



Summary of stakeholder feedback from fees/costs/levies pre-consultation September–October 2021

Background

The Teaching Council (the Council) engaged in a series of pre-consultation hui with stakeholders in September and October 2021 to seek their feedback on the design of the consultation process for fees and levies.

This feedback is summarised below, along with our analysis of its implications for design of the consultation process and the consultation document.

Key themes identified in pre-consultation engagement

Value proposition

Understanding how the Council contributes to a high-quality and trusted teaching profession:

- be able to clearly represent the value of the Council as the support and development hub of the profession
- the importance of being able to represent the voice of the whole profession, particularly those who may be on the margins
- identifying what the Council's core functions that are for the wellbeing of the profession and the public are
- the importance of being autonomous and self-determining, not being told what to do
- consideration of the issue of who would undertake the Council's functions if it didn't exist.

Approach to consultation

An engagement and consultation process that reflects the Council's organisational values and the many voices and views of the teaching profession:

- ensure it reflects Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership relationship
- the process needs to look and be different from previous consultation and show the Council has listened to teacher and stakeholder feedback
- it needs to be able to show how the many voices/views have been heard and considered and why final decisions are made
- messages and information should be tailored to different groups and be clear and concise
- timing is critical—end of the year or in January is not ideal—a longer period of November–April will work better
- identify the areas in which feedback is being sought, e.g., how best to equitably distribute costs across groups of teachers or sectors, options for user pays, options for different levels of service where they exist, performance standards or expectations.

Financial considerations

Weighing up cost-effectiveness in meeting legislated functions alongside the impact of increases to fees/levies for different groups of teachers:

- be cognisant of equity issues that may impact on different groups of teachers—differential fees/levies structure?
- what should be the responsibility of Government and what should be the responsibility of the teaching profession in terms of funding?
- what costs should be shared amongst the profession and what should be user pays?
- all teachers should fund this evenly regardless of the sector—it is the profession's responsibility to manage the profession
- negotiate a solvency plan with Government to allow a phased approach to increasing fees/levies
- thoroughly explore different payment options—what would be the impacts of a basic service level in some areas, and where would this be possible without impacting on quality?
- highlight quality improvements but also need to test with teachers how much they are willing to pay
- benchmark processes/costings against other similar professional bodies.

What the feedback tells us

Value proposition

Stakeholders shared a range of views about the Council's effectiveness in promoting the teaching profession as autonomous and self-determining, which they saw as fundamental to understanding teacher concerns about increases in fees and levies.

For some, the Council's value proposition is clearly reflected in the quality of the range of services and activities already underway. For others, the work the Council is doing is overshadowed by dissatisfaction with the range of functions it is required to perform. This reflects debate within the profession centred on whether the Council's functions should be limited to regulatory requirements, with other functions being addressed elsewhere in the system.

This feedback indicates that the consultation document and processes need to be able to clearly illustrate the value of an independent professional body to teachers, while recognising that there are a range of views regarding the breadth of the Council's legislated functions.

Approach to consultation

Stakeholders were largely supportive of the two-tiered approach to consultation, particularly the opportunity it provides for early insight into key issues for teachers.

Feedback from stakeholders indicated that the Council's commitment to being a Te Tiriti o Waitangi and values-based organisation needed to be visible and integrated through the process, particularly the approach to engagement with Māori. This included the Council being able to clearly show how feedback from this engagement before and during the consultation was heard and considered, and what impact it had on design of the consultation and final decisions.

How the information about options for ensuring the Council is resourced to undertake all its legislated functions is presented to the teaching profession was seen as critical. Stakeholders were particularly concerned that teachers would be able to see the Council undertaking a genuine consultation, i.e., not just presenting information about why fees and levies needed to be increased. Discussing the range of options considered so far and being clear about which were considered viable and why was seen as an important part of undertaking a robust and genuine process. Stakeholders also noted that creating space for "blue skies" thinking during the consultation and processes to respond to this was necessary.

Stakeholders commented that timing for the consultation needed to be mindful of teacher workloads and peak periods where centres, schools and kura would be preoccupied with internal activities. There was support for avoiding the holiday period, while also allowing plenty of time for teachers to discuss options and provide their feedback.

This feedback indicates that structuring the consultation document and our approach to engagement will be fundamental to ensuring the overall process reflects our organisational values and captures the views and voices of the teaching profession. Providing a range of ways to engage with consultation information and tailoring messaging to reflect the diversity of the teaching profession will also be important.

Financial considerations

Stakeholders provided detailed feedback on a range of considerations to inform options for determining the level of fees/levies. Being able to provide a detailed break-down and analysis of costs and where savings could or had been implemented was regarded as important in providing context for teachers' feedback. Stakeholders also indicated that clear information on which functions were required to be funded by the teaching profession and which by Government was needed, so that teachers were clear where funding responsibilities lie.

Stakeholders identified several options they considered were important to include in the consultation document. Examples included whether different levels of service would be an effective means to reduce costs, exploring different payment options such as fortnightly payments, and differential payments for different practising certificate types, recognising salary differentials for new/beginning teachers compared to other teachers.

This feedback indicates that setting out the range of options considered so far, including any analysis of viability, will be critical to ensuring that teachers have a full picture of the challenges facing their professional body.