

Strengthening mathematics/numeracy entry requirements for English medium primary Initial Teacher Education

Frequently Asked
Questions



**Teaching
Council of
Aotearoa
New Zealand**

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is changing?

Student teachers enrolling in English medium primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes commencing from 2025 onwards will need to demonstrate competence in mathematics by getting a score designated as equivalent to NCEA Level 2 in a mathematics assessment specified by the Teaching Council.

Which ITE programmes are affected by this change?

These changes only apply to English medium primary teaching programmes. They do not apply to secondary and early childhood education teaching programmes. We have not yet consulted on an appropriate way to strengthen mathematics capability in Māori medium primary teaching programmes.

Why is this change being made?

A strong foundation in mathematics is crucial to every primary school student’s educational success.

The Teaching Council believes that by strengthening mathematics/numeracy entry requirements for primary ITE programmes, we can contribute to lifting the mathematics capability of primary teachers and support student achievement.

This complements the work of ITE providers to prepare teachers with a strong grounding in the content and teaching practices of the mathematics and Pāngarau curricula areas.

When do these changes take effect?

Initially, candidates will have until graduation to pass the prescribed assessment, but this will transition to needing to pass the prescribed assessment prior to entry to the programme.

The transitional and ongoing arrangements starting from next year are summarised in the table below:

First year of candidate enrolment	Mathematics Competence Requirement	
2025	Candidates need to pass the prescribed assessment prior to graduation	
2026	Multi-year programme: Candidates need to pass the prescribed assessment prior to the second year of their programme	One-year programme: Candidates need to pass the prescribed assessment prior to enrolment
2027 and onwards	Candidates need to pass the prescribed assessment prior to entry to the programme	



What about the current literacy and numeracy entry requirements?

Prior to entry, candidates for English medium programmes must pass literacy and numeracy competency assessments, as set by the provider. The pass level in literacy and numeracy must be no lower than the equivalent to UE in literacy and numeracy.

For English medium primary programmes, the new mathematics competence requirement will replace the existing numeracy assessment for candidates commencing study from 2026 onwards.

The existing assessment will stay in place for secondary and ECE teaching programmes. We have not yet consulted on an appropriate way to strengthen mathematics capability in Māori medium primary teaching programmes.

The literacy competency assessment is unchanged.

How has the proposal the Teaching Council put out for consultation been changed as a result of sector feedback?

The Teaching Council is thankful to everybody who participated in our consultation. An analysis of the feedback received can be found here [insert link]. We were also grateful to be able to discuss our proposals with our ITE and Induction Stakeholder Group's working group on entry requirements for primary ITE. Our thinking was shaped in important ways by the feedback they gave, although of course, responsibility for the final decisions taken rests solely with the Teaching Council.

The main change from the proposal released for consultation on 29 August 2024 is that we will no longer be using a candidate's school record in NCEA (or a recognised equivalent) as a measure of a primary ITE candidate's competence in mathematics.

Concerns were raised by sector experts about unintended consequences from the use of this measure. In addition, we had already identified that another assessment would need to be available since it would not be fair or possible to rely solely on a candidate's school record. The Teaching Council has therefore decided that including a potential candidate's school record as part of this requirement is unnecessary and undesirable.

How will candidates' competence in mathematics be assessed?

For 2025, the Teaching Council has determined that passing the prescribed assessment will entail a score of between 690 (generally predictive of success at NCEA Level 2) and 800 on the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (LNAAT) developed by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

LNAAT is a free-to-use online assessment that has been in use since 2008. It provides users with a report on their results, including areas for development. It has a six-step progression aligned to the levels of the mathematics and statistics in the New Zealand Curriculum and to NCEA standards for numeracy assessment.

It has been used by the University of Otago for the numeracy assessment that it requires ITE students to pass, so there is practical experience with its use for this purpose.

The Teaching Council will arrange with the New Zealand Council for Education Research (NZCER) for each ITE provider to receive guidance in early 2025 on how to access and use the test (see below). More information about LNAAT can be found on the [Literacy and Numeracy for Adults website](#).

In normal circumstances, i.e. where the transitional provisions and the special exemption (see below) do not apply, a candidate would be able to attempt the assessment twice as part of their application, the second time a month after the first.

It is important that the provider has confidence that the person undertaking the literacy and numeracy assessments is the same person who has applied to enter the programme, and that the candidate is not using additional external support to complete the assessments (for example the internet or someone sitting with them).



What support will ITE providers receive to implement the LNAAT assessment for 2024?

NZCER developed and administers the LNAAT tool for TEC.

The Teaching Council has arranged for NZCER to develop guidance material for the use of LNAAT to meet our mathematics requirement. This will be available by mid-February 2025.

NZCER will also offer a two-hour support session early in 2025 to each provider that has an English medium primary ITE programme. This will help you get set up if there are any issues and answer your questions.

Why has the Teaching Council only designated LNAAT as the prescribed assessment for 2025?

LNAAT's suitability and availability for use for the requirement beyond 2025 is subject to confirmation. We are working through any potential barriers with TEC and NZCER and will advise providers as soon as arrangements for 2026 and beyond are finalised.

How does the required score in LNAAT compare to the existing numeracy test?

The current numeracy tests are set by individual ITE providers and required to be at least the level of the mandated NCEA Level 1 numeracy credits that are required for university entrance. This has been assessed¹ as corresponding to an LNAAT score of 605, which is the threshold for step 5 of the LNAAT numeracy progressions. A score of 690 is a step above that, at the threshold of the top step in the LNAAT progressions (step 6).

Is there any way for candidates to be allowed entry before passing the assessment, subsequent to the transitional arrangements?

From 2026 (one-year programmes) or 2027 (multi-year programmes), the Teaching Council will consider applications from providers seeking for a candidate/group of candidates to be able to demonstrate competence in mathematics through the prescribed assessment on a deferred basis.

A deferred basis means prior to graduation for one-year programmes and prior to commencing the second academic year of the programme for multi-year programmes.

Exemptions will only be granted where **all** of the following conditions are met:

- The candidate(s), in their initial attempt at the prescribed assessment exceeded the minimum threshold for the current numeracy test (which is set at NCEA Level 1).
- The candidate(s) were strong applicants in other respects, and contributed to meeting diversity objectives and/or had other skills/attributes that made them high-quality applicants.
- The provider was confident the candidate(s) had the potential to meet the specified minimum score range.
- The provider attested that it was able and willing to support the candidate(s) to meet the specified minimum score range.

A fee is likely to be charged to providers for processing a special exemption.

¹ Gill Thomas, Michael Johnston and Jenny Ward, *Alignment of Literacy and Numeracy Measures: Research for the Tertiary Education Commission*, 30 June 2014, <https://www.tec.govt.nz/assets/Reports/c6fd843620/Alignment-of-Literacy-and-Numeracy-Measures.pdf>.



What can be done to facilitate equitable availability of bridging and other support to prepare candidates for the prescribed assessment?

The consultation sought feedback on the provision of programmes to support candidates who did not fully meet the new entry requirement. While there was general support from the profession, the issues raised by some key stakeholders and advice from the ITE Working Group has led us to a different view.

Considerable institutional resources are needed to develop and run these sorts of programme, which not all ITE providers have.

The suggestion from the Working Group was that rather than rely on on-site support delivered by individual providers, support should focus primarily on asynchronous online offerings, prior to enrolments and independent of individual providers.

This was seen as more practicable, with broader availability of access, and more cost effective than relying on individual providers to offer bridging programmes.

We propose to investigate further opportunities of this type.

However, those providers who seek to use the special exemption requests to allow post-entry assessment may need to offer bridging programmes, or at least provide non-credentialised but structured support.

What impact will this change have on the supply of primary teachers in the future?

Given that the use of a candidate's NCEA record was not proceeded with, we expect that the mathematics requirement is likely to have only a modest impact on supply,

The Teaching Council will, however, work with the Ministry of Education as the mathematics entry requirement policy is implemented to achieve the best possible understanding of teacher supply impacts and consider changes to the policy settings if needed.



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