

17 July 2025

## Relief Teacher Pathways

We are pleased to provide comment to the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand's proposed relief teacher pathway.

## 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 for every child. Established in 1963, the organisation is 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 the 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 teachers' | kaiako knowledge of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Aotearoa New Zealand's dual cultural heritage;
- providing access to blended delivery through online and face-to-face, with practical real-life exposure and experiences through undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate tertiary education programmes leading to recognised and approved initial teacher education and other qualifications;
- promoting quality teaching and leadership through ongoing professional learning and development programmes;
- providing advocacy and a range of unique resources and services to our early childhood education members;
- collaborating with New Zealand and international partnerships to strengthen research and teacher education.

Our feedback reflects our unique role as both as ECE advocates and an initial teacher education (ITE) provider (ECE and primary), working to lift the quality and esteem of our teaching workforce. We have used a number of your consultation questions to frame our submission.



**Part One: Introducing new support features, which might include a new practising certificate, for day-to-day relief teachers**

*Would a relief teacher's practising certificate help to meet the needs of relief teachers, professional leaders, and schools and centres?*

Aotearoa New Zealand is currently experiencing a teaching shortage across all sectors (ECE, primary and secondary). If a relief teacher's practising certificate makes the certification process easier and encourages former or retired teachers to return to the profession, it will help the sector immensely.

Relief teachers are an important and essential part of our teaching workforce, enabling permanently employed kaiako to take leave and engage in PLD. Relief teaching is a valid option for many qualified kaiako at different stages of their career and keeps them in the profession. Any opportunities to remove barriers, while maintaining professional standards, is welcome.

*Do you agree that if we introduce a day-to-day relief teacher's practising certificate, that it should be for a term of one year?*

Yes, provided the application process is not onerous to have to go through every year and the cost is reasonable. If the administrative process is too complex or the cost too high, relievers would let their certification lapse and no longer be available, defeating the purpose of this pathway.

The proposal for endorsement and police vetting to remain triennial is sensible.

The proposal does raise some questions:

- Will there be a maximum number of years an individual can stay on the new relief teacher's practising certificate?
- How will the Teaching Council determine if kaiako are on the correct practising certificate? Will this be monitored? This is especially relevant from an ECE perspective, as kaiako are employed by individual ECE services, not the Ministry.

*Should this type of practising certificate be available to overseas-trained teachers who meet our registration and certification requirements, and who are in New Zealand on a working holiday?*

We believe all overseas-trained teachers should undertake some form of PLD to learn about our unique bicultural context, including how to engage with and give life to Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum and the New Zealand Curriculum. Is this an explicit component of induction for overseas-trained teachers?

The relief teacher's practising certificate should only be available to overseas-trained teachers who intend to work as relief teachers. We think those taking on permanent roles should seek a full practising certificate (which again raises questions of how this would be monitored).

*Do you agree that a new set of standards be introduced for day-to-day relief teachers?*

No. A different set of Standards would risk complicating the system. All qualified, registered, certified teachers in front of our tamariki should meet the same Standards and aspire to high-quality teaching practise.

The Standards are intentionally designed at a high level, so they are applicable for all kaiako at any stage of their career and any working context. Kaiako holding a relief teacher's practising certificate have different opportunities to utilise and demonstrate the Standards.



The Standards themselves are applicable, but the degree to which kaiako holding a relief teacher's practising certificate can meet each and every focus area may vary. We believe expectations be managed here, without introducing a new set of Standards.

*Do you feel that our proposed approach gets the balance right in recognising the specific circumstances of day-to-day relief teachers while still reflecting the key aspects of quality teaching practice?*

Kaiako who hold a relief teacher's practising certificate should be held to the same Standards, but different emphasis may be placed on the focus areas. Using the examples provided, there might be less emphasis on planning and reporting, and with more of a focus on understanding learners and how they learn. Ensuring they engage with and aspire to the same Standards as other kaiako is important, even if that looks different in their own practise.

*Do you have any other feedback, suggestions, or concerns about new day-to-day relief teacher standards?*

Ensure that nothing is introduced that provides another layer of complexity to the profession.

*Do you think a tool to help day-to-day relief teachers plan their PGC would be helpful?*

Yes. Relief teachers may not have the same support network or relationships as permanently employed kaiako, so additional tools and guidance would be helpful.

*Should there be an agency who coordinates or manages professional learning and development for relief teachers?*

PLD should be an essential part of all teacher's Professional Growth Cycle, to use and meet Our Code, Our Standards | Ngā Tikanga Matatika, Ngā Paerewa in their everyday practice, and therefore a compulsory part of registration and certification.

We are supportive of an agency coordinating PLD specifically for relief teachers.

In Australia, we understand that accredited providers offer PLD and teachers are required to complete a certain amount of this PLD to maintain their certification. This is commonplace in other professions in Aotearoa, such as nursing, law, or accounting, who must complete certain CPD (continuing professional development) hours to maintain their professional registration. This is worth considering if we want to uplift the mana and esteem of the teaching profession.

Relief teachers still engage with schools and ECE services, so can learn about PLD opportunities through these networks. They should be encouraged to do so and be proactive about their own PLD, *because* they won't always have the same established relationships as permanently employed kaiako.

*Do you agree that asking a teacher to enter a mentoring programme if they want to move from a relief teaching practising certificate to a Tūturu | Full (Category One) Practising Certificate would be helpful?*

Yes. There will be a point of difference between the relief teacher practising certificate and a Tūturu | Full (Category One) Practising Certificate. If kaiako opt to move from relief teaching to full certification, mentoring should be offered.



*Do you have a preferred option to which approach should be taken to make the process of gaining and renewing practising certificates easier for those working as day-to-day relief teachers?*

We are broadly supportive of introducing a new practising certificate for day-to-day relief teachers.

Regardless of whether a new practising certificate is introduced, this consultation has highlighted a need to support relief teachers. We are supportive of introducing some new features to support day-to-day relief teachers.

*Which features you think are most critical to supporting day-to-day relief teachers in their work?*

- ☐ Supporting professional leaders to make an endorsement.
- ☐ Standards for day-to-day relief teachers.
- ✓ Professional learning and development tools.
- ✓ Creation of guidance around satisfactory recent teaching requirements.

*Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your views on these options?*

We agree that the relief teacher's practising certificate should not be an option for beginning teachers, and that their induction and mentoring is an essential introduction to the profession.

**Part Two: Introduce a new Limited Authority to Teach for day-to-day relief teachers**

We would not support a move to introduce a new LAT, as we consider it devalues the role of the teacher. LATs are a stop-gap measure to put an unqualified person in front of tamariki, at best a babysitter. We advocate for a qualified teaching workforce to educate our tamariki and don't support any short-term interventions, such as the new type of LAT proposed, as they risk diluting the profession or tamariki education, care, and safety.

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Make submission to [submissions@teachingcouncil.nz](mailto:submissions@teachingcouncil.nz) by Friday 18 July 2025.

Key contact for Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand: Kathy Wolfe, Chief Executive