13 November 2026

Consultation on the ITE Requirements

Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Ministry of Education's consultation on the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Requirements. In summary, we do not support a comprehensive review at this time, we support targeted improvements in selected areas, and we ask that research, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and authentic sector partnership remain central to any future change.

While we agree there is always space for improvement, Te Rito Maioha does not support a comprehensive review of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) requirements at this time. Significant reform has already occurred through the 2024 amendments to the ITE requirements and the introduction of the 2026 Standards for the Teaching Profession, and these changes have been managed within the current ITE requirements. Providers are required to fully operationalise the new Standards by 1 January 2027, so there has been insufficient time for the impact of these reforms to be embedded, monitored and evaluated.

We are concerned that the rationale for the review appears to be based primarily on the transfer of responsibility for ITE to the Ministry of Education and changes to the Standards, rather than evidence of systemic shortcomings. The organisation notes that effective reform should be informed by the collective expertise of ITE providers, the Teaching Council, NZQA, and the wider educational research community. The proposal also suggests limited consultation with the sector.

Across the nine proposed opportunities, Te Rito Maioha supports selected areas for improvement but cautions against reforms that significantly increase compliance requirements and costs, diminish the role of research in teacher education, or shift ITE towards a narrow teacher training model.

If any new requirements are to be developed, wide consultation will need to capture teacher voice, student voice, schools and ECE services as ‘consumers’ of ITE provision.

Opportunity 1: Clarify what counts as evidence, and how it should inform programme design

We support evidence-informed practice, while recognising multiple forms of knowledge.
Programme design should be informed by contemporary research, established pedagogical traditions, learning theory, critical inquiry, and diverse research methodologies.

The proposal focuses on ‘effective teaching’ but does not refer to theories of learning. This omission raises questions about the extent to which educational theory and the nature of learning are informing the review's underlying assumptions around sound evidence.

The ‘broad’ understanding of evidence provided in the Summary Discussion document includes sources of evidence already well-embedded in ITE programme design and course content for student teachers to engage with. With this being the case, what is the underlying purpose of wanting to clarify evidence?

Calls for a clearer definition of "evidence-based practice" require scrutiny. Such definitions can privilege particular forms of evidence and create assumptions about what counts as settled knowledge, potentially excluding alternative perspectives and methodologies. We have already seen this in the current government’s curriculum reforms and approach to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

More broadly, these proposals appear to signal a return to an earlier model of teacher education as practical training. That model placed greater emphasis on practical preparation and diversity of practice, often with less attention to research engagement and knowledge creation. Whether such a shift would strengthen or weaken teacher professionalism remains a significant question for the sector.

Field/practice-based models emphasise learning to teach as embodied and social learning, promoting embeddedness in early learning settings and schools, but not at the expense of developing critically reflective practitioners and knowledge producers.

Opportunity 2: Reframe staff capability away from research production.

We believe research should be maintained as a core feature of ITE.
While a broader conception of staff capability is welcomed, reducing the emphasis on research risks de-professionalising teacher education, creating disparities between providers, and weakening the knowledge base that underpins quality teaching practice.

The proposal to reduce the emphasis on research production as a measure of staff capability in ITE programme approvals, review and monitoring offers a broader view of capability, but it also carries significant risks.

NZQA require all non-university ITE programmes to show evidence of staff being active researchers whose research outputs contribute to programme content and delivery. This also ensures those teaching future teachers are also upskilling and enhancing their profession to teach not only in New Zealand but also globally.

External monitors measure and attest to this in their reports to NZQA. Diminishing research as a core component of staff roles would place Non-University ITE providers at risk of failing to meet NZQA requirements and obligations. It would also weaken opportunities for domestic and international collaboration, as many providers seek partnerships with research-active organisations that contribute to the creation, exchange, and advancement of knowledge.

Reducing the prominence of research risks creating a two-tier ITE system. Universities may continue to maintain strong research expertise, while non-university providers may increasingly operate with reduced research-qualified or research-active staff. Such a distinction could have implications for NZQA accreditation requirements, consistency, quality, and professional status of ITP and PTE initial teacher education.

A reduced emphasis on research may also create unintended incentives. Within universities, where ITE already occupies a relatively low-status position compared with other disciplines, this could result in reduced resourcing and institutional support for teacher education. In fact, evidence of educational performance in ITEs/ITPs is in some instances better than universities.

We need a focus on research production to emphasise ITE teaching as a profession and to produce critically aware practitioners. This should be a cross-sector commitment to keep university, PTE and ITP providers strong in the professional knowledge that should underpin quality ITE. Currently as a PTE we have a significant research framework domestically and internationally as well as a partnership with a library supporting student teachers in their learning. It offers staff and students access to global teaching research to enhance learning.

Opportunity 3: Require programmes to articulate a coherent and complete model of progression.

Existing programme approval, monitoring, and review processes already require coherent programme progression mechanisms.
Current ITE requirements and approval processes require ITE providers to demonstrate coherent and integrated capability development for student teachers throughout their programmes. The expectation that providers need to be able to clearly articulate this progression is redundant. They already do. This is the whole focus of programme approvals and is embedded in current processes of programme monitoring and review.

If the Ministry were to require a new model of progression, then this would double up on the existing requirements set by the TEC who already measure student progression via programme completion rates and into employment.

We therefore question the need for a separate Ministry-defined model of student teacher progression. Before introducing an additional requirement, there needs to be clear evidence of a gap in the current ITE quality assurance system, and a clear explanation of how a new model would address that gap. Without this, the proposal risks duplicating existing ITE approval, monitoring and TEC accountability requirements, increasing administrative and cost burden for providers without demonstrably strengthening the quality of ITE or outcomes for student teachers.

Opportunity 4: Retain current student entry requirements but improve consistency in how they are assessed.

We support consistency in entry requirements, but those requirements need to be able to reflect learner diversity.
The profession has been calling for consistency around entry assessment for a long time. The move to the LNAAT to assess maths entry levels has provided consistency.

We could only support consistency measures that preserve and promote diversity in our preservice teacher profile. We need teachers that reflect the diversity of Aotearoa. The risk is that national consistency around entry assessment will create barriers for candidates that might otherwise be well suited to teaching by removing flexibility for providers to select candidates that may not initially do well on entry measures, but who bring valuable experience to teaching and become great teachers longer term.

Opportunity 5: Introduce greater specificity regarding required content aligned with the 2026 Standards for the Teaching Profession.

The 2024 ITE requirement changes and 2026 Standards already provide greater clarity, consistency, and programme prescription.
The 2026 Standards have not yet had time to be fully implemented and embedded, including curriculum changes. Further large-scale reform is premature before the effectiveness of these changes can be evaluated.

Beyond the 2024 ITE requirements adjustments, the 2026 Standards added 33 Focus Areas grouped to each standard. The Focus Areas were drawn largely from the 2017 Standards Elaborations. Only two new standards and their associated Focus Areas represent substantive new expectations for ITE programmes.

The Focus Areas already represent a stronger level of programme prescription so the impact of their integration into ITE programme design should be given time to produce the intended consistency of programme content and strengthened capability of student teachers and beginning teachers.

We agree with the development of a 'shared core' of knowledge, practices and capabilities, but ITE providers must be involved in developing this content. Although the curricula differ across the sectors, we would be extremely concerned by different 'standards' for ECE and for schools. Core content must be consistent across sectors: **a teacher is a teacher**, no matter which part of the education system they teach in.

Opportunity 6: Embed clearer expectations for high-quality professional experience.

With the increase in field/practice-based ITE models there is merit on re-evaluating expectations of what counts as high-quality professional experience.
This now extends beyond block courses and traditional practicums into regular in-school or in-centre days. We strongly support enhancing expectations around mentor, coaching, liaison, and associate teacher capability. Investing in high-quality mentoring and coaching has the potential to strengthen practicum experiences and improve outcomes for student teachers. This could also be extended to the provisional licencing period required by graduate teachers.

ITE programmes are required to have criteria on which they select Associate Teachers and Liaison Teachers (if they are field or practice-based). Strengthening the capability and preparation of Associate Teachers by providers and/or the regulator would be a benefit to the ITE system. It is an element currently emphasised in SOTP criteria; how does the provider foster and support the capability of mentor teachers and associate teachers?

Should this area be an opportunity to enhance, then clarity is required as to who is responsible for enhancing Associate Teachers and Liaison Teachers, i.e. providers, schools and ECE services and wherever this lands that the resourcing and funding is provided.

Opportunity 7: Consider a national, standardised and externally moderated assessment framework.

We do not support unnecessary centralisation and compliance.
National assessment frameworks and expanded external assessment processes risk increasing bureaucracy, reducing programme flexibility, and shifting the focus from learning and professional judgement to compliance. Assessment informs teacher educators and their teaching and student teachers and their learning. National frameworks risk refocusing assessment on compliance.

We are particularly concerned that a national standardised assessment framework could evolve into a high-stakes national exit examination. The Australian experience with LANTITE illustrates the challenges associated with using a nationally administered test as a gateway to graduation and entry to the profession, including the need to subsequently remove limits on test attempts and provide greater opportunities and support for candidates to meet the required standard. Readiness to teach is multidimensional and should be demonstrated through authentic evidence of professional practice, knowledge, judgement and capability over time, rather than being reduced to performance in a single national assessment.

The ITE system already contains a nationally expected but locally enacted endpoint assessment mechanism through the Culminating Integrative Assessment (CIA). Introducing independent external assessors raises practical questions about feasibility, efficiency, value and cost (funding). For example,

in one-year programmes it is unclear how independent assessment would operate without creating additional complexity and workload in already intense timeframes.

External assessment moderation is already an embedded requirement of NZQA-governed ITE programmes. It is resource intensive; adding a body of external assessors may further slow processes and complicate programme delivery. This will also add significant cost to providers and tauira.

This was the assumption underpinning the Key Teaching Tasks (KTTs), to focus ITE providers on preparing their graduates to be ready to teach on Day 1 through agreed capabilities. These capabilities were co-designed between ITE providers and their early learning services and schools. The KTTs are embedded in practicum courses and form the basis for practicum assessment by teacher educators and associate teachers. Student teachers also refer to these in their Culminating Integrative Assessment (CIA) reflections.

Further it would be useful to understand what the expectation for "day 1 ready to teach" means because many degree graduates meet the current requirements. There needs to be an understanding of whether this is in fact an issue, and if so, we suggest the cause is addressed rather than basing changes to requirements on an anecdotal comment that graduates are not ready to teach. No graduate completing their degree will be day one prepared, accountants, doctors and nurses do internships for example.

In essence it should be determined whether a provider is not performing to ITE requirements and deal with that position with the provider rather than making a general comment that all providers are graduating tauira who are not ready to teach. We believe this has not been evidenced sufficiently.

Opportunity 8: Establish clearer links between ITE providers and support for beginning teachers.

We support improved connections between ITE and induction and mentoring support for beginning teachers.
The proposal correctly identifies the importance of preparing beginning teachers for the transition from study into professional practice. However, responsibility for this transition should be shared between ITE providers and employing schools and early learning services rather than being viewed solely as an ITE responsibility.

Work on a national approach to induction and mentoring of beginning teachers was underway but has disappeared due to changes in functions from TCANZ to MoE and ERO. We would support rigorous mentoring and coaching programmes for provisionally licensed graduate teachers to full registration. Clarity will need to be provided regarding whose responsibility this will be and associated resourcing and funding i.e. TCANZ? MoE? ITE Providers? Schools? ECE services?

Opportunity 9: Strengthen the rigour and consistency of programme approvals, monitoring and moderation.

We support rigorous approvals and monitoring.
Consistent and robust quality assurance processes are valuable when they promote professional learning, sector improvement, and collaboration, rather than compliance alone.

There is merit in trained approvals panellists beyond what is currently offered by the Teaching Council. We would want to see continued contribution of current teacher educators on panels and as programme monitors preserved. Engagement with each other's programmes stimulates mutually beneficial learning that potentially is shared throughout the ITE system.

Consistency of advice in the process of preparing for and implementing panels is crucial. This advice is currently provided by NZQA and Teaching Council. Quality of advice would need to be emphasised in any strengthening of rigour and consistency.

Programme monitors often come from the initial approvals panel and this role is a continuation of a relationship developed early on. The monitor can become a trusted sounding board and invested in enhancing programme quality. A risk would emerge if the monitoring process became overly compliance focused to the detriment of professional learning.

Currently providers are reviewed and assessed and replication, duplication of reporting across multiple government agencies is significant. The agencies are requiring similar detail from providers but in slightly different formats. Can this be avoided in the MOE role for ITE Standards stewardship or will ITE providers have more reporting? Associated costs are also significant - for programme approvals providers can pay around $30,000 per programme.

As an example, the table below lists the separate reporting and monitoring requirements that NZQA, the Teaching Council and TEC each place on providers:

NZQA	**Teaching Council**	**TEC**
External moderation for all degree level and higher programmes	Annual self-assessment monitoring for each programme	Learner Success Plan
Annual Programme evaluation report (for self-monitoring programmes) for all degree level and higher programmes	Standards change reporting	Disability Action Plan
Annual Self Review-including report; 90 min hui and 6 monthly 15-30 minute hui		Investment Plan
Standards change reporting		Educational Performance Indicators
Code of Pastoral Care annual review		Provider audit review
Graduating Year review		
Ad-hoc monitoring for programmes delivered off-shore		
NZQA is currently consulting on iQaf which includes a quality descriptor regular quality assurance process		

Additional concerns

One of the principles guiding the review was "Responding to the Aotearoa New Zealand context with a genuine commitment to te ao Māori". Nowhere in the opportunities is there a commitment to Te Tiriti evident and articulated. We believe this should be reflected in all nine opportunities. Where is the commitment to authentic partnership? Again, this doesn't appear to be strong in the listed opportunities.

Te Rito Maioha believes there are a number of critical questions that remain unanswered:

- What is the actual problem we are trying to fix?
- Where and what actual evidence aligns to the problem we are trying to fix?
- Is it actually an ITE standards issue, or a performance issue with some ITE providers?
- Does the whole system have to be upended rather than just addressing where some root causes are occurring?
- How have the consultants and Ministry of Education engaged with NZQA regarding the proposed changes?
- How will the proposals align with NZQA expectations that degree-level teaching is undertaken predominantly by research-active staff?
- Will TEC be engaged in this process?
- What implications will the changes have for ITE provision outside the university sector?
- Does the Minister for Education, Ministry and the Advisory Group have in-depth knowledge of what ITE programmes currently contain to assess quality or not?
- What is the intended impact of a greater focus on play-based learning or school readiness on ITE programme content and on the professional judgement and autonomy of providers?
- How will the proposals interact with Tertiary Research Excellence Fund (TREF) expectations and requirements?
- What role will authentic partnerships (ECE centres, schools, iwi, hapū, communities' other international organisations) and meaningful sector engagement play in future discussions, which is currently a requirement.

Te Rito Maioha believes energy and focus should be placed in these areas of ITE delivery opportunities:

- Mentoring and coaching during the provisional licensing of a graduate teacher
- Enhance Associate and Liaison teacher skills sets and provide adequate resourcing and funding to do so;
- Paid practicums for students to ensure the stress of not earning when on practicum does not cause barriers for tauira to become teachers and be successful while on practicums
- Re-assess where practicums are to be completed e.g. currently tauira have to go to another ECE service not affiliated with where they may be employed or volunteering and/or school, but at times for example students who are employed or volunteering in large ECE providers can do their practicums in another service in another community. Challenges also occur that students in rural remote areas have to travel large distances to be in another school or service which adds travel, accommodation and food costs.

About us

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

Our bicultural kaupapa, te reo Māori me ōna tikanga, is embedded throughout everything we do and teach. We are committed to ensuring the success of our Pacific nation students across the motu by growing authentic relationships that embrace students' whānau and communities across our programmes.

Through our membership we advocate for early childhood education services and the kaiako who provide education to thousands of infants, toddlers, tamariki and young people. Our members are drawn from a diverse range of community-based, privately-owned, kindergarten and homebased early childhood education services and teachers.

We have delivered teacher education since 1980 and are a registered Private Training Establishment (PTE) with the highest rating for a tertiary provider in Aotearoa New Zealand. We are accredited and approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to deliver a range of early childhood and primary school undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate qualifications (levels 5-9), including specialist kaiako education, both nationally and internationally.

We are governed by a Council made up of elected and appointed members, led by a National President and supported by a National Kaumātua. Our national office is in Wellington, and our teaching staff are employed at 11 regional education centres|takiwā ako throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.
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 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.

Make submission to TeachingStandards@education.govt.nz by 13 November 2026.
Key contact for Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand: Kathy Wolfe, Chief Executive