

Submission on the discussion document – Proposal to replace NCEA with new national qualifications

September 2025

MinEx

MinEx is the national health and safety council for the New Zealand extractive sector – the mining, tunnelling and quarrying industry. Our principal purpose is to help industry achieve its goal of being free from fatalities, injuries and diseases. MinEx is funded by the mining and quarry sectors – through the respective associations and a number of individual companies – with a mandate to:

1. be the main point of contact with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), WorkSafe New Zealand (WorkSafe) and other agencies on all extractive sector matters related to health and safety; and
2. through leadership and consultation develop an industry view on relevant legislation, regulations, guidelines and training matters, and work with MBIE, WorkSafe and other agencies to adopt and implement those views, as appropriate.

MinEx represents the following organisations on vocational education matters: the New Zealand Minerals Council, the Aggregate and Quarry Association, the Institute of Quarrying NZ, E tū, AusIMM, and many other mining, tunnelling and quarrying operators.

We make the following submissions in relation to the discussion document – [Proposal to replace NCEA with new national qualifications](#).

Key points

- We strongly support government working with industry to create new vocational education and training (VET) subjects for use in schools.
- Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) are the appropriate bodies to develop subjects that are connected to real post-school opportunities; however, they will need additional funding to carry out this work in consultation with industry.

General comments

Our sector covers mining, quarrying and tunnelling and with over 1,000 active work sites, we cover the length and breadth of New Zealand.

VET is highly valued by employers in our sector as it develops the skills necessary for employment, such as working as part of a team, reliability, as well as technical skills. We agree that VET subjects are an important part of the education system, offering students meaningful learning experiences that, in the long-term, lead to better employment outcomes. The changes proposed will provide clearer pathways for students who want to go on to further study or employment, so that they have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

PART 2: Proposals for change

Proposal 1: Working with industry to integrate Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects into the senior secondary qualifications.

It is critical that government work with industry to create VET subjects for use in schools, as industry groups understand the skills needed within their respective industries.

VET subjects should be made up of coherent sets of skill standards which can be delivered to students in partnership with tertiary providers, private training establishments (PTEs) and employers.

ISBs are the appropriate bodies to shape VET subjects that are connected to real post-school opportunities. They should have the flexibility to draw on existing content and standards or develop entirely new content for VET subjects, based on industry needs.

We agree that aligning VET subjects with industry qualifications means that students will be able to work towards achieving the new senior secondary qualifications while potentially also making a meaningful start on a tertiary qualification.

ISBs are currently not funded for this work so additional funding will be required to enable them to carry out this work in consultation with industry.

Proposal 2: Introducing a new Foundational Award and national senior secondary qualifications for years 12 and 13

We agree that replacing NCEA Level 1 with a Foundational Award in numeracy and literacy is a good way to help prepare students with the basic skills needed to successfully engage with learning in years 12 and 13.

We agree that the Award will provide potential employers with a sense of a school-leaver's knowledge in fundamental areas, including literacy and numeracy or te reo matatini and pāngarau.

Proposal 3: Shifting focus to a structured and subject approach and introducing required subjects in the curriculum

We agree that students focussing on subjects rather than standards will incentivise students and teachers to consider the learning that is needed for a student's chosen pathway post-school. External and internal assessments within a subject will provide potential employers and tertiary educators with a better sense of students' knowledge and skills in key learning areas.

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