

Funding Determinations for 2026 - Consultation on Proposed Changes

Feedback provided by Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa (on behalf of the ACE Sector Strategic Group and the wider ACE sector)

Introduction

The Ministry for Education has invited feedback on a range of proposed variations to current funding determinations issued under section 423 of the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act).

ACE Aotearoa, with the ACE Sector Strategic Group (ASSG) and the wider sector, has prepared its response on these changes, received from ACE providers, for consideration and inclusion, prior to the Minister's decision to proceed with the variations.

ACE Aotearoa and the ACE Sector Strategic Group (ASSG)

The Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector is a critical partner in the education system, with a history of engaging with and changing the lives of New Zealanders socially and economically marginalised, and with intergenerational needs that inhibit their success in education and employment.

The ACE sector provides affordable, local education and professional development to communities. It targets adults and offers programmes to improve basic skills, language, literacy, and numeracy, building people's capabilities to seek further education, and employment and promotion within the New Zealand workforce.

ACE Aotearoa established the ACE Sector Steering Group to serve as an authoritative commentator on emerging ACE issues and provide strategic oversight from a sector and stakeholder perspective, for the benefit of all ACE learners.

The current members of the ASSG are:

- ACE Aotearoa
- Ako Aotearoa
- Centre for Pacific Languages
- Community Learning Association in Secondary Schools (CLASS)
- English Language Partners NZ
- Federation of Workers Education Association (FWEA)
- Literacy Aotearoa
- REAP Aotearoa NZ
- Te Ataarangi Trust.

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Feedback on Funding Determinations Proposed Changes - Overview

ACE Aotearoa thanks the Minister for Vocational Education, Minister for Universities and the Minister of Education, as well as the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission for this opportunity to provide feedback. On the whole, we understand that most of the changes proposed are generally positive for learners of the sector, and we note particularly in that regard the ability to deliver Foundation Education online with the introduction of the sections related to allow the delivery of:

- online synchronous learning, and
- asynchronous learning.

These clauses are significant to the ACE sector in a number of ways, and most importantly to learners who seek to attend educational programmes, after work, from remote areas, and with other dimensions that affect their ability to get to programmes face-to-face. It also enables providers to utilise their tutor workforce to deliver across the country, and not only in the locations that they reside.

1. Adult and Community Education (ACE)

As previously noted, we support the addition of section 16 to allow for the delivery of online synchronous learning. As a number of the ACE providers noted this will ensure ACE learners' needs can be responded to with effective, equitable and accessible learning to across the entire country.

From our engagement with learners who, for many reasons, have found education participation and achievement difficult, and often negative, every opportunity to make learning easy to access and engage with, is another step in removing barriers and building opportunities for them to recognise their potential and gain possibilities for their future.

We also support the change provided in section 17 to allow written approval for asynchronous learning that has been given in a previous funding year to remain valid for the current funding year unless the approval is revoked by the TEC.

Several of our providers are concerned that the focus on priority learners (Māori, Pacific and disabled) has been removed from the funding for ACE in Schools. There was strong agreement that the sector must continue to push for meaningful equity in these areas, and seeks clarification on the status of the definitions of:

- ACE priority learners, and
- ACE priorities.

The formalisation of the six-hour minimum learning duration for funding eligibility for schools was also noted.

Note: We have been advised by one of the ACE sector providers that Section 25b will need to be updated to reflect the changes in section 16. We suggest that the wording is reviewed to allow for the delivery of online synchronous learning as per section 16.

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2. Delivery at Levels 1 and 2 on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (DQ1-2)

ACE Aotearoa has no feedback to provide on these changes.

3. Delivery at Levels 3 – 7 (non-degree) on the New Zealand Qualifications and category for this funding, to reflect Cabinet decisions.

ACE Aotearoa remains concerned for the impact of removing any mechanisms that recognise and support meeting the specific needs of Māori and Pacific learners, in order to address issues of equitable and fair treatment and achievement of marginalised learners and their communities.

4. Delivery at Level 7 (degree) and above on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (DQ7-10)

ACE Aotearoa has no feedback to provide on these changes.

5. English Language Teaching

ACE Aotearoa has no feedback to provide on these changes.

6. Gateway

ACE Aotearoa has no feedback to provide on these changes.

7. Literacy and Numeracy Provision

ACE Aotearoa has no feedback to provide on these changes.

8. Māori and Pasifika Trades Training (MPTT)

- Section 9(b) now reads:

Additional ~~culturally appropriate~~ learner support (activities, equipment, or other support), which contributes to learners' success, ~~with a focus on the needs of female learners and learners who may be less likely to participate or achieve in vocational training without MPTT.~~

ACE Aotearoa believes the removal of the term 'culturally appropriate' to qualify learner support, fails to recognise the necessity for researched and recognised teaching and training approaches that best meet the needs of Māori and Pacific learners, to ensure, as outlined in section 3(c) this training is aligned more closely to the needs of learners, employers and of Māori and Pasifika communities.

ACE Aotearoa also believes it remains important to ensure a focus on the needs of female learners and learners who may be less likely to participate or achieve in vocational training without MPTT, to facilitate their successful participation and achievement in their chosen trades training.

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9. Youth Guarantee

The ACE Aotearoa has no feedback to provide on these changes.

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10. Additional Comment

On behalf of a number of the small ACE providers, ACE Aotearoa would like to raise the issue of the current tender system for ACE funding. The concern is that the process is inequitable, with amounts for the same programmes markedly different across the sector.

Discussion on this matter would be appreciated.

11. Closing Comments

ACE Aotearoa is appreciative of the opportunity to provide feedback. ACE Aotearoa also recognises the need to have focussed conversations with the Ministry of Education and the TEC to consider new and additional contributions of the ACE sector towards the current government agenda.

We see the value in scoping the ways the ACE sector can enhance opportunities for the expected future workforce of Aotearoa, noting that it is understood that in 2040 it will be primarily made up from Māori, Pacific and Asian communities – the communities we work alongside to create transformative and relevant successful outcomes.

We welcome any questions or discussion regarding our feedback. Please contact:

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