

NCEA COVID-19 BCP 2021 Planning

Date:	12 May 2021	NZQA Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In confidence	Report No.	CR22210

	Action Sought	Deadline
Minister of Education	a. agree that the proposed decision steps should be adopted as a framework for approaching future COVID disruptions.	n/a

Enclosure/Appendix: No

Round Robin Yes

Contact for Telephone Discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone	Cellphone	1 st Contact
Andrea Gray	NZQA DCE Assessment	(04) 463 4264	[REDACTED]	√

The following departments/agencies have seen this report:

Ministry of Education Tertiary Education Commission Other (specify)

Minister's Office to Complete:

Noted Seen Approved

Needs change Withdrawn Overtaken by Events

See Minister's comments Declined

Referred to:

Comments:

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NCEA COVID-19 BCP 2021 Planning

Recommended Action

It is recommended you:

- b. **agree** that the proposed decision steps should be adopted as a framework for approaching future COVID disruptions.

AGREE/DISAGREE

Proactive Release Recommendation

It is recommended that you

- c. **agree/disagree** that this report is not proactively released as part of the next publication of documents due to the matters being under consideration.

AGREE/DISAGREE



Dr Grant Klinkum
NZQA Chief Executive

12 May 2021



Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary Early Learning and
Student Achievement
Ministry of Education

12 May 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

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NCEA COVID-19 BCP 2021 Planning

Purpose of Report

1. NZQA has undertaken further consideration of potential responses to future disruptions arising from COVID-19 [CR 21879 refers]. This briefing presents this further thinking.
2. This briefing outlines the decision steps of the approach that may be required to manage the impact of COVID-19 on learner achievement in 2021, following further discussion with your NCEA Professional Advisory Group.

Background

2020 COVID-19 mitigations for NCEA and University Entrance

3. The 2020 COVID-19 mitigations¹ for NCEA and University Entrance (UE) were designed to support students to engage and progress with their assessed learning whilst maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualification.

Changes to NCEA:

- i. One (1) extra Learning Recognition Credit (LRC) was given for every five (5) credits achieved, up to a maximum of 10 LRCs for Level 1, or up to a maximum of 8 LRCs for Levels 2 and 3.
- ii. For Auckland, one (1) extra LRC for every 4 credits achieved, up to a maximum of 16 LRCs for Level 1, or 12 LRCs for Levels 2 and 3.

Change to University Entrance

- iii. Only 12 credits in each of three approved UE-approved subjects were required, reduced from the usual 14. (The NCEA Level 3 and literacy and numeracy requirement remained to be awarded University Entrance.)

4 March 2021 NCEA Professional Advisory Group (PAG) meeting

4. On 4 March, NZQA and the Ministry of Education met with your NCEA PAG to discuss a suggested approach to COVID 19 disruptions in 2021, in light of provisional figures from the 2020 response and the disruptions to Auckland that were ongoing at the time. PAG endorsed the suggested approach, which was relayed to you in the related briefing [CR21879 refers].
5. That briefing proposed the following approach in the event of a future outbreak:
 - i. Given the resiliency demonstrated by schools, and taking into account the greater level of preparedness in 2021 compared with 2020, we advised that even a large outbreak and subsequent lockdown would require increased caution in providing broad interventions.
 - ii. NCEA's inherent flexibility would be the first line of defence, supported where required, by MoE learning resources and NZQA assessment resources and advice.

¹ These included introduction of Learning Recognition Credits and changes to NCEA and UE.

- iii. If required, further changes can be made, such as extending portfolio submission dates, and further adjustments to credit requirements and the award of UE, and reducing national external moderation requirements implemented as a last resort.
 - iv. The threshold for interventions in paragraph 3 could be equivalent to 2020, but the specific interventions would be adjusted to account for resilience in the system and our increased understanding of their specific impact.
6. NZQA agreed to the following next steps:
- i. NZQA would commence work on refreshing the interventions that support distance teaching, learning and assessment, namely the subject matrices and assessment evidence gathering templates, along with their other resources and information.
 - ii. The ongoing Auckland disruptions would require no immediate intervention.
 - iii. NZQA and MoE would continue to work with the PAG and other key sector stakeholders to co-create a proposed response for your consideration to any ongoing COVID-19 disruptions.
 - iv. NZQA and MoE would consider a high-level communication with the sector to outline our current proposed response.
 - v. NZQA and MoE would provide you with a follow-up briefing with joint advice following another meeting with the PAG in late-March.

Data analysis of the impact of potential COVID 19 interventions

Commentary

7. In 2020 attainment increased across all NCEA levels and UE. The LRCs and changes to UE gave confidence to students and the sector and ensured learners could continue on their pathways [CR22173 refers].
8. NZQA modelling showed that the effect of no intervention would have been significant decreases in attainment across all NCEA levels and UE in 2020 [CR 21879 refers].
9. NZQA has modelled the impact on attainment of a reduced mitigation on the 2020 cohort:
 - i. halving the maximum number of LRCs given for both Auckland, and the rest of New Zealand.
 - ii. for UE, applying a 14/12/12 credits in three approved subjects rule.
10. The modelling shows that NCEA and UE attainment levels with a reduced mitigation would be similar to 2019 attainment. A comparison of this modelled response with actual attainment in 2020 is included as Annex 1.

Options for 2021

2 April PAG Meeting

11. NZQA and the Ministry met again with the PAG on 2 April. The approach outlined below, as well as the modelled data, was provided to them for their consideration and comment.

12. PAG:

- i. confirmed that the broad approach used for the 2020 response worked well and was still applicable for 2021, albeit with potential adjustments to ensure the response is equitable and proportional to the disruption, as informed by the modelled data and engagement with the sector.
- ii. endorsed the proposed approach for 2021.
- iii. noted that COVID disruptions in 2021 could be of any scale and affect any group of schools.
- iv. noted that the unpredictable nature of such an outbreak makes it impractical to construct a detailed response in advance.
- v. advised to keep the response mechanism simple.

13. PAG also recommended that NZQA develop an appeal mechanism, with clear criteria, for specific learners affected by a COVID-19 disruption who may be eligible for an adjustment like those in an affected school or region, even though their school did not have to close. This would be like the arrangements made in 2020 by NZQA for some students outside Auckland who could also apply for the additional adjustments.

Assumptions and principles

14. The following assumptions and principles underpin any response:

- i. The first line of defence to COVID-19 interruptions remains the flexibility of NCEA as a qualification and the ability of schools to use that flexibility to adapt and change their teaching and learning programmes.
- ii. The current Assessment Evidence Gathering Templates and Subject Matrices remain available and relevant to support schools assess student achievement during future lockdowns.
- iii. Interventions must ensure equitable outcomes and the credibility of the qualification.

Decision Steps

15. If further interventions are required:

- i. the application of these would be based on factors such as what point in the year the disruption occurs, and how many schools are affected.
- ii. in calibrating the levels of LRC and other interventions, a starting point would be to take into account the increased system resilience.
- iii. NZQA and MoE would continue to work with the PAG, building on the discussion and consensus achieved to date, to provide final advice for you.
- iv. NZQA would also consult with the regional sector principals and other groups, given that a regional lockdown is the most likely scenario.

Next steps

16. NZQA will continue to work on supports for distance learning. Schools have already been contacted and encouraged to use 2020 resources such as the evidence gathering templates where appropriate.

17. If agreed to, NZQA will adopt the proposed decision steps as a guideline for future COVID-19 interventions.

Annex 1:

2019		2020 (with COVID mitigations applied) best estimate compared with 2019		2020 (without COVID mitigations applied) compared with 2019		2020 (modelled with COVID mitigations halved) compared with 2019	
National attainment		National attainment (percentage points)		National attainment (pp)		National attainment (pp)	
Level 1	70.6%	Level 1	+1.5	Level 1	-9.3	Level 1	-4.8
Level 2	77.5%	Level 2	+2.5	Level 2	-4.3	Level 2	-2.0
Level 3	67.3%	Level 3	+5	Level 3	-4.5	Level 3	-0.4
University Entrance	49.3%	University Entrance	+3.75	University Entrance	-8.2	University Entrance	+2.1
Level 3 attainment by ethnicity		Level 3 attainment by ethnicity		Level 3 attainment by ethnicity		Level 3 attainment by ethnicity	
Māori	55.1%	Māori	+6	Māori	-5.2	Māori	-0.3
European	70.8%	European	+4	European	-5.1	European	-1.5
Pacific	60.3%	Pacific	+9	Pacific	-5.4	Pacific	+2.0
Asian	71.3%	Asian	+6	Asian	-2.7	Asian	+1.1