



Submission

Teaching Council consultation
on a revised set of standards
for the teaching profession
2025

About PPTA Te Wehengarua

PPTA Te Wehengarua represents the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education in New Zealand, including secondary teachers, principals, and manual and technology teachers.

Under our constitution, all PPTA Te Wehengarua activity is guided by the following objectives:

- to advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;
- to uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively; and
- to affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

This submission is from the PPTA Te Wehengarua Executive and is on behalf of all of our members.

Proposal for a revised set of standards for the teaching profession 2025

1.1 Standard 1: Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership

Demonstrate commitment to tangata whenuatanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand

PPTA Te Wehengarua activity is guided by a constitution that seeks to affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi. PPTA Te Wehengarua considers that the Tiriti o Waitangi partnership should be prominent in the professional standards and that it is an important aspect of quality practice.

PPTA had varied feedback for this standard. There is recognition that putting Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership as the first standard acknowledges its importance to the professional standards.

The consultation material outlines that the Teaching Council has considered whether it was possible to present the set of standards in a way that was more intuitive and accessible to those entering the profession, external stakeholders and the wider public. It is not clear to the PPTA if this version of the standards achieves that.

It is important for those entering the profession, as well as external stakeholders and the wider public to be able to see the primacy of Te Tiriti O Waitangi in the standards.

For standard 1 the visual format of the professional standards shows Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership as part of a whole. Given that the proposed standards have been expanded by two, it is now 1/8 rather than 1/6. We view this as diminishing its importance in the 'whole' of standards for the profession.

Feedback from our Principal members is that the profile of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership needs to be raised and they suggest that this standard could be split into Professional Knowledge, Practice, and Engagement. If a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership is left at the introduction, it will be glanced over; lacking implicit connection to the three headings.

PPTA has also had membership feedback that this professional standard should be intertwined rather than stand-alone. Members would like to see Te Tiriti sit across all three domains. They consider that this will solicit more meaningful actions and provide the impetus for more deliberate engagement with what it means to be a kaiako honouring Te Tiriti.

Members point out that KNOWING about Tiriti obligations is of value if you are going to DO something in your professional capacity and enable you (I AM) to be a Te Tiriti o Waitangi honouring professional practitioner.

Members suggest this might look like:

- **I KNOW** *about my obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi* – Professional Knowledge.
- **I DO** – *I act deliberately and in accordance with my obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi in my Professional Practice*; and,
- **I AM** *actively engaged in professional learning to ensure my professional practice meets my Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations* – Professional Engagement.

Te Reo a Rohe, PPTA Māori regional representatives, have expressed concern that the existing Te Tiriti standard doesn't go far enough to embed a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It is limited by association with a (singular) treaty principle - i.e., Partnership. Members see this consultation as an opportunity to move away from having the standard be tied to just this one principle and advocate for a broader application, and deeper understanding, of the relevance and application of the actual provisions within Te Tiriti o Waitangi in their practice as kaiako.

Teaching standards outline expectations for all teachers to meet, and feedback from Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake is that there could be more stretch in this standard, particularly 1.3. They consider, for example, that 'practise and develop the use of te reo and tikanga Māori' could be stretched to 'develop fluency in the use of te reo and develop a sound understanding of tikanga Māori'.

PPTA would like to see the profession challenged to move beyond simple, possibly tokenistic actions to one that is informed and committed to their professional knowledge, practice, and engagement.

PPTA knows that 97% of Māori are educated in English Medium settings and considers that alignment is needed in the 'Standards for the Profession' for both Māori Medium and English Medium settings.

1.2 Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it

Design learning based on curriculum and pedagogical knowledge.

PPTA acknowledges that the proposed standard two encompasses important aspects of quality practice. The proposed Standards for the Profession put considerable emphasis on design for learning, as the previous standard has been split into three in this proposal. Members' feedback is that the proposed expansion of the design for learning standard makes it a bit clearer to understand.

Proposed focus area 2.1 highlights the need for teachers to have a deep understanding of the content knowledge, progressions in learning, and teaching strategies appropriate to the learners they are teaching, and to the learning area(s) where relevant.

PPTA considers that all students should be taught by registered and professional teachers. PPTA's preference is also for appropriate subject specialists; however, it recognises that the secondary sector has a significant shortage of teachers and, as a result, some teachers are having to teach outside their specialism to ensure coverage of classes and the curriculum.

In cases of teaching outside a specialist subject area, teachers may not be experts and may not have a deep understanding of the content knowledge and may only teach a subject for a short time. With this reality, we consider that teachers may be *working towards* a deep understanding of the content knowledge, learning progressions, etc.

The proposed focus area 2.2 seeks to articulate the foundational role of the curriculum. PPTA understands the importance of having a national curriculum and has strongly advocated that teaching and learning are led *by* this, rather than assessment. PPTA considers that good assessment 'falls out' of a good curriculum.

Proposed focus area 2.3 requires teachers to be informed by research and innovations. This focus appears to be influenced by the current government's priorities. PPTA has a concern that being 'informed by research and innovations' can lead to the work of teachers being subject to the whim or flavour of current ideology.

As a result, teachers (as professionals) may sometimes make well-informed decisions in the interests of the individual learner that may conflict with a strict interpretation of national policies and priorities.

PPTA is concerned about a narrowing of the curriculum such as that declared by Chris Luxon when he said "he is prepared to see schools defer arts and music curricula to raise achievement in maths and reading."¹ We consider functional literacy and numeracy important elements of teaching and learning but are cautious to ensure that the focus on literacy and mathematics is not at the expense of a fulsome curriculum.

Some members question the current view that all teachers are teachers of literacy and numeracy (te reo matatini and pāngarau in Māori Medium settings). Literacy and numeracy are testable and compulsory components of our qualifications and therefore need to be treated as *subjects* in the curriculum, with fully funded literacy or numeracy teaching positions available, as opposed to the current practice of tagging them on to all subjects on top of existing teacher workload.

Digital technologies are an area that are becoming increasingly ubiquitous, providing both opportunities and challenges. PPTA has a concern that this focus area (2.4) is unrealistic. It requires teachers to understand effective teaching strategies that integrate digital technologies into learning and teaching. PPTA considers that this is asking teachers to be skilled in an area that many are untrained in and under-resourced for.

There are significant and frequent new technologies emerging, and PPTA questions whether a teacher is easily able to understand effective teaching strategies that integrate digital technologies into learning and teaching. There is a paucity of PLD in this, and currently, there appears to be no strategy to upskill teachers in these areas such as GenAI technologies.

1.3 Standard 3: Know learners and how they learn

Understand the learning process and the strengths, interests, needs, identities, languages, and cultures of each learner.

PPTA fully understands that teaching and learning are built on a foundation of relational practice. We agree that knowing the learner and how they learn is important, as is the teacher's understanding of their own bias (3.2).

PPTA strongly agrees that teachers need to create culturally responsive learning environments (3.3) that are inclusive for all learners.

PPTA knows that recent Government policy has drawn attention to the importance of understanding how learners learn, and that focus area 3.1 attempts to set 'it' (understand how learning happens) out more explicitly.

PPTA considers this focus area (3.1), the learning and development sciences, and their application to be contested. It could be difficult for a teacher to find, for example, a consistent definition and

¹ [christopher-luxon-prime-minister-on--maths-achievement-levels](#)

application of the ‘science of learning’. PPTA is unclear what ‘secure knowledge’ is for structuring a teaching programme. There is unease with the continued lack of clarity around the ‘science of learning’ and expectations to apply across curriculum learning areas. Subject leaders—many of whom have played a vital role in supporting curriculum development in the past—are left in a state of uncertainty.

PPTA notes that the proposed new focus area ‘inclusive teaching and learning’ (3.4) requires much of teachers - to use evidence to develop learning strategies that support learners with additional needs and demonstrate an understanding of how to implement learning support and a willingness to seek specialist support where needed, to enable these learners to fully participate and succeed. PPTA does not consider that the current resourcing of this area enables teachers to fully meet this proposed focus.

PPTA knows that learner support has been a chronically underfunded area for many years, that there is a dearth of useful PLD for teachers, and a significant problem with accessing specialist support. Principal members comment that the Ministry creates expectations in the minds of young people and their families, which schools are unable to deliver because of significant under-resourcing, lack of specialist support, and the absence of PLD in learning support.

ERO made several recommendations in its report on the quality of education for disabled learners in schools and services across Aotearoa NZ.² These were for improvements that were focussed on strengthening teachers’ capability, inclusive of principals as well as prioritising PLD in this area. It was noted that secondary teachers reported low confidence in supporting students with disabilities and therefore quality PLD in this area would be important in schools as well as within the ITE programme. At this time, PPTA does not believe that these recommendations have been acted on.

PPTA supports the need for inclusive teaching and learning, but this certainly needs to be done in conjunction with appropriate levels of resources, support and specialist guidance.

1.4 Standard 4: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

Teach and respond to learners in a knowledgeable way to progress their learning at an appropriate depth and pace.

PPTA agrees that teachers should plan for and implement effective teaching and learning, which includes demonstrating high expectations (4.1), teaching in ways that ensure all learners are making sufficient progress (4.2), and through coherent teaching programmes (4.3).

PPTA would not like to see teaching reduced to sequenced learning and teaching programmes, with scripted teaching. Teachers are professionals with specialist subject knowledge that enables them to be innovative in their teaching, encouraging student agency and creativity. Sometimes lessons will go ‘off script’ and perhaps be unstructured to catch a ‘teachable moment’.

PPTA is also concerned that the broader, global shift in education³ towards standardisation, high-stakes accountability, and the use of corporate management models has led to some jurisdictions being increasingly reliant on commercial programs for teaching students.⁴

PPTA considers the autonomy of the teacher and their professional knowledge and skills to be paramount and does not want to see this standard used to emphasise or encourage conformity in lessons. (4.3)

² [Thriving at school? Education for disabled learners in schools](#)

³ [Global Educational Reform Movement is here! | Pasi Sahlberg](#)

⁴ [Chances are your child’s school uses commercial programs to support teaching: what parents should know](#)

Teachers should use a repertoire of teaching strategies, approaches, and learning activities (4.4) and use these adaptively in response to the needs of individuals and groups of learners. PPTA strongly agrees that teaching and learning are relationship-driven (4.5).

Members question whether this standard could be read like a list, with 4.1 more important than 4.5 or 4.6. If this is not the intention, we would suggest reordering the focus areas with 4.5 first and 4.6 second.

Māori must be supported to succeed as Māori (4.6), but these are not necessarily measurable outcomes that can be seen in literacy, numeracy, NCEA or PISA results.

1.5 Standard 5: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

Develop a culture which is focused on learning, and is characterised by respect, inclusion, empathy, compassion, collaboration, and safety.

The creation and maintenance of supportive and safe learning environments is an important aspect of quality teaching practice. Teachers do need to support learner participation (5.1) and ensure access to learning for all through the support of learner participation (5.2).

PPTA has frequent feedback from members that behaviour is an increasing issue in the nation's classrooms. PISA 2022 results highlighted the importance of the behaviour climate and its relationship to achievement. Results showed that the behavioural climate in Maths has largely remained the same since 2012, but negative behaviours occur at a much higher rate than the OECD average and are strongly negatively related to achievement.⁵ ERO has also noted that it is time to address behaviour in our classrooms as it is a major problem in NZ schools, and it is worse than other countries.⁶

ERO's report found that not all teachers are well prepared to manage behaviour and that many teachers and principals struggle to access the expert support they need, particularly in secondary schools and schools in low socioeconomic communities. There are inconsistencies in behaviour management both within schools and between schools, suggesting an immediate need to provide support and suitable PLD to schools.

Promoting positive behaviour (5.3), developing a shared understanding of what positive behaviour looks like, and setting high expectations in the learning environment for everyone *sounds sensible*. However, at the time of writing, the Ministry of Education's only programme for behaviour support for schools is Positive Behaviour for Learning, and it is unclear if this is to continue.

If teachers are to be held accountable to this standard, the government must also be accountable to provide a suitable programme that supports schools in promoting positive behaviour, as well as the provision of expert support to schools and teachers in need of this.

PPTA continues to question whether there has been enough focussed PLD and time to enable all teachers to incorporate strategies to promote the safe, responsible, and ethical use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), in learning and teaching (5.4).

⁵ [PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment | OECD](#)

⁶ [Time to Focus: Behaviour in our Classrooms – Summary](#)

1.6 Standard 6: Assess, provide feedback, and report on learning

Regularly and consistently assess and report on learner progress.

PPTA does consider that teachers should monitor the extent and pace of learning (6.1) and that teachers need to identify progress and learners' needs (6.2) as well as provide effective feedback (6.3) to students.

The PPTA agrees that the communication of clear and accurate assessment for learning and achievement information (6.4) is important. Identifying progress, strengths, and areas for development is a skill of teachers, and there are many ways of doing this.

We do not support the increase in standardised assessment and Aromatawai tools. There is growing concern that the direction of curriculum change is increasingly driven by a desire for standardisation. Frameworks such as *Te Mātaiaho*, developed with considerable thought and sector input, now appear to be at risk of being retrofitted to meet the demands of a 'knowledge-rich curriculum based on the science of learning.'⁷

Understandably, teachers and school leaders remain cautious about the role of standardised testing, given its poor track record internationally. In many jurisdictions, it has been used to justify performance-based pay systems, with deeply damaging consequences for learners.

PPTA notes that education leaders and their peak bodies in the primary sector in Aotearoa have long supported assessment for learning (formative assessment) and oppose standardised testing that risks teaching to the test, negative impacts on student hau ora, high stakes league table ranking of schools, and performance pay for teachers.⁸

1.7 Standard 7: Engage in professional learning

Use inquiry, collaborative problem-solving and professional learning to improve professional capability.

PPTA believes that professional learning and development (PLD) is an integral part of all teachers' professional practice. Schools have an obligation to support the professional development of their staff.

PPTA agrees that this proposed standard appropriately encompasses an important aspect of quality practice.

1.8: Standard 8: Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers, and the community

Establish and maintain professional relationships and behaviours focused on the learning and wellbeing of each learner.

This proposed standard appropriately encompasses an important aspect of quality practice.

Teachers should engage in reciprocal, professional, and collaborative relationships (8.1) and build positive, culturally appropriate relationships with learners and their parents and whānau (8.2). Communicating effectively with others (8.3), actively contributing and working collegially (8.4) is the daily work of teachers.

PPTA expects teachers to meet relevant regulatory, statutory, and professional requirements (8.4).

⁷ tahurangi.education.govt.nz/our-story

⁸ [Harmful and outdated: Government standardised testing move is...](#)

Overall assessment and implementation

PPTA agrees that there is alignment with these standards and effective practice of a teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The principal member feedback is that the standards align well with what most are expecting in their schools, and they are comfortable with the proposed standards. There is recognition that the 'new' standards for the teaching profession are not dissimilar to the current standards.

PPTA's 2017 submission on the Draft Code of Professional Responsibility and

Standards for the Teaching Profession strongly supported the reduction in the number of criteria to six from twelve, and we are concerned to see a proposed increase in the number of standards in this latest consultation.

PPTA has had feedback that the Teaching Council should not increase the number of standards. To be effective, the standards need to be memorable, and an increase in the number of standards may make this more difficult.

PPTA has received much feedback that it is unfortunate to have two sets of standards that teachers need to meet. Principal members question whether merging the standards to have one set of standards would be beneficial.

The feedback from our field service team is that there is confusion and vagueness. It is not clear how the Standards for the Teaching Profession link to Our Code, Our Standards (professional code) or rule 9 Teaching Council Rules 2016 which defines serious misconduct [Teaching Council Rules 2016 \(LI 2016/122\) \(as at 29 July 2023\) 9 Criteria for reporting serious misconduct – New Zealand Legislation](#).

It should be noted that our legal team considers Our Code, Our Standards is working well and does not need tinkering with, diluting, or making more ambiguous.

The role of focus areas

The PPTA accepts the Teaching Council proposal to make the 'focus areas' more integral to the application of the 2025 standards.

PPTA does not want to see these used in a checklist of 34 items for the Professional Growth Cycle; however, it can see that the focus areas standing as part of the standards provide some more clarity to teachers' effective practice.

Principal members do question if the focus areas (formerly elaborations) make them more memorable for teachers.

PPTA greatly appreciated the information made available in the resource, *How the proposed standards' focus areas were developed from the existing elaborations and the Statement of Government Priorities, plus ideas from the Australian Standards*.

The use of domains

PPTA has had feedback that the domains could help to make the standards an effective and accessible representation of the effective practice of a teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Principal members consider Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, and Professional Engagement clear, sensible, and direct. They do, however, point out that, I know, I do, I am – will possibly complicate matters, especially with these phrases being used in the revised curriculum (Know, Do).

Member feedback is that the grammar of the standards is problematic. A teacher reading these can respond to the "I KNOW *the content*" and the "I DO *assess, provide feedback, and report on learning.*" However, when considering ... "I AM *engage in professional learning*"? This needs to be addressed.

Implementing the standards

The PPTA accepts that the changes proposed here are not intended to fundamentally depart from the Standards currently in place. PPTA's submission highlights areas we consider problematic.

PPTA believes that embedding these proposed new standards requires the profession to have reliable access to PLD in many areas if teachers are to be confident in all aspects of the Standards for the Profession.

The supporting information for this consultation states that ongoing development requires the Standards to adapt, ensuring that all teachers feel prepared and confident to teach. It highlights shifts in practice resulting from the COVID years, further development of the learning sciences and how the brain works, the ubiquity of artificial intelligence, and the refresh of the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.

PPTA considers that in each of these areas, teachers were not supported with appropriate resources and/ or PLD. Teachers made adaptations, and the shifts in practice were often at the expense of a balanced workload.

PPTA would like to see secondary-specific supporting material as well as material that would be useful for beginning teachers, experienced teachers, middle and senior leaders, and people in specialist roles.