

30 April 2025

## Consultation on the revised teaching Standards

We are pleased to provide comment on the revised Standards for the Teaching Profession.

### About Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand

Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand (Te Rito Maioha) is an Incorporated Society of members committed to high quality early childhood education (ECE) for every child. Established in 1963, we are an influential leader in shaping today's early childhood sector through advocacy, policy, tertiary education qualifications and professional development programmes.

We advocate for early childhood education services and the teachers|kaiako who provide education to thousands of infants, toddlers, and children|tamariki. Our members are drawn from a diverse range of community-based, privately-owned, kindergarten and homebased early childhood education services.

Te Rito Maioha is also a registered Private Training Establishment (PTE) with the highest Category One rating for a tertiary provider. We are accredited and approved by New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to deliver a range of undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate qualifications (levels 4-9), including specialist kaiako education, both nationally and internationally.

We are committed to achieving high-quality teaching and learning by:

- increasing kaiako knowledge of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Aotearoa New Zealand's dual cultural heritage;
- providing access to online blended delivery of undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate tertiary education programmes leading to recognised and approved qualifications;
- promoting quality teaching and leadership through ongoing professional learning and development programmes;
- providing a range of unique resources and services to our members.

Our feedback reflects our unique role as both as ECE advocates and an initial teacher education (ITE) provider (ECE and primary).

### A review of the teaching Standards is timely

As noted, the current teaching Standards were first developed in 2017, so a review is timely. The current Standards are far from broken, so we are pleased these were used as a starting point, rather than taking a blank slate approach.

The Teaching Council is an independent professional body, and our professional code and standards are titled 'Our Code, Our Standards'. There is a sense that the revised Standards have been drafted to align with direction of the current Government rather than what the continued expectations are of teachers. The current Standards allow curriculum changes or revisions, growing research, and focus. The core fundamentals of teaching do not change, so the Standards should not be arbitrarily changed as government policies or priorities do. It is important that teachers 'own' the Standards - by the profession and for the profession – and that these are not swayed by the government of the day. Professional teaching Standards should endure.

## Teaching Standards elevate the profession

Utilising professional Standards hold teachers to account and helps to lift the mana and status of the teaching profession. Being transparent about expectations through these Standards assures parents, whānau, communities, and the Government that teachers are well-equipped and fit to teach. It is in everyone's interests to ensure all teachers - from ECE, primary and secondary school - in front of our tamariki and young people are bound by professional Standards.

## Overall, do these standards as a whole describe the effective practice of a teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand?

We are largely happy with the proposed changes and agree that the Standards seem comprehensive. They are aspirational and provide a good guide for teachers to grow in their practice through the professional growth cycle.

It is important for the teaching Standards to be relevant for all teachers, across all sectors - ECE, primary and secondary - at any point of their career, as well as being inclusive of all learners across these sectors, responding to individual needs and abilities.

To that point, some of the language used across the Standards appears more focused on primary or secondary teaching. Examples include statements such as 'pace of learning', 'assessment and achievement of learning', 'mathematics learning', or 'sequenced learning'. These concepts can and do apply across all sectors but are more relevant to teaching in the compulsory sectors. As ECE advocates, we are very conscious of ensuring ECE is not lost or overlooked. ECE must be visible in the language used to articulate the Standards.

The *Statement of Government Policy Relating to Teaching Council Functions* sets clear expectations on the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, which we appreciate the Teaching Council has had to give regard to in when revising the Standards.

The sections used from this Statement used to inform the revised Standards also appeared to focus more on compulsory schooling and excluded ECE, which raised some initial concerns. For example, GPS1.2:

*Being clear about the responsibility of teachers to have a deep understanding of, and subject knowledge mastery in, the learning areas set out in the national curricula for schooling, and the ability to teach the relevant curriculum effectively in a way that supports every learner to succeed.*

This was included but the next bullet from the *Statement* that relates specifically to ECE was not.

*Being clear about the responsibility of early learning teachers to understand and be able to effectively implement Te Whāriki – the curriculum framework for early childhood education.*

We are pleased to see, however, that the resulting Teaching Standard 2.1 *Content and teaching strategies of the learning area*, as well as other Standards, use more inclusive language that covers all sectors. We are mindful that the ECE sector is often overlooked, and we don't want it to be lost in the language of the Standards. ECE teachers meet the same qualification, registration, and certification requirements, and are held to the same professional Standards as their compulsory sector counterparts. A teacher is a teacher is a teacher. We need to protect the entire teaching profession with one Code and Standards.

## Are there any key aspects of quality teaching practice that you feel are missing from the proposed standards?

While the Standards are fairly comprehensive, the tone appears to be shifting towards structured or sequenced teaching. The language used emphasises the science of learning, learning design, and structured learning. This risks reducing the profession to a technical one, focusing on compliance, rather than encouraging professionals to engage in critical thinking. Teaching is a holistic practice, and the Standards should reflect this. With our ECE lens, we draw attention to Te Whāriki, a holistic curriculum, and we know kaiako in schools also take a holistic approach to learning. This is a gap with the current Standards, but we have an opportunity to address this. Our professional Standards should encourage teachers to think holistically, critically, and to be prepared to advocate and engage in current and social justice issues.

### The individual standards

*Does the proposed standard appropriately encompass an important aspect of quality practice? Do you have any other feedback, suggestions, or concerns?*

There are some inconsistencies in the language used, so we hope this is refined in a final version. For instance, the domains are all in the first-person, starting with “I”, but the Standards themselves are more general actions or statements. Standard 3.2 is the first Standard expressed in the first person, referencing “my own assumptions and beliefs”.

We have feedback and questions on specific Standards:

- *1. Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership.* We agree should remain unchanged. Section 4 of the Education and Training Act 2020 seeks to establish and regulate an education system that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi, so this should be embedded in all we do. This Standard is written in an aspirational manner, which we support.
- *2.1 Content and teaching strategies of the learning area.* There is no need to say, “where relevant”.
- *2.2 Foundational role of the curriculum. Have the ability to teach the relevant curriculum effectively in a way that supports every learner to succeed.*  
...“have the ability to teach” is not about knowing the content, so we suggest it needs a different lead phrase. This should cover understanding what curriculum is in its diversity of forms, and how it operates in relation to student learning.

It would also be useful to include teachers knowing how to build their own understanding and learn curriculum content to teach something they may not know.

- *3. Know learners and how they learn. Understand the learning process and the strengths, interests, needs, identities, languages, and cultures of each learner.*  
These are expressed in terms of specific actions rather than what needs to be known. As such, they are not consistent with the I KNOW category. For instance, 3.1 - structuring programmes is not ‘knowing’.
- *3.1 Understand how learning happens. Structure teaching programmes using a secure knowledge and understanding of how people learn from the learning and development sciences and their application.*

The language in this standard is concerning. What is a structured teaching programme? It is well established that tamariki learn through play alongside qualified teachers who scaffold their learning with a variety of teaching strategies. Consider an ECE setting and Te Whāriki, which take a more holistic approach to learning.

- *3.4 Inclusive teaching and learning. Referencing trauma-informed teaching is very specific. Will we have to include 'trauma informed teaching' in our ITE programme? Referring to 'responsive teaching' is sufficient and is inclusive of all learner needs.*
- *4. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning.* There could be closer alignment between this Standard and the I KNOW Standards.
- *4.2 Advance learner progress and achievement.*  
We dislike the use of deficit language, such as 'struggling'. The original Standard sets out the same message in a more positive manner, speaking to equity and excellence.

To meet this Standard, teachers would need to meet all of what is covered in Standard 6. Could they be combined?

- *4.3 Content selection and organisation. Organise content into coherent, well-sequenced learning and teaching programmes.*  
What is meant by 'well-sequenced'? How does it apply to ECE? Te Whāriki focuses on holistic learning, which doesn't necessarily sit well with a 'sequenced' programme.

ECE professional practice is underpinned by sociocultural theory and the idea that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore tamariki learn from their peers and teachers who stretch their thinking. Notions of learning sequentially or in stages limit the potential of our tamariki. What content is this statement referencing - curriculum content, planning content?

- *5.4 Use digital technologies safely, responsibly, and ethically.* Will we have to include AI in our ITE programme?
- *6.4 Communicate assessment information.* It is unclear who the reporting is for. Clear and regular communications with parents and whānau should be encouraged, whereas we question whether formal reporting to government agencies (ie: Ministry for Education) fits into professional teaching Standards. The language could be clearer about who the reporting is for.
- *7.3 Engage professionally colleagues to improve practice.* Where are parents and whānau? If feedback is sought from learners, their parents and whānau should also be included. We recognise that Standard 8 explicitly identifies parents, carers, and whānau, but that engagement is for a different purpose and is framed differently. Relationships are an integral part of a teachers practice.
- Splitting the original Standard 5 (*Design for learning*) into three new ones makes sense. Learning design is a broad topic and unpacking this to curriculum and pedagogical knowledge; the learners and how they learn; and assessment and reporting on learner progress, makes for richer and more meaningful standards.

- The original Standard 5.5 (*design learning that is informed by government policies and priorities*) has disappeared and not captured anywhere (See page 19 of the consultation document). No rationale has been given to explain why.
- *8. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers, and the community.*  
There is very little about engaging professionally with children or students, which seems to be a significant omission in the “I AM” section. The only mention is focus area 8.2 with respect to learners and their families. This is more about who the teacher is, rather than what they know and what they do, so should be more explicit and not assumed to be embedded in other focus areas (such as 4.5 *Develop learning-focused relationships*).

### **The role of focus areas**

*Our proposal is to make the ‘focus areas’ more integral to the application of the 2025 standards. Including the focus areas as part of the standards would mean that schools and ECE services would be required to include the focus areas in each of the required elements of their Professional Growth Cycle. Do you feel that giving the focus areas standing as part of the standards, and therefore a key part of the Professional Growth Cycle, will provide clarity to teachers’ effective practice?*

Are we right to understand that the focus areas form part of the Standards that teachers will be measured against for registration?

We do not support the focus areas being made more integral (which we have interpreted to mean they will be given the same weighting alongside the actual standards). Moving from ‘elaborations’ to the draft focus areas has given teachers more detail to unpack the Standards, though it might have a negative impact on teachers rather than a positive one. They are well intended and aspirational but might be too much for teachers to actually achieve. They risk creating more work for teachers.

We consider the focus areas are too prescriptive if they are made more integral and are a requirement for teachers to meet. Instead, we agree with the bold statements of each focus area, and suggest the accompanying statements are included as guiding examples only. Our rationale for this view is that it is crucial for teachers have agency to reflect their own professional practice if they are to have ownership of these standards.

### **The use of domains**

*Do you feel that these domains help to make the standards an effective and accessible representation of the effective practice of a teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand?*

The three domains – I KNOW; I DO; I AM – are an active, clear and effective way to structure the Teaching Standards.

The circular diagram effectively sets out the revised Standards under these headings.

### **Further change for the sector**

While we welcome the review, we are also worried that implementing changes will add pressure to an already stretched workforce. Such pressure could risk successful implementation, undermining the relevance and importance of the Standards. Increased expectations on teachers without sufficient resourcing would be unfair, and meeting the revised Standards will be hard to achieve without significant resourcing and funding.

We ask the Teaching Council to recognise the pressure the sector is already under, with a lot of consultation and significant changes already under way. Please be mindful of this when planning

implementation, perhaps considering a sound transition period that takes into account the existing workload, changes, and pressure the sector is currently facing.

### **Implementing the standards**

*The Teaching Council wants to support the profession to introduce these refreshed standards. What resources and materials would you find most helpful to implement these standards?*

Implementation is incredibly important and will look very different for ITE providers and for practicing teachers. Both will need to be well supported and resourced to understand and implement the revised Standards. While at face value, not much has changed with the Standards, if the focus areas have a greater weighting, it will take a lot of work to fully and meaningfully implement the revised Standards. We want to lift the status of the profession by doing them justice and implementing them well.

There will need to be a transition period, allowing time for the sector to fully understand the revised Standards and focus areas. Teachers must consider what it means for their practice and ITE providers will require a good timeframe to embed changes into their programmes. Therefore, we consider that 2026 is too soon for implementation unless there is a clear timeline that allows for transitioning the new Standards into practice.

Further thoughts on implementation:

- Webinars, tailored for practicing teachers and ITE providers, will be a helpful way of walking through the revised Standards and what is expected of each group. Such engagement, including hearing questions from peers, helps to aid understanding and will support implementation.
- Focus area 2.3 implies an improved set of pathways for teachers to access up to date research and innovation. As already noted, teachers are busy, so having to understand and meet revised Standards adds to their workload. Existing PLD in the sector is limited. Also note that ECE teachers do not get non-contact time to engage in PLD. All teachers will need dedicated time to engage with and work towards the new Standards.
- We consider focus area 5.3 (*Promote positive behaviour*) will need support.
- It is important to understand the scale of change this may require of ITE providers. Our programmes will likely require some 'type two' changes. We will need to review our course outlines to incorporate the revised standards and support our tauira to meet them, and these may also change our learning outcomes. If we do need to engage with NZQA, it will increase the implementation timeline.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the revised Standards. We look forward to working with you and the sector to ensure any changes are successfully implemented and continue to lift the professionalism and mana of teachers.

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Make submission to [revisedstandards@teachingcouncil.nz](mailto:revisedstandards@teachingcouncil.nz) by 2 May.

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