

## **FAQs**

### **Special Programme Change Process – 2026 Standards**

#### **1. Changes to the legislative framework for the teaching standards and the ITE programme requirements that could affect this process**

*Do the existing rules for initial teacher education (ITE) set by the Teaching Council cease to operate once the legislation affecting the Teaching Council's powers and responsibilities has passed?*

No.

The Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill (the System Reform Bill) provides that, if enacted, the existing Standards and ITE Programme Requirements would continue in force unless and until amended or replaced by the Ministry using its new powers.

As at December 2025, no decisions have been made or announced about which of the new rule-setting powers the Ministry will use over what timeframe, nor about how the new rules might differ from the existing.

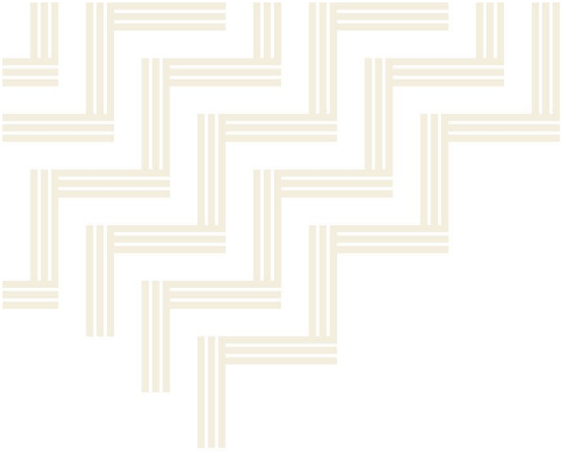
*Given this lack of certainty, is it worth continuing with the change to 2026 Standards?*

The 2026 Standards come into effect across every education setting in the country for the purposes of the professional growth cycle from 1 January 2026. They come into effect for other purposes (including ITE) from 1 January 2027.

After careful consideration, the Teaching Council has made the decision to continue with the 2026 Standards taking effect in this way as planned. We note that, while the System Reform Bill could see the transfer of the Council's standard setting functions to the Ministry of Education some time in 2026, the 2026 Standards would continue in force until such future time that they are amended or replaced by the Ministry of Education using these new powers.

*Even if the 2026 Standards go ahead, wouldn't be more prudent to defer the Special Programme Change Process given the prospect of new ITE Programme Requirements?*

The timeframe for the 2026 Standards means that anyone graduating from an ITE programme is expected to be able to meet the 2026 Standards (in a supported environment).



Given this, we feel we have an obligation to student teachers to provide assurance that ITE programmes have been adapted, where necessary, to prepare them in this way. The Special Programme Change Process has been designed to be an efficient process for providing that assurance in a way that is manageable for providers.

## **2. Timeline**

*How can we complete the necessary engagement with partners and all the other processes that are needed to make programme changes within this timeframe (such as internal committees, PD for staff and expectations of other agencies)?*

Consultation with partners is typically an important aspect of the process to make programme changes, and keeping partners informed is always good practice. Nevertheless, because this is a Council-driven and non-discretionary change, we would not expect ITE providers to have to test its proposed changes with partners in the way that they normally would.

We know that each ITE provider needs to navigate their own internal processes (and in some cases external processes as well). We have accommodated this by making sure there is flexibility in timings for decision processes and by engaging with NZQA and CUAP to understand their processes and timelines.

*Some ITE providers have just had programmes approved in 2025 – it seems unfair to have to go through this programme change process so soon after programme approval.*

We appreciate that the timing of the Special Programme Change Process means another round of applications and assessment for newly approved programmes. However, it is important to be assured that all programmes can prepare graduates to use the 2026 Standards from the beginning of 2027, as graduate teachers will be going into early childhood education (ECE) services and schools that are using the 2026 Standards. Their induction and mentoring will also be directed towards being able to fully meet the 2026 Standards. The Special Programme Change Process is intended to support ITE providers as they adjust their programmes to ensure that student teachers are prepared for this environment.

Given that programmes approved in 2025 will tend to have had greater visibility of the revised Standards and other developments such as curriculum change than programmes approved in earlier years, we would anticipate that 2025 programmes are less likely to need significant changes to the programmes themselves to be ready for the 2026 Standards.



### 3. Process

*Why is the Teaching Council using panels for this programme change? Wouldn't a desk review be sufficient, especially given this is a programme change mandated by the Teaching Council?*

Following initial engagement with the sector, the Teaching Council has decided that it is appropriate to assess and approve applications using desk review of your completed template as much as possible. We have therefore adjusted the assessment approach for the special programme change process as outlined below:

1. We anticipate that a decision on most applications will be made using a desk review of the application template (i.e. these applications will not need to go through a review panel)
2. In some cases, we may request additional information and then complete decision-making via the desktop review
3. In what we anticipate would be only a limited number of cases (where we do not feel confident to approve the application based on the desktop review) we may establish a panel to undertake a more in-depth review.

We have revised the *Special Programme Change Process: Preparing ITE graduates to meet the 2026 Standards (in a supported environment)* document to reflect these changes.

*Who will you use as panellists?*

As noted above, we only intend to assemble panels where we do not feel confident approving an application based on the written information provided

In these instances, the nature of the panel used may be customised to the particular issues identified with the changes as proposed. In general, however, we expect the panels used will be small, focused and led by the Teaching Council (so not the same kind of structure we currently use for programme approvals and reviews), although with expert academic support as needed. Ministry of Education representatives may also take a role.

NZQA may participate in the panels for non-university programmes; however, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the impact of changes affecting NZQA requirements.

*How will applications be judged as suitable?*

Every special programme change application will initially be assessed via desk review of the completed template submitted. To assist the robustness and consistency of this assessment, the



following 'scoring' rubric that will be used to assess and score each application. For transparency, this rubric has been made available alongside the application templates.

Programme changes will be able to be approved based on desk review using this rubric. This will be possible where the application receives an overall score of 300 out of 500, and also a passing score for each of the individual focus areas and Standards. (Reviewers will however still reserve the right to refer the application to another pathway if they have a particular concern about a specific aspect of the application.)

*What will happen if an application is judged to not adequately demonstrate that the programme will in 2027 be preparing graduates to meet the 2026 Standards (in a supported environment)?*

In this instance, the applicant may be told that revisions need to be made to the application before it can be approved. However, this would not be done solely on the basis of desk review using an assessment rubric. The purpose of the rubric is to identify applications that require escalation for further scrutiny. Any adverse decisions will be made by the chief executive, informed by feedback from a panel.

Any concerns about the planned changes for a programme will be discussed with the ITE provider before a final decision is made.

*Are there costs associated with this special programme change process?*

The standard cost for all applications will be \$630.00 per programme, in line with the standard programme change application process.

In instances where we decide further scrutiny of the application via a panel is needed, this may incur additional costs. These will also be broadly in line with the standard programme change application process but may be lower due to making less use of external panellists.

#### **4. Working with New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP)**

*Has the Teaching Council had early conversations with NZQA and CUAP regarding the number of applications for change that they will be seeking?*

Yes, the Teaching Council has had discussions with both NZQA and CUAP. They understand the Special Programme Change Process and the volume of change applications across ITE that it will entail.



*Why do all ITE providers need to individually engage with NZQA (non-universities) or CUAP (universities)? Can the Teaching Council come to some common agreement with NZQA and CUAP around centrally implementing this?*

The Teaching Council, NZQA and CUAP all want to work together constructively, and avoid making the change process more arduous than it needs to be for ITE providers.

However, each agency has its own processes that it needs to follow and its own legislative requirements that it is operating within. It would not be possible to simply agree to a common process that would be applied to all applications.

That is why the best advice we can give to every provider is to engage early as you are developing your programme changes. This is particularly the case if you are contemplating including some alterations that are not directly about adapting to the 2026 Standards. (Remember: the 'special programme change process' is for programme changes that are solely or largely for the purpose of adapting to the 2026 Standards – if there are significant non-Standards elements, it is likely that the application will need to be assessed through the standard programme change process.)

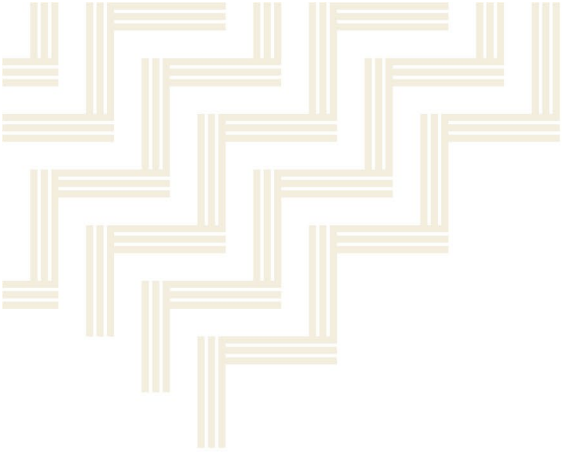
In particular:

- Non-university ITE providers are encouraged to contact NZQA early to understand how proposed changes may affect NZQA requirements and their responsibilities for maintaining approval and accreditation.
- University ITE providers should engage early with their university's academic office to get an understanding of whether their proposed changes will need to be submitted to CUAP.

*What guarantees do we have that NZQA will definitely support us in these changes?*

No such guarantees can be given in advance as NZQA will need to assess the proposed changes against its requirements. As noted above, non-university providers are encouraged to contact NZQA early to understand how proposed changes may affect NZQA requirements and their responsibilities for maintaining approval and accreditation.

NZQA is fully aware of this process and recognises that addressing the 2026 Standards is a regulatory requirement for ITE programmes. NZQA's interest will be in being assured that the way that these requirements are being met is consistent with its own requirements.



*How do you propose getting any CUAP approvals completed within these deadlines?*

Not all change proposals will necessarily need to be submitted to CUAP for approval. For those that are, in some cases it may be more practicable to go through CUAP's process prior to submitting to the Teaching Council and in some cases, it may be more practicable to do so afterwards.

As noted above, University ITE providers should engage early with their university's academic office to get an understanding of whether their proposed changes will need to be submitted to CUAP.

## **5. The realities of changing ITE programmes**

*We are concerned about aligning the 2026 Standards changes with curriculum changes, when some of the curriculum change documents won't be finalised until the middle of next year, when these other changes are supposed to be submitted. Does this mean we are going to have to go through another change process immediately after this one?*

We are aware that there are time pressures for primary and secondary ITE programmes in assuring that changes to the curriculum that will be in effect in 2027 are appropriately reflected in programmes in 2027, in order to meet the needs of student teachers.

It will not be necessary to have finalised every aspect of this work in order to submit a Special Programme Change Process application.

In the particular area of the curriculum, what is being asked for in primary and secondary applications is up to 300 words showing that there is substantive programme content that addresses:

- The ideas underpinning the NZ Curriculum (NXC)
- What NXC covers (particularly, for secondary programmes, in the student teacher's identified school subject or subjects)
- Its progressions in learning, and
- Practical considerations in enacting NXC.

This should be accompanied by information about the amount of time (including teaching time) and credit values that will be associated with this content (recognising that this may be an estimate given some teaching hours and/or credits may be split between this content and other areas).



*Is there an expectation that Key Teaching Tasks (KTTs) will change as part of this Special Programme Change process?*

We recognise that, in 2027 or possibly over a longer time period, providers might, with the involvement of their partners, revise their sets of KTTs to reflect the programme changes to adapt to the 2026 Standards.

The template will be asking providers to identify what impact, if any, the changes set out in the application will have on key teaching tasks. (If these impacts appear to entail potential risk, the provider is asked to describe their mitigation to that risk.)

This does not, however, require that providers set out all changes to key teaching tasks in full or finalised detail. Moreover, this information would not be expected to be a key focus of Special Programme Change Process approvals.

The Teaching Council will also be reviewing its three model KTTs (Structured Literacy; Explicit Teaching; and Rangaranga Reo ā-Tā) in 2026, with a view to them becoming core KTTs from 2027 onwards.

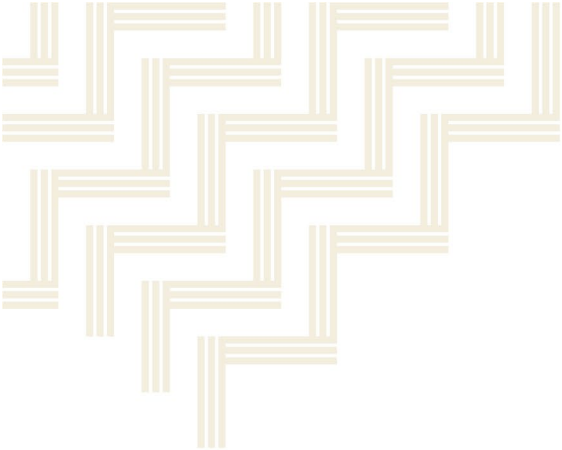
*What are the expectations for different cohorts in three-year programmes e.g. in 2027, 3rd year cohort will only have 1 year exposure to the 2026 Standards?*

For multi-year programmes, where a programme may have started this year (or even last year), the most the Council could ask is that the ITE provider is teaching the 2027 year of a three-year programme in such a way that there is room for student teachers who started prior to 2027 to catch up on new content that is being added to the programme to help graduates meet the 2026 Standards (in a supported environment).

The template for making your programme change application will include a section for how you intend addressing the changes to the Standards for student teachers who have already begun their programme. We don't want to be prescriptive about approaches that should be used for this purpose, as the best way of ensuring 'catch up' may differ depending on the structure and pedagogical framework of each programme.

## **6. Content of application**

*How significant are the changes - can they be outlined in one paper or should they involve changing the learning outcomes?*



For each programme, provider will be asked to:

- Fill in the application template, which focusses on addressing what programmes need to show in relation to focus areas 2.1-2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 5.3 and 5.4 and Standard 6 (as set out in Appendix A of the Special Programme Change Process document)
- Provide a marked-up/track-changed course outline, and
- Include, for specified focus areas<sup>1</sup>, information about the amount of time (including teaching time) and credit values that will be associated with the programme content addressing these focus areas.

Providers are also able, but not required, to provide links to supporting information.

The template will ask providers to identify what impact, if any, the changes set out in the application will have on aspects of the programme including learning outcomes and the graduate profile. If these impacts appear to entail potential risk, the provider is asked to describe their mitigation to that risk.

Information about changes to learning outcomes or the graduate profile would not be expected to be a key focus of Special Programme Change Process approvals. However, it may also be useful information for NZQA or CUAP.

*Is it enough to only look at the focus areas specified? How will the Teaching Council also ensure all the other focus areas for the 2026 Standards are met?*

Standards 1, 4, 7 and 8 and Standards 3 and 5 in respect of Focus areas 3.3, 3.4, 5.1 and 5.2 are regarded as having been largely ‘carried across’ from the 2017 Standards. Therefore, all approved ITE programmes are deemed to already be addressing these standards and focus areas.

However if an ITE provider has identified that programme content that is important for developing the knowledge and understandings associated with these standards and focus areas (cf Appendix B of the Special Programme Change Process document) is being scaled back to accommodate the new content being introduced to adapt to the 2026 Standards, then it will be important that this be indicated when filling in the template along with all mitigations being put in place to ensure that these aspects of the 2026 Standards can be met.

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<sup>1</sup> There are focus areas 2.2-2.4, 3.1, 3.2, and (for primary programmes only) 2.1.





*How is the Teaching Council looking to be assured that Standard 1 (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) is demonstrated across ITE programmes?*

As noted above, Standard 1 is regarded as having been largely ‘carried across’ from the 2017 Standards. Therefore, all approved ITE programmes are deemed to already be addressing this Standard.

Once again, though, if an ITE provider has identified that programme content that is important for developing the knowledge and understandings associate with Standard 1 is being scaled back to accommodate the new content being introduced to adapt to the 2026 Standards, then it is important that this be indicated when filling in the template along with all mitigations being put in place to ensure that these aspects of the 2026 Standards can be met.

*Assigning teaching hours and credit values – Is there a minimum teaching hour or credit values (for those focus areas where this has been indicated as being needed)?*

No, there is no predetermined minimum threshold (in terms of teaching hours or credits) for programme content being ‘substantive’. The amount of programme content that is appropriate to one item in this table will differ from the amount of programme content that is appropriate to another item. A provider might also have a particular explanation for the amount of programme content relevant to a particular item, and why it will be effective in building graduates’ understanding in that area, that the assessment of the application will want to take into account.

*What kind of evidence are you looking for to show teaching hours?*

There is no requirement that providers supply evidence of the teaching hours. We note that this is the expected teaching hours for the programme in 2027 and may differ from the actual teaching hours prior to the programme change.

The provider will also need to supply a marked-up outline of their programme (showing changes for 2027). We may have questions for the provider if they cannot easily reconcile that against the teaching hours (and credit value) information provided.

*Can 'student-directed' be considered as meeting the teaching hours expectation?*

ITE providers should include information about the amount of time that will be associated with the specified areas of content (see above).



This can include information on student-directed time, if the provider wishes to include this, but it must also include information on teaching time (i.e. scheduled contact hours lectures, tutorials, workshops etc).

(We recognise that this may be an estimate given some teaching hours and/or credits may be split between this content and other areas.)

*What do you mean by ‘narrative’? Is it a statement for each of the focus areas about what we are doing in relation to the focus area? Could we have an example?*

In this context, the phrase “narrative response” means a response to information sought that involves the provider drafting a relatively brief (300 or 600 words) narrative account that specifically addresses how the programme shows the characteristics sought. This is in contrast to, for instance, providing copious documentation about the programme and the changes made to it. The latter approach might give readers a more rounded understanding of the programme, but not necessarily directly address specific points of information.

The information that will be sought for each focus area or standard as part of the application template is set out in Appendix A of the Special Programme Change Process document.

As an example, for focus area 3.2, ‘Understand how diverse needs can be met’, providers of ECE, primary and secondary programmes will all be asked to provide a 300-word narrative that demonstrates that,

*There is substantive programme content that develops understanding of:*

- *the diverse needs of learners, including those associated with neurodivergence, disabilities, and trauma*
- *Age-appropriate learning strategies that can support each of these three groups.*

### **Making other changes to ITE programmes**

*If we are making a minor change to our curriculum document, can these be put through the Special Programme Change Process?*

Yes, up to a point, although (as per standard processes for programme changes) you should submit a separate application(s) using the standard programme change template for the non-Standards change(s). Talk to us early about this, and to NZQA (non-universities) or your university’s academic office, to understand what implications this proposed additional element might have for approval processes.



Our 'Special Programme Change Process' is for programme changes that are solely or largely for the purpose of adapting to the 2026 Standards – if there are significant non-Standards elements, it is likely that the application will need to be assessed through the standard programme change process.

### **Additional support**

*Can we have an assigned person per ITE provider to liaise with? Can we have more support along the way, such as progress drop-ins?*

If ITE providers have queries about the Special Programme Change Process or need additional advice, please contact us at [iteadmin@teachingcouncil.nz](mailto:iteadmin@teachingcouncil.nz) and we will get in touch with you to discuss your query. This group address is monitored by multiple staff members and is the most effective way to ensure messages from providers get a prompt response.

*If there are early submissions, could we have an anonymised best practice example?*

We encourage ITE providers to talk with each other and share information and insights, as they work through their applications, in line with what took place during the National Moderation Event. There is no one 'right' way to address the items that programmes need to show (as set out in Appendix A of the Special Programme Change Process document), so we think that discussions amongst providers would be more valuable than trying to get a best practice example out in a timeframe that would be helpful for your application process.