Senior secondary assessment faces some unique challenges…

At primary	By senior secondary
Progressions and progress tools help teachers understand and track progress against parts of the National Curriculum.	Teachers often lack the tools they need to understand young people's progression against the National Curriculum.
Children make progress across the National Curriculum and across Learning Areas.	Young people begin to specialise and choose the courses they take, so often won't progress in every Learning Area.
Most courses are built from content in the National Curriculum, and essential skills and competencies from the curriculum's front half are evident.	Courses are often built around achievement and / or unit standards, and essential skills and competencies from the front half of the curriculum are often neglected.
Most learning delivered by education providers happens in a school setting	A significant amount of learning happens outside of school – including with tertiary providers and in workplaces
A significant amount of learning occurs in cross-curricular settings, and the use of the inquiry cycle is a key part of the teaching and learning process.	Most learning continues to occur in subject-based silos for a variety of reasons, including prior teacher practice, University Entrance requirements, and parent and whānau expectations.

Years 9 and 10 at times show features of both settings.

…but there are a number of ways we can start to tackle them, using priority and other programmes – which we've sorted using five principles of a strong senior secondary system:

Principle	Possible issues	Opportunities
Wellbeing	• Excessive assessment may be encouraged because more assessment – and more credits – is seen as good, including by parents, whānau and young people. • This may impose excessive workload on teachers, and young people may face more high-stakes assessment than is necessary.	• Using the NCEA review to better discourage excessive assessment, such as by considering credit counts and the role of each level of NCEA. • Options to strengthen NCEA digital assessment, including digital external and internal assessment.
Equity	• Not every young New Zealander has the same opportunities to succeed, and young New Zealanders in low SES environments, or who are Māori and Pasifika, may experience fewer choices and may not have the same chance to succeed. • There is a perceived disparity between 'academic' and 'vocational' learning, which discourages young people from following vocational pathways or engaging in vocational learning, and may stigmatise those who follow these pathways.	• Using the NCEA review to explore ways to strengthen equitable access to an NCEA, and to rich learning. • Using the School Leaver's Toolkit to ensure universal access to the learning needed to succeed in life and the workforce. • Strengthening the Vocational Pathways to provide more support to young people with a 'vocational' focus, and to improve parity of esteem. • Using Te Kotahitanga as a vehicle to improve the integration of te ao Māori into English-medium settings. • Investing in Māori-medium education, including through a Wānanga Tohu Matauranga qualification.
Coherence	• NCEA provides significant choice to young people, and their teachers and school leaders who design programmes – but this can mean that important learning is sometimes missed. • There are opportunities to strengthen literacy and numeracy, and other 'core literacies' and 21st century learning (e.g., civics, financial and digital literacy), and to make building coherent courses easier.	• Using the NCEA review to encourage or require more coherent programme design, which includes a stronger 'common core'. • Using the School Leaver's Toolkit, or strengthening the Vocational Pathways, to make it easier for schools to deliver teaching based on soft skills or 21st century learning.
Pathways	• NCEA is a powerfully flexible qualification – but this can also make it hard for young people, and their families, whānau and teachers to work out what kind of NCEA will be most useful for them. • We should consider how the choice architecture of NCEA, and the supports and curriculum design tools which surround it, can make this decision-making process easier and more robust.	• Using the NCEA review to strengthen NCEA's choice architecture, and identify supports which may make pathway identification easier. • Strengthening the Vocational Pathways to help signal which pathways will be most valuable for each young person, and make it easier to deliver programmes of learning which respond to these. • Revising Youth Guarantee initiatives to make secondary-tertiary initiatives more responsive to the needs and pathways of diverse young people.
Credibility	• It can be difficult for young people, teachers, school leaders, parents and whānau, employers and the wider community to understand NCEA, and senior secondary education more widely – including secondary-tertiary partnerships and the Vocational Pathways. • Some programmes of learning may not be credible – e.g., programmes mainly built using unit standards – or viewed as credible by all, particularly employers.	• Using the NCEA review to make NCEA more accessible and more readily understood. • Strengthening the Vocational Pathways to improve the quality of 'vocational' and practical teaching and learning programmes.

In particular, the NCEA review is a powerful opportunity to start considering ways to strengthen senior secondary education:

PHASE 1: SCOPING November 2017 – December 2017	PHASE 2: CONSULTATION February 2018 – July 2018	PHASE 3: REPORTING August 2018 – November 2018	PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION December 2018 – Onwards
• Establish Advisory Group • Prepare and announce Terms of Reference • Provide you with a Cabinet Paper	• Advisory Group works with the Ministry to develop public-facing discussion materials • Focus groups for young people and whānau • 50+ workshops and hui nationally • Dedicated online platform and consultation programme	• Development of a consultation report reflecting public perspectives • Report-back to Cabinet • Recommendations agreed by Cabinet	• Design strategy and options to progress recommendations • Progressively implement recommendations with appropriate sector support