

## **NZSA Education Committee response to *The Future of NCEA* Oct 2018**

(NZSA = NZ Statistical Association)

### **This is the second of two submissions on NCEA from the NZSA Education Committee**

We are responding to the Ministry of Education's request for feedback stated at <http://www.conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/ncea-have-your-say/get-involved-today/> and using the third option: 'Make a detailed submission'. In fact we sent in our main detailed submission, *Topics for NCEA Review from NZSA Education Committee*, in February 2018, and all of it still stands. We are re-sending it. In this second submission, we want to comment briefly on the Ministry's 'six big opportunities'. We will post it on CensusAtSchool.

The format below comes from the Ministry's *The future of NCEA - Detailed Submission* page.

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#### **Reaction to big opportunity 1:**

Creating space at NCEA Level 1 for powerful learning

(Rebuild Level 1 as a 40 credit qualification – 20 for literacy and numeracy, and 20 for a project.)

In general we support this, as we'd like to see learning freed from assessment needs, where possible.

The literacy and numeracy options need to include statistics. Guides for the project should clarify that it may use statistical skills. With this change to assessment by NCEA, we'd like to see PD on methods to motivate strong learning.

We have concerns about the 20 credit project because of the potential added workload implications for teachers - we worry about the amount of work students may do for the project, including extraneous busy work, and how this might differ between schools in terms of teacher expectations and parental assistance. We support the continued assessment of literacy and numeracy (20 credits) - it's important to have some sort of national measure at Year 11.

#### **Reaction to big opportunity 2:**

Strengthening literacy and numeracy.

(Benchmark literacy and numeracy at the level needed for success in further learning and employment.)

We support the focus on literacy and numeracy. The important skills of contextual thinking in statistics both contribute to it and require it as part of their foundations.

Yes, we agree with benchmarking. How literacy and numeracy are defined and assessed could be further developed/strengthened, and numeracy assessment should include statistical literacy/data interpretation and critique. Work could draw on the expertise of PISA and NEMP about how to benchmark (not their assessment items), in particular how NEMP interviews children as well as paper-based assessment.

### **Reaction to big opportunity 3:**

Ensuring NCEA Levels 2 and 3 support good connections beyond schooling.

(Introduce pathways opportunities to NCEA Levels 2 and 3, giving every young person access to learning relevant to their pathway.)

We support this. This aim is always important for students as they move on, and it is really important now as the information aspects of work and civil society are changing so fast. Education planners will need to call on and promote research into where the pathways are leading, and their changing needs.

In particular, we support thinking about NCEA Level 2 and 3 pathways as two year learning programmes that lead to (and make connections with) the students' future/planned destinations. Schools will need to be supported to value other pathways that do not lead to University Entrance; e.g. measures of academic performance for a school should not just be measured through UE pass rates. Different learning pathways will require different pedagogical approaches: e.g. practical vs abstract/theoretical. New measures of school performance will need to be developed.

### **Reaction to big opportunity 4:**

Making it easier for teachers, schools and kura to refocus on learning.

(Shift culture from achieving as many credits as possible to encouraging quality teaching and learning.)

We agree with this! We strongly support this shift in culture, as it means preparing students for their lives with much more appropriate skills. Again, we see the need for PD, along with consultation and planning. Since statistics has many engaging features (like problem-solving in context, visualisation, etc), it may be able to take a lead in demonstrating this shift. It may be able to do this in conjunction with any and all other learning areas.

Teachers will appreciate greater time to reflect on their teaching.

However, how school performance is measured by the government/society/popular press will have a big influence on what is achievable. NB reducing number of credits does not necessary cause higher quality teaching and learning - the culture will not change if measurement of school performance does not change. For example, if the types of league tables reported in the press comparing schools do not change in meaningful ways, then they will continue to be a powerful driver of school decision making that affects the resulting learning culture.

**Reaction to big opportunity 5:**

Ensuring the Record of Achievement tells us about learners' capabilities.

(Enhance the Record of Achievement with better summary information and space for learners to detail achievements outside of NCEA.)

In theory this is a good idea. In practice NZ would need a standardised system across schools. Anyone involved with reporting at school level can tell you how hard that is! For example, reporting on key competencies, extra/co-curricular learning, and a lot of this other achievement information is captured on school-level reports (in many diverse ways!). Students at some schools may be disadvantaged by not having the opportunities/resources that high decile schools have, in terms of service/participation/sports etc.

**Reaction to big opportunity 6:**

Dismantling barriers to NCEA.

(Make NCEA more equitable, starting with making it easier for learners to access Special Assessment Conditions, and remove fees to enrol in NCEA.)

We support this.

The Special Assessment Conditions definitely need to be accessed by lower decile schools, or disadvantaged students who would not be able to pay for the necessary assessments.

**Our conclusions:**

Our vision for statistical education in the last three years of school is a system that prepares students for, and involves them in, these things and more:

- The expanding data universe
- Growth in the need for data exploration and analysis
- Growth in the need for dealing with uncertainty and risk
- Growth in accessible software tools for all that
- Progress in what we understand by statistical thinking.

We hope to see

- Progress in the pedagogy for all that, to support lifelong learning.

In particular, we'd like to see reduced workload for teachers. We need to bear in mind that systematic changes to the qualification system will not automatically change teaching culture or pedagogy in schools. The culture is not driven by aspirations and stated goals, it is driven by how students, teachers, and schools are measured, and how this feeds into school reputation.

Our vision includes an assessment system that enables that vision. The six 'big opportunities' can all be steps towards an enabling form of NCEA.