

August 2015

The final outcomes of the refinement of Levels 1 and 2 Vocational Pathways

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The outcomes of the refinement of Levels 1 and 2 Vocational Pathways

Background

In September 2014, the Ministry Youth Guarantee team initiated a process to refine and maintain the Vocational Pathways.

The first objective of the refinement and maintenance project was to improve the six Vocational Pathways so that increasingly coherent, consistent, balanced assessment opportunities (with manageable progression) were available for learners across all six Vocational Pathways.

The second objective was to provide better support for development of high quality foundation learning programmes for all learners at National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2, including accurate assessment information that supported NCEA Level 2 achievement with a Vocational Pathways Award.

The refinement and maintenance process involved working groups reviewing the current framework of assessment standards in each of the Vocational Pathways and making recommendations for the retention or removal of individual standards (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Working groups in the Levels 1 and 2 refinement process

The Overarching Group (OWG) also undertook analysis of standards across all pathways, to ensure consistency and coherence of the pathways.

Industry and education stakeholders were engaged throughout the process, including the undertaking of public consultation. This document provides a summary of the outcomes of the refinement and consultation process.

Outcomes of the Levels 1 and 2 refinement process

The following areas have been affected:

1. Changes of Vocational Pathways for identified careers

During the refinement process the Sector Consortia Groups (SCG) identified particular careers that were incorrectly placed in pathways. The Overarching Working Group (OWG) then approved the following recommendations.

Figure : Approved recommendations of changes of Vocational Pathways for particular careers

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Domain/Career** | **Pathway Change** |
| Boat Building | From Construction and Infrastructure to Manufacturing and Technology |
| Wood Manufacturing | From Primary Industries to Manufacturing and Technology |
| Furniture Making and Operations | From Construction and Infrastructure to Manufacturing and Technology |
| Journalism | From Services Industries to Creative Industries |
| Baking | From Manufacturing and Technology to Services Industries |
| Floristry | From Primary Industries to Services Industries |

1. Confirmation of the position of employability, work readiness and specialist skills in the Vocational Pathways framework

As part of the Levels 1 and 2 refinement process, sector consortia groups decided that whilst assessment of employability and work readiness skills generally fit outside the Vocational Pathways framework, they are inherently important to the successful transition of young people from education to employment. The groups thought that the number of standards relating to employability and work readiness could detract from the key purpose of Vocational Pathways which is to support young people develop the specialist skills that industry values.

This means, for example, standards relating to core driving knowledge and skills, personal financial management, generic computing, service sector core skills, social and co-operative skills, occupational health and safety and work and study skills have sometimes been included and sometimes not, depending on decisions made by individual consortia.

These assessment standards can still be selected for programme development outside of the Vocational Pathways Framework, as they are registered on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework

The OWG recommended that the Ministry explores supporting the development and recognition of employability and work readiness skills. In response to this recommendation, the Youth Guarantee team is developing guidance material and instigating wider policy work to explore this issue.

The OWG also noted that the change to the composition of the pathways will impact on schools and tertiary organisations offering programmes aligned to Vocational Pathways. For example, schools that offer programmes using funding streams such as Gateway are expected to report the alignment of their programme to a Vocational Pathway(s), with a minimum average of 20 credits being acquired.

Similarly, if STAR funding is being used to provide students with relevant, coherent learning experiences these experiences need to be aligned to the [Vocational Pathways](http://youthguarantee.net.nz/vocational-pathways/). The same would apply to tertiary organisations offering Youth Guarantee fees free programmes.

In response to these changes the Youth Guarantee team will provide guidance and support for providers as they plan programmes using the refined Levels 1 and 2 Vocational Pathways.

1. Other areas the refinement process has included and addressed:
2. The widening of scope for some pathways to include sectors that were previously missing, e.g. as a result of the refinement process the Services Industries Vocational Pathway now includes some standards relating to outdoor education.
3. The variability in the number and types of standards in the pathways, recognising that the pathways are not of equal size; and variance in the scope and nature of qualifications. For example, it is acknowledged that the learning in the Creative Industries Vocational Pathway can be assessed through more easily accessible achievement standards in a school environment.
4. The fact that the ratio of sector related standards and recommended standards in each pathway differs across the pathways.
5. The composition of pathways to ensure broader access to industry sectors in each Vocational Pathway.
6. The consideration of standards relating to English Language Learners, which have not been included in previous maps.
7. Analysis was undertaken to determine the number of achievement standards, and progression opportunities (including meeting University Entrance requirements) for English, mathematics and science. . This resulted in an increase in the number of Level 2 achievement standards in English, mathematics and science. Further work is being undertaken to support schools to offer contextualised packages of science, technology, engineering and mathematics learning (STEM) plus English, to support progression into further study and employment.

Retention of Level 1

The removal of Level 1 Vocational Pathways was suggested by the OWG and considered by the Pathways Advisory Group and the NCEA Oversight Board. Subsequently feedback on this suggestion was sought through public consultation. . The preferred position was to retain the Level 1 Vocational Pathways at present and for the proposal to be re-considered in future maintenance of the Vocational Pathways.

Reasons for retaining Level 1 included:

* Helps students to start thinking about possible career options.
* Helps students consider and identify possible career pathways.
* Helps identify student strengths and possible next steps.
* Supports students with subject selection.
* Supports students to see the links / relevance between their learning and their career pathway.
* Encourages reluctant learners – by making school more relevant.
* Provides broad foundation for Level 2 and beyond.
* Promotes conversation, assisting students to identify their tertiary Vocational Pathway.
* Provides a framework to assist students and their parents and whānau explore possible career

options.

* Provides a valuable guide for curriculum development.
* Offers an introduction into the ‘real world, industry based skills’.

Implementation process

2016 is a transition year between the old and the new systems. In 2016, students will be able to gain a Vocational Pathways Award from EITHER the existing OR the refined pathways. Some standards currently identified as sector related may not be recognised as such in the new, refined pathways. However, in 2016 we will recognise all such standards as sector related. If a standard is Sector Related in either the existing or the refined pathway, it will be awarded as Sector-Related. The Award will include all standards identified for inclusion in both the existing and refined pathways.

**N.B. From 2017, only the refined pathways will be available.**

Assessment information has been provided to help with this transition period.

Maintenance process

The refinement process has taken into account standards that have expired, standards that replace expiring standards, and new standards that have been registered on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF). From 2016 the Ministry will undertake an ongoing maintenance process, involving NZQA and the OWG. This will remove expiring standards and consider the listing of new standards on the NZQF. The maintenance process will also address ongoing changes within industry, such as the changes that will occur with the finalised Health and Safety Reform Bill.

Messaging and information

Throughout the development process the OWG consistently raised the need for the provision of clear messaging and information. A range of supporting materials and mechanisms will be released along with the finalised Vocational Pathways:

* The hard copy Guidance books and Pathways books have been updated and put online.
* The profile builder has been updated to include both existing and refined pathways information, with the addition of a literacy and numeracy calculator to help students understand whether they meet the requirements for NCEA Levels 1 and 2.
* Four examples of Level 2 programmes are presented.
* Material has been developed to inform the public of the outcomes of the refinement process.
* NZQA will integrate the new standards into the Vocational Profile from 2016.
* Communications to the sector have been developed
* The Youth Guarantee team members will support the sector to manage changes that may impact on programme delivery.
* Employability and work readiness material has been developed.