to attain an NCEA qualification.

Next steps

24. Schools will be briefed in mid-September about the outcome of the consultation process and the changes that will be made to the measure. Peak Bodies will be briefed in advance of this.
25. Changes to the reports reflecting the outcome of the consultation process will be made available to schools by the end of the first week of October 2018.
26. Schools will continue to have access to both the current reports (which use the participation and roll-based measures) and the new reports until the end of 2018. When the first release of the 2018 attainment statistics is made available to schools in January 2019, the roll-based and participation-based reports will be removed.



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31/08/18



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