

# Consultation on proposed changes to the “Language competency for teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand” policy

April 2024

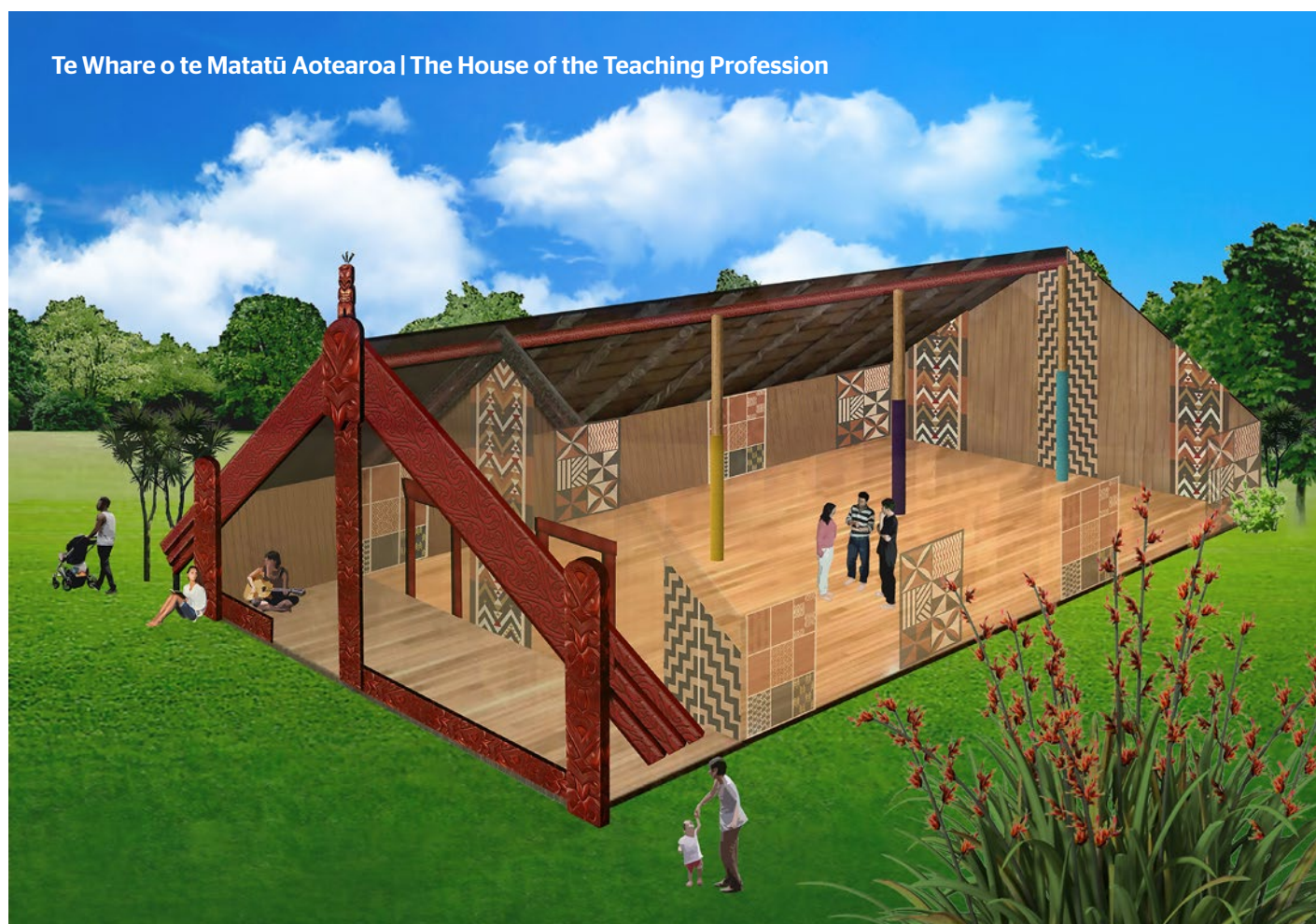


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# Background to this policy review

Since the implementation of the *Language Competency for Teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand* policy in 2019, the Teaching Council has continued to explore how it can best respond to a widespread call from Pacific communities, ākonga | learners and whānau | families, along with Pacific kaiako | teachers, for an education system that better reflects the diverse identities, languages, and cultures of the nations of the Pacific in the context of Aotearoa | New Zealand.

During this time, the Council has heard from Pacific kaiako | teachers that its English language requirement is set at a level that is above what a Pacific bilingual/immersion kaiako | teacher needs for their day-to-day interactions with ākonga | learners and whānau | families. This may create a barrier for applicants who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages<sup>1</sup> seeking to enter Initial Teacher Education or register as a teacher because the level is set at a post-graduate/doctorate level.

Pacific kaiako | teachers have also noted that a high level of competence in Pacific languages and culture is essential for bilingual and immersion settings to provide quality of teaching and learning and engage appropriately with whānau | families and communities. They have argued that the level of English language competency required for entry into ITE and for teacher registration is less appropriate for Pacific medium settings, because the primary medium of instruction is one or more indigenous Pacific languages.

The shortage of registered and certificated kaiako | teachers who are also proficient in one or more indigenous Pacific languages to a level where they can work in a Pacific bilingual or immersion setting also presents challenges for sustaining and growing Pacific languages in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We know from research about teaching and learning, (which has resulted in resources such as *Tapasā* and *Tātai Ako*), the importance of culture, identity, and language being visible to support ākonga | learners on their learning journey. Having a teaching workforce that can reflect the diversity of ākonga | learners is also a critical part of ensuring positive learning experiences and educational success for all. For Pacific ākonga | learners, having kaiako | teachers who can connect with them from their own lived experience provides a solid basis for good learning experiences and improved learning outcomes.

## What we want to achieve

The overall intent of our review of the language competency policy is to contribute to addressing the current problem of having insufficient numbers of Pacific kaiako | teachers who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages to support teaching in Pacific bilingual and immersion settings. We could do this by providing an alternative pathway for demonstrating language competency for applicants who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages, which supports Pacific medium teaching, but also means the kaiako | teacher can work in English medium settings.

Establishing alternative options for demonstrating language competency will also assist us in responding to future projections for our population profile, which predicts increased numbers of Pacific peoples, by reducing potential barriers to entering teaching for applicants who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages.

The proposed approach we would like your feedback on therefore responds to an immediate problem (insufficient numbers of kaiako | teachers who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages), as well as being future focused (providing pathways into teaching that may be more attractive for Pacific people). If implemented, these changes will mean we will be well-positioned to respond to needs in the future that are likely to arise from the changing demographics in this country.

1. Indigenous Pacific languages include: Te Gagana Tokelau, Vagahau Niue, Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Āirani, Gagana Samoa, Lea Faka Tonga, Te Gana Tuvalu, Fāeag Rotuam Ta, Vosa Vakaviti and Te Taetae ni Kiribati.

## How to have your say

The Council welcomes feedback from all kaiako | teachers, professional leaders, ITE providers, peak bodies, and other stakeholders, including members of the public, ECE, and kura or school communities, who may be interested in or potentially affected by the proposed policy changes. The deadline for feedback is **Friday 10 May 2024**.

You can submit your views on the proposals via a survey on our website. However, you can also make a written and/or oral submission.

If you wish to provide more detailed feedback rather than responding to the survey, please send written comments to [LangCompConsult2024@teachingcouncil.nz](mailto:LangCompConsult2024@teachingcouncil.nz)

## What we will do with your feedback

The Council will analyse and consider your feedback before making decisions on amendments to the policy.

An analysis of the submissions will be published. The Council is required to consider any request to release the submissions under the Official Information Act (OIA). Any submissions released under the OIA will be anonymised. You cannot veto the release of your submission under the OIA, but you can let us know if there are specific reasons why you would like your feedback to remain confidential, and we will consider those reasons before deciding on any OIA request that is received.

## Te Tiriti o Waitangi context

All the Council's work is underpinned by recognition of our partnership responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We have illustrated this using a whare metaphor, which includes a depiction of our Tiriti partnership relationship, using the tukutuku panels *Ngā Pātū o te Whare | the Wall of Identity*. Tagata o le Moana | Pacific Peoples have a specific place on *Ngā Pātū o te Whare | the Wall of Identity* as Tangata Tiriti, that acknowledges the relationship Tagata o le Moana had with Tangata Whenua prior to the first European contact into Aotearoa | New Zealand.

*Ngā Pātū o te Whare* reminds us of our responsibilities as Tiriti partners, and the accountability we have to all communities. This includes our responsibility to (amongst other things) support the protection and revitalisation of te reo Māori as a taonga for iwi, hapū and whānau and as a language integral to our national identity. It also provides space for us to respond to needs and aspirations of different communities as these are identified.



Our current focus on developing pathways to support Pacific bilingual and immersion teaching and learning speaks to this accountability under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In this instance, we are responding to a need identified by Pacific kaiako | teachers and Pacific communities, and are working to develop an approach that upholds and reflects priorities for Pacific communities and that aligns with the Council's own strategic objectives.

## How we developed the proposed approach

During 2023, the Council undertook its own internal policy analysis, supported by a cross-agency working group including representatives from the Ministry of Education, NZQA and Ministry of Pacific Peoples.

We discussed draft proposed policy approaches with the Council's Pacific Education Steerage Group (PESG) and sought approval from our Governing Council to share these with focus groups.

Following feedback from focus groups held in October and November, we made further amendments to the proposed approach, with advice and feedback from the PESG and colleagues in the joint working group.

We are grateful for these contributions and the support, advice and feedback provided during the development of the proposed approach.

## The proposed policy approach

English language requirements for entry into academic programmes in our tertiary education institutions are designed to ensure students have sufficient command of the language to navigate the complex demands of academic study in English. The English language requirements for general academic admission in most instances are set at the equivalent of IELTS level 6 (Refer to Appendix 1).

In Pacific medium ECE and schooling settings, kaiako | teachers need to be able to engage with ākonga | learners and colleagues using highly developed Pacific language skills. However, there is also a need to use English as a medium of communication – such as interactions with whānau | families where Pacific language fluency may not be present, and for professional interactions (such as with external agencies or the teaching profession more broadly).

Therefore, the approach we have proposed and are recommending seeks to achieve a balance between:

- a. recognising the value and contribution of indigenous Pacific languages, identities, and culture to our education system and teaching profession, and
- b. acknowledging the importance of having a good level of English language competence to undertake all aspects of teaching roles in both English and Pacific medium settings.

It is important to note that in most countries in the Pacific region schooling and tertiary studies are undertaken using English as the main medium of instruction or as part of a structured bilingual approach to teaching and learning. This means most applicants for ITE or those seeking teacher registration or an authority to teach who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages are also likely to have a good command of English.

## Recommendation 1: Introducing an indigenous Pacific languages pathway

**For entry into Initial Teacher Education:** Adding an indigenous Pacific language competency pathway, with:

- an evidence requirement for indigenous Pacific language competency, and
- no additional Teaching Council evidence requirement for English language competency.

While this framework is developed, the Council's English Language Competency requirement for entry into ITE could be amended for applicants who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages, so that it is set at the same level for general academic entry.

**Rationale:** Providing an indigenous Pacific language competency pathway for entry into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) sends a strong signal about the value of Pacific identities, languages, and culture. A new pathway would recognise the high level of competence in Pacific languages and culture that are needed for bilingual/immersion settings. The Council already has a similar pathway in place for speakers of te reo Māori.

Removing the Council's current English language competency requirement addresses concerns that the level of English language competence currently required is a barrier for recruiting speakers of Pacific languages into bilingual/immersion settings. The need for a good command of English for academic study is supported by the need to meet academic entry requirements for English.

**Other considerations:** While this pathway highlights the value of indigenous Pacific languages within our education system, all teaching in our tertiary education institutions, other than Māori Medium settings uses English as the medium of instruction. This means:

- all applicants for academic programmes still need to meet each institution's general academic entry requirements, including English language competency requirements.
- general academic entry requirements are set at a slightly lower level than the Council's current English language requirements - so an applicant will still need enough English language for academic study, even if they choose the indigenous Pacific language competency (PLC) pathway.
- developing criteria for demonstrating Pacific language competency may mean a delay in being able to implement this pathway.

It will also be important that any criteria for demonstrating Pacific language competency are robust and provide assurance of command of the language, but do not create barriers for entry into ITE.

**For teacher registration or an authority to teach:** Adding an indigenous Pacific language competency pathway for teacher registration or for issuing a Tūranga Whakaako Whai-herenga | Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) with:

- an evidence requirement for indigenous Pacific language competency and
- no evidence requirement for English language competency.

**Rationale:** Providing an indigenous Pacific language competency pathway for teacher registration or a LAT sends a strong signal about the value of Pacific identities, languages, and culture. A new pathway would recognise the high level of competence in Pacific languages and culture that are needed for bilingual/immersion settings. The Council already has a similar pathway in place for speakers of te reo Māori.

In addition, teacher registration applicants will already hold a teaching qualification at level seven, or above, which will likely have been taught with English as the medium of instruction. This means the applicant will have a good command of English for a teaching role.

To meet registration requirements, the applicant will also need:

- evidence they have completed one of the NZQA pre-approved teaching qualifications at level seven, or
- provide other evidence from an NZQA International Qualifications Assessment.

Currently in the Pacific region, there are two pre-approved teaching qualifications delivered by the University of the South Pacific (USP). The two USP teaching qualifications use English as the medium of instruction.

**Other considerations:** Developing criteria for demonstrating Pacific language competency may mean a delay in being able to implement this pathway.

It will also be important that any criteria for demonstrating Pacific language competency are robust and provide assurance of command of the language, but do not create barriers for teacher registration or issuing a LAT.

## Recommendation 2: Expanding English language evidence criteria

This change would apply to any applicant from the Pacific who is applying for entry into ITE, teacher registration, or a LAT, using the English language competency pathway.

**For entry into Initial Teacher Education (ITE):** Expand evidence for demonstrating English language competency to include:

- c. all primary and at least three years secondary schooling OR six years secondary schooling and at least two years tertiary education completed with English as the main medium of instruction while living in Tokelau, Niue, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Rotuma, Fiji or Kiribati.
- d. If the applicant is unable to provide these evidence options, the other options in the language competency policy would apply, including taking one of a range of available language tests.

**For teacher registration or a LAT:** Expand evidence for demonstrating English language competency to include:

- a. all primary and at least three years secondary schooling OR six years secondary schooling and at least two years tertiary education completed with English as the main medium of instruction while living in Tokelau, Niue, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Rotuma, Fiji or Kiribati.
- b. If the applicant is unable to provide these evidence options, the other options in the language competency policy would apply, including taking one of a range of available language tests.

**Rationale:** Most Pacific countries use English as the main medium of instruction or as part of a structured bilingual approach to teaching and learning. Therefore, it is appropriate for schooling and tertiary study to be included as evidence of English language competency for any applicant from the Pacific, where the evidence criteria noted above can be met. (Refer to Appendix 2 for information about medium of instruction in Pacific countries).

To meet teacher registration requirements, the applicant will also need:

- evidence they have completed one of the approved teaching qualifications from the USP - these programmes are taught using English as the medium of instruction, or
- another teaching qualification at level 7 or above, on the NZQA pre-approved teaching qualification list, or approved as comparable to a level 7 New Zealand ITE qualification.

**Other considerations:** The Council could undertake an attestation process with each Pacific country, to confirm English as the medium of instruction for schooling and tertiary.

## How would the new pathways work?

Scenario One:	Scenario Two:	Scenario Three:	Scenario Four:
ITE applicants choosing the PLC pathway needn't meet Teaching Council English language competency requirements but must meet their <b>tertiary education institution's general admission</b> requirements.	A teacher from the Pacific choosing the PLC pathway needn't meet Teaching Council English language competency requirements but must have a <b>level seven (or above) teaching qualification</b> (pre-approved USP qualifications are taught in English).	An ITE applicant schooled in the Pacific can provide evidence of this <b>instead of needing to complete language testing</b> . Language testing would only be necessary if evidence for schooling or tertiary study in the Pacific can't be provided.	For an applicant for teacher registration from the Pacific - a teaching qualification from the <b>USP serves as evidence of English language</b> competency.

## Implementation of proposed approach

If we adopted this proposed approach, it could be introduced in phases, as outlined below:

### Phase 1

**Applies to ITE entry** - Change the Council's ELC requirement for entry into ITE so that it is set at the same level for general academic entry, for applicants who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages (the applicant would be required to meet ELC requirements for general academic entry).

**Applies to ITE entry, teacher registration and LATs** - Expand evidence for demonstrating English language competency for applicants coming from the Pacific to include schooling and tertiary studies in Tokelau, Niue, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Rotuma, Fiji or Kiribati.

### Phase 2

**Applies to ITE entry** - Adding an indigenous Pacific language competency pathway with an evidence requirement for indigenous Pacific language competency (to be determined) and no evidence requirement for English language competency.

**Applies to teacher registration and LATs** - Adding an indigenous Pacific language competency pathway with an evidence requirement for indigenous Pacific language competency (to be determined) and no evidence requirement for English language competency.

## What would these changes mean?

The table below shows expectations of competency for each language medium (Pacific languages, te reo Māori, English language).

**Table 1: Language medium competency expectations**

Language medium	Evidence requirement for language medium	English language competency expectations
<b>Pacific languages</b>	To be determined through evidence framework, but likely equivalent to level 6-7.	ITE applicants - meet the institutions general academic admission requirements (usually level 6).  Teacher registration and LAT applicants must meet qualification requirements which also provide assurance of English language competence to a level appropriate for these settings.
<b>Te reo Māori</b>	Achieved Whakamātauria Tō Reo Māori Level 3, or  All primary and at least three years secondary schooling in te reo Māori, or  Five years secondary schooling in te reo Māori	No evidence requirement - applicants can undertake an ITE programme with te reo Māori as the medium of instruction. However, some Māori medium programmes may have their own English language requirements.
<b>English</b>		Level 7, determined by a range of evidence criteria.



# Questions

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- 1** Do you agree that the Council should develop an indigenous Pacific language competency pathway that requires evidence of Pacific language competency and has different expectations for English language competence?
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- 2** If the Council introduces a Pacific language competency pathway as Phase 2 of this review, do you agree that as an interim measure before this is implemented, the Council's current English language requirement for entry into Initial Teacher Education should be reduced to level 6 for applicants who are speakers of indigenous Pacific languages?
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- 3** If the Council introduced a Pacific language competency pathway for entry into ITE, teacher registration, and LATs, what criteria for evidence of Pacific language competence could be used?
- a. Testimonial (commenting on proficiency in listening, reading, writing, speaking)
  - b. Language proficiency examinations in the relevant language/s
  - c. Interview with recognised proficient speaker
  - d. Other
- 
- 4** Do you agree that the Council should add schooling and tertiary study completed in Tokelau, Niue, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Rotuma, Fiji or Kiribati to the evidence list for demonstrating English language competency?
- 
- 5** Do you have other ideas about changes that could be made to the language competency policy to support pathways into teaching in Pacific bilingual and immersion settings?
-

# Appendix 1: English language competency descriptors

The table below illustrates the difference between English language competency levels, using the IELTS test descriptions.

**Table 2: English language competency level descriptors**

Band score	Skill level	Description
9	Expert user	The test taker has fully operational command of the language. Their use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and shows complete understanding.
8	Very good user	The test taker has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. They may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. They handle complex and detailed argumentation well.
7	Good user	The test taker has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. They generally handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.
6	Competent user	The test taker has an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings. They can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
5	Modest user	The test taker has a partial command of the language and copes with overall meaning in most situations, although they are likely to make many mistakes. They should be able to handle basic communication in their own field.
4	Limited user	The test taker's basic competence is limited to familiar situations. They frequently show problems in understanding and expression. They are not able to use complex language.
3	Extremely limited user	The test taker conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication.
2	Intermittent user	The test taker has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
1	Non-user	The test taker has no ability to use the language except a few isolated words.
0	Did not attempt the test	The test taker did not answer the questions.

## Appendix 2: Medium of instruction for schooling in Pacific countries

Pacific country	Medium of instruction	Links/Resources
<b>Rotuman</b>	English is the main medium of instruction. They also teach in Vernacular, which is Rotuman.	<a href="#">Education in Rotuma</a>
<b>Samoaan</b>	English is the main medium of instruction	<a href="#">Education in Samoa</a>
<b>Cook Island Māori</b>	English and Cook Islands Māori are the main medium of instruction	<a href="#">Education in Cook Islands</a>
<b>Tongan</b>	Tongan is the main medium of instruction in schools from preschool though primary education.  English is introduced as a subject in the early years of primary education.  English becomes the language of instruction for some subjects in secondary education.	<a href="#">Education in Tonga</a>
<b>Tuvaluan</b>	Tuvaluan is the medium of instruction from Class 1 through to Class 3  English is the medium of instruction from Class 4 onwards.	<a href="#">Education in Tuvalu</a>
<b>Kiribati</b>	English and Kiribati are the main medium of instruction.  In Kiribati schools the teaching and learning takes place in and through the medium of both languages	<a href="#">Education in Kiribati</a>
<b>Fijian</b>	English is the main medium of instruction.  Fijian Vernacular is also taught in schools.	<a href="#">Education in Fiji</a>
<b>Niuean</b>	Niue and English are the main medium of instruction.  Secondary education includes both academic and vocational courses.	<a href="#">Education in Niue</a>
<b>Tokelauan</b>	Gagana Tokelau is the main medium of instruction.  English is only included informally before Year 3	<a href="#">Education in Tokelau</a>



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