

Reform of Vocational Education

What the Government's proposals mean for wānanga

Thank you for taking an interest in the Reform of Vocational Education. We want to hear your views on these proposals. The changes we propose are complex, and we need the detailed knowledge and the different perspectives of people across New Zealand to get them right.

This fact sheet is a companion document to the Reform of Vocational Education consultation discussion document, which is published here: <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/reform-of-vocational-education/>. It provides additional information on what the proposed reforms would mean for wānanga.

What should wānanga understand about the proposals?

We are committed to working in partnership with wānanga to determine how the proposals might be adopted by them and support their aspirations. We recognise the special role of wānanga as set out in the Education Act 1989 and given practical effect through their teaching and learning practices.

The Government wants to work with the wānanga to understand where the biggest opportunities for wānanga and their learners lie in these proposals, and what adaptations might be needed to reflect the unique role of wānanga in the system.

Why are changes being proposed?

At the heart of the Government's reform of vocational education is a goal to ensure that the needs of learners, employers and communities drive the system, to help us raise living standards for everyone in New Zealand. We want a system that truly delivers to the regions of New Zealand, and our proposals will help to ensure that there is greater availability of provision throughout New Zealand.

We need a vocational education system that delivers to the needs of all learners. The current system persistently under-serves some learner groups, including Māori. We need to ensure that Māori learners can access and succeed in a vocational education system that responds to their needs. Statistics New Zealand projects that the proportion of young people aged 15-24 who identify as Māori will increase from about one in five in 2018 to more than one in four by 2038.

A vision for NZ

A strong, unified vocational education system that is sustainable and fit for the future of work, delivering what learners, employers and communities need to be successful.

Have your say

The government is seeking feedback on the proposals for the Reform of Vocational Education by Wednesday 27 March 2019. The link above will also take you to our online survey where you can respond to the questions posed and more.

You can also provide feedback by attending a face-to-face consultation event. Details on these events are available at <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/reform-of-vocational-education/>

Key changes

- » Wānanga will have the opportunity to deliver vocational training in the workplace and the classroom, which will be supported by the creation of a unified vocational education funding system.
- » Wānanga could host 'Centres of Vocational Excellence'.
- » Industry skills bodies would set standards across all vocational education provision.

This Government has taken action to address various immediate issues with skills supply in New Zealand, such as through the Construction Skills Action Plan, and by investing funds to address financial viability issues in ITPs. This work is important, but more fundamental change is needed if our vocational education system is to meet New Zealand's long-term needs.

The Government can't continue tinkering at the edges, or adding more layers of complexity and "Band-Aid solutions" to an already complex system. These problems call for decisive action to safeguard New Zealand's skills pipeline and economic development for the future. These issues with our current system are holding New Zealand back, and some groups bear the costs much more than others. New Zealand deserves better.

Specifics of the proposals for wānanga

Education providers supporting workplace learning and assessment

The Government is proposing that providers would take on the role of supporting workplace learning and assessment that is currently done by industry training organisations (ITOs).

New "Industry Skills Bodies" would extend the leadership role of industry and employers across all vocational education, including provider-based vocational education. They would also provide industry with a purchase role across all vocational education, through advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), which TEC must give regard to.

Providers would be responsible for delivering and supporting all vocational education and training, whether it took place at a provider's facilities on campus or in a workplace. They would take responsibility for approximately 140,000 trainees and apprentices in addition to the approximately 110,000 vocational education learners they already serve (based on 2017 Ministry of Education figures). This would require increased capability and capacity.

Workplace learning would become part of the core business of vocational education providers, putting them in day-to-day contact with employers. Over time, programmes that integrate structured learning with the workplace would become the norm, making it easy for learners to transfer between providers and between on-job and off-job training throughout their programme of study. More vocational education could resemble apprenticeships, with education providers and employers working together to help a learner meet industry skill standards via a mix of work-based learning occurring in the course of doing a job, and structured learning supported by a provider off-job where needed – regardless of whether the learner is employed.

The changes set out above would require significant change processes for providers and ITOs. If these changes proceed, Government will need to provide support for the change processes to ensure they are smooth and effective, including supporting existing trainees and apprentices and their employers to easily shift training arrangements.

A single New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology with a robust regional network of provision

The Government proposes to create a new New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology, bringing together all 16 existing institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) to offer high-quality vocational education throughout New Zealand. The creation of a new institution will allow greater and faster improvements, compared to continuing with ad-hoc mergers of competing ITPs across New Zealand, as individual institutions run into financial difficulties.

A dedicated organisational charter in the legislation would set out the purpose and functions of the institution, including specific obligations to ensure it was responding to the needs and aspirations of regional New Zealand and of Māori as tangata whenua.

Each region would have a Regional Leadership Group to advise the Institute’s “national office” and the TEC on local skills, to link with local and regional development strategies, and to advise on what mix of courses should be offered in that region.

The “New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology” is a working name, and we are interested in your feedback on the name. The Government would like the New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology to be in operation from 1 January 2020. The process of transformation would be phased to ensure minimal disruption to learners.

Collaboration through Centres of Vocational Excellence

The Government envisages that the New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology, and perhaps also wānanga, would host Centres of Vocational Excellence focused on teaching and learning, and possibly applied research, in areas of study of particular importance to New Zealand.

Centres of Vocational Excellence would cover key sectors and industries, which could be broad (eg, agriculture) or specific (eg, viticulture). They could potentially also cover key types of educational delivery or activity, for example kaupapa Māori delivery.

We envision these would be located across the country, including in regional New Zealand.

Centres of Vocational Excellence would bring together a critical mass of knowledge and expertise in their areas, helping drive innovation and lift quality, and improve links to industries and communities.

A unified vocational education funding system

The proposed changes above would need to be supported by a new funding system. Creating one funding system for vocational education would ensure learners get the skills, experience and support they need to be successful, providers have the funding they need to be sustainable and to support our regions, and Industry Skills Bodies can fulfil their roles.

What are the potential impacts on wānanga?

The wānanga play a distinct role in the tertiary education system, including the vocational education system, and so are an important part of the conversation on the proposed reforms to vocational education. We are committed to working with the wānanga to determine how the proposals might apply to them.

Wānanga offer a wide range of education provision from foundation, vocational, degree through to postgraduate level. Much of the provision wānanga offer would not be in scope of the proposed changes, as the proposals only cover vocational provision.

There are opportunities in these proposals for wānanga to strengthen connections with employers and work-based vocational education, and to provide nationwide leadership in developing high-quality teaching and learning that meets the needs of Māori learners, their whānau, hapū, and iwi. Wānanga may wish to adopt, adapt and contribute to new national qualifications and vocational programmes so that they are appropriate and effective for the local and specific wānanga context.

What happens after I provide feedback?

We expect that many people will be interested in having a say on the future of vocational education in New Zealand. Everyone’s feedback is welcome. We’ll carefully consider what we’ve heard in engagement meetings, along with the feedback that is sent in to the survey, email address and phone line. The Minister and Cabinet will receive a summary of all the feedback and it will inform their decisions about the Reform of Vocational Education. You can expect to hear about these decisions around mid-2019. We’ll also continue to draw on feedback and ask for more conversations as we work through how to implement Government’s decisions.

Are you looking for more detail?

Technical discussion documents that go into greater detail on the specifics of the proposals are available at <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/reform-of-vocational-education/>. Questions on the details are available on the technical discussion documents and online when you indicate that you wish to provide specific feedback to the following topics:

- » Proposal on new roles for providers and industry bodies
- » Proposal on a new New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology
- » Proposal on a unified funding system