

18 December 2024

### **NZATE Feedback on The Rewritten Curriculum**

The New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (NZATE) received a draft of *The New Zealand Curriculum: English Years 7 - 13* on 9 December 2024 with a deadline for feedback on 18 December. Three members of the NZATE Executive had a one-hour meeting with members of the MOE on 10 December where the areas of focus were discussed. Executive disseminated this draft to a focus group of English teachers and curriculum experts and then organised a face-to-face meeting with this group in Wellington on 17 - 18 December.

The following is the collation of our feedback to the MOE. It has been collated within sections that will cover:

- **Areas that NZATE have identified as constructive.**  
These aspects were highlighted as being particularly positive. We recognise these components as valuable to an English curriculum in Aotearoa.
- **Aspects that NZATE has identified as concerning or in need of addressing.**  
These are aspects that lack development or clarity. We feel they leave too much to chance and need strengthening.
- **NZATE strongly recommends that the following actions are taken.**  
These actions are based on the areas that NZATE identifies as being areas of concern and in need of revision, or that complement the constructive aspects already identified.

## **Areas that NZATE identified as constructive:**

### **Inclusion of Oral Language**

NZATE appreciates seeing oral language clearly expressed in the 7 - 13 English curriculum. We see the need to be more direct and to clarify the progressions in this area. The creation of a safe environment for oral language skills to be built is required and needs to be explicitly expressed in the Curriculum. Ensuring that the progress outcomes are clearly subject English based will be transformational.

### **Text Diversity and Range**

It is exciting to see the diversity and range of texts as an area that is required in the Curriculum; we feel positive about students experiencing a range of text content and text types. We see the potential of the 'Criteria for Selecting Texts' to support kaiako to feel more confident in how they select the texts for students to engage meaningfully with. We also appreciate that this Curriculum requires ākonga to read multiple extended written texts.

### **Cross-Curricular Literacy**

The reference made to the importance of cross-curricular literacy is heartening. We note that an adaptation of the following statement would be important for every learning area to include in their Curriculum document, specifying their own disciplinary contexts:

*Elements of structured literacy approaches: During phase 5, students apply the elements of structured literacy approaches through English disciplinary contexts as they explore language studies and textual studies.*

### **Consistent Delivery of the Curriculum**

NZATE sees that the Curriculum document could be an important way of reducing the variation of what is being taught in classrooms by increasing the specific detail in learning outcomes. As a subject association, NZATE has value to add to this space, but we need a reasonable amount of time and access to do this.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Separating learning outcomes for accessibility is helpful for kaiako. There is a need for these to be made more understandable for teachers. There is an issue with the overall coherency; some are more specific and clear than others.

### **Understand - Know - Do (UKD)**

NZATE sees the UKD across all phases as appropriate and this clearly articulates the learning focus and progressions for these phases of the Curriculum. The expansion of the descriptors under the various headings in the UKD is set out successfully and consistently in the receptive and productive modes. The increasing complexity from phase to phase worked well. Of particular note, the KNOW and DO in Phase 5 were seen as aspirational and provocative:

- *Students also know that text creators in Aotearoa New Zealand express ideas that represent our unique perspectives, world views, and traditions, and how these reflect and challenge those of global contexts. They know that text creators contribute meaningfully to local, national, and global conversations.*
- *Students know that language is not neutral and that all language (including their own) can express, challenge, promote, and influence how people seek to shape meaning. They know that it provides an insight into perspectives, bias, and contexts.*

**Aspects that NZATE has identified as concerning or in need of addressing. These are aspects we feel leave too much to chance and need strengthening.**

**Document Scope**

This is overwhelming as a document for several reasons:

- The length of and repetition within the document is a barrier to engagement.
- It is unrealistic to expect English teachers to cover everything listed in a year, especially in phase 3 and throughout phase 4.
- All schools do not have the same contact hours with ākonga, per week. This means some kaiako will be understandably overwhelmed by the content expected to be covered in a lesson, week, term, year, and phase.
- To meaningfully engage with all the text types specified, kaiako would need to explore the different texts across a phase instead of across a year.
- The layout of the document impedes understanding and creates a significant cognitive load for teachers attempting to understand the content. Suggestions for addressing this can be found in the recommendations.

**Progress Outcomes**

- In many instances, progress outcomes are not sitting in the appropriate phase. This will make it difficult to ensure that students can achieve all expectations.
- The lack of coherence and consistency across the progress outcomes creates confusion and ambiguity, meaning specific elements may be missed in the teaching and learning sequence. An example of this is the inconsistent and incoherent use of verbs within and across progress outcomes. (e.g. In Phase 4, students are to ‘recognise’ and ‘examine’ then in Phase 5, ‘recognise’, ‘analyse’, and ‘critically evaluate’ or ‘identify’.) The inconsistency of verb usage makes the progression steps less clear.
- A systematic review of the progress outcomes for coherence would support the development of a more logical and sequenced approach between phases.
- There is a significant disconnect between the UKD descriptors and progress outcome framing. The UKD descriptors adequately describe the disciplinary content expectations and would

serve as a stronger framework for the progress outcomes. These should match. The current heading and subheadings create a confusing format for teachers to understand.

- At times, progress outcomes cover multiple teaching and learning aspects within a single outcome. This is likely to create situations where essential learning may be missed or confused due to the need for teachers to unpack the progress outcome before teaching can start. For example *“recognise how their own and the creator’s perspectives and biases and explain how these contribute to communicating meaning in texts, including texts from their own or others’ cultures”*. This example highlights the complex task for teachers. A teacher would need to understand first the need to teach ākonga about:
  - Their own perspective and biases
  - Creator’s perspectives and biases
  - How texts communicate meaning
  - How their own perspectives and biases contribute to the communication of meaning
  - How creator’s perspective and biases contribute to the communication of meaning
  - Identification of texts from their own or others’ cultures
  - How these texts are influenced by their own perspectives and biases.
  - How these texts are influenced by the creators’ perspectives and biases.
- There are a number of progress outcomes which are far too complex and nuanced for the level they are placed in. For example, from Phase 3:
  - *‘critically respond to others’ ideas with sensitivity’*
  - *‘ask probing questions which require them to synthesise knowledge and explore implications’*
  - *‘evaluate digital-media messaging and bias by analysing the accuracy and credibility of information and opinion in digital texts and comparing them against a range of sources’*
  - *‘consider whether the creator can credibly represent a group or a position or share particular stories’*
  - *‘evaluate the use of different forms, conventions, and techniques used in digital texts to analyse the message, context, intended and unintended audience, and purpose of the text’*
  - *‘explore texts that are not easily categorised – for example, poetry that has persuasion as its purpose, or informational narrative texts (such as biographies or historical novels)’*

### Teaching Considerations Sections

- Teaching considerations, as they are currently, are difficult to follow because of the content and layout.
- While there are some interesting ideas and suggestions in these sections, there is an abundance of specificity in some areas (Phase 3) and others are incredibly vague (Phase 5). The guidance should be balanced by paring back overly specific guidance and expanding on areas where guidance is vague or insufficient. An example of guidance that is overly specific can be found in Phase 3 on page 31 referring to “TAG”. The guidance is *“Provide worked examples of ways to give and receive constructive feedback. This could be using methods such as TAG: T – Tell: Start by telling your partner something you like about their work. This positive feedback helps to build confidence and sets a constructive tone. A – Ask: Ask a thoughtful question about their work. This encourages deeper thinking and helps the creator consider different perspectives. G – Give: Give a positive suggestion for improvement. This should be constructive and aimed at helping your partner enhance their work.”* The first sentence, *“Provide worked examples of ways to give and receive constructive feedback”* is sufficient and would avoid the potential for all teachers to teach “TAG”, when the intention is for teachers to support ākonga to understand how to give and receive constructive feedback.
- A stronger layout will better support teachers in understanding the applicability of some approaches across multiple progress outcomes. A significant amount of repetition occurs because a number of teaching considerations can be applied across multiple progress outcomes. One way to address this is to reposition the teaching considerations to the end of a phase and indicating where teaching considerations align with phase outcomes. This current ambiguity will make it hard for kaiako to understand how the guidance is relevant to each progress outcome.
- Pedagogies and activities should be delineated, with a preference for sharing effective pedagogies over pinning down activities.
- It is unclear whether the teaching considerations are guidance or an expectation. While the language ‘should’, ‘could’, or ‘as an example’ are used, kaiako may struggle to delineate where they should follow the curriculum or respond to ākonga in front of them.

### Vague Terminology and Reference

- While the conceptual progression is generally clear, there are areas where language usage introduces ambiguity, inconsistency, or confusion for teachers. While "identify, explore, analyse, evaluate" are used somewhat consistently (and link to previous steps which are familiar to kaiako), other verbs like "engage" and "consider" lack specificity. For instance, in Phase 3, students "engage with the purposes of texts," but in Phase 4, they "engage with complex texts." The terms "engage" and "explore" are vague and could mean anything from reading to analysing to creating. This creates uncertainty for teachers, as it is unclear how to measure or observe "engagement".
- Where vague terminology is used, our recommendation is to either gloss these words or replace them with more specific terminology.
- Furthermore, there is a reference to School Journals in Phase 3 "*School journals include a range of text forms (e.g., poetry, graphic stories and drama) that have been allocated a reading-year level.*" Does this inclusion mean that School Journals meet the criteria of texts—is it an example of the suggested texts?

### Phase 5

- The reference to NCEA in Phase 5 must be removed. The phrasing reads that NCEA will dictate what the content of the Curriculum should be. Our view is that it is inappropriate for the national assessment framework to feature so prominently in the national Curriculum. While the alignment is important, the deliberate naming and referring to NCEA is unnecessary and creates a disconnect for teachers in that they are likely to gloss over or ignore critical learning if the learning is not clearly seen as part of the NCEA framework. NCEA should be expected to align with the Curriculum, not the other way around.
- A clear and coherent connection to both the UKD and English disciplinary content is required for Phase 5 to be robust enough for the rigours of both NCEA and quality English teaching and learning. Phase 5 presents a strong focus on receptive skills and capabilities at the expense of productive ones. The progression of UKD across Phase 5 closely mirrors NCEA standards, leaving an absence of wider disciplinary knowledge necessary for students to progress in the Learning Area and in preparation for the rigours of academic literacies and pursuits.

- Phase 5 lacks explicit references to the creation of texts and requires teachers to infer, from progress outcomes, instances where teaching the creation of texts is necessary. In its current form, too much is left to chance for kaiako.
- Phase 5 needs further building to be sufficiently detailed for robust and quality English teaching and learning programmes to emerge.
- At times, teaching considerations in Phase 5 include aspects that should be progress outcomes, and some progress outcomes would be better suited to being teaching considerations.

#### **‘Front End’**

- The Essence statements and ‘Front End’ of the NZC present a view of ākonga that kaiako are able to draw on when setting up teaching and learning environments. Consideration is given to the aspirations for ākonga and important ‘life-worthy’ learning that should take place. A clear lack of a ‘front end’ means that kaiako do not have a clear understanding of what is expected in this space.
- It is our view that the purpose statement be visionary, specifying what is expected for students of English to learn and be equipped with as a result of the learning experience. As a whole, the Curriculum holds glimpses of ‘aspiration’ shrouded in the overwhelming content and nature of the document itself. The issues identified in this response compound the challenge of clearly understanding the aspirations of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand as a result of their studies in English.



**NZATE strongly recommends that the following actions are taken.**

**Progress Outcomes**

The progress outcomes across Years 0-13 should be reviewed for coherence and consistency. This will include reviewing verb usage that attempts to outline progression.

Below is the beginning of an example of the work required to create this coherence and consistency:

	Critical Analysis				
REPRESENTATION	> <b>recognise</b> how people, places, objects, or ideas are portrayed in multiple texts and <b>explain</b> the different position represented within and across texts	> <b>examine</b> how people, places, objects, or ideas are included, excluded, or represented across multiple texts in different contexts	> <b>recognise</b> inclusion and exclusion, applying this to a range of local, cultural, national, and global texts.	> <b>analyse</b> the representation of perspectives within a range of local, cultural, national, and global texts, <b>considering assumptions</b> and <b>explaining the impact</b> on how we make meaning from these texts	> <b>critically evaluate</b> the representation of perspectives within a range of local, cultural, national, and global texts, <b>taking a critical stance</b> on the text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections across these
PERSPECTIVES & BIAS	> <b>recognise</b> that texts communicate explicit and implicit perspectives	> <b>recognise</b> that texts communicate explicit and implicit perspectives influenced by creators' biases	> <b>recognise</b> how their own and the creator's perspectives and biases and <b>explain</b> how these contribute to communicating meaning in texts, <b>including</b> texts from their own or others' cultures	> <b>analyse</b> their own and the creator's perspectives and biases and <b>explain</b> how these contribute to communicating meaning in texts, <b>including</b> texts from their own or others' cultures	> <b>critically evaluate</b> their own and the creator's perspectives and biases and <b>explain</b> how these contribute to communicating meaning in texts, <b>including</b> texts from their own or others' cultures
PERSPECTIVES			> <b>identify</b> how texts present versions of the world, <b>supporting</b> their arguments with evidence  > <b>identify how texts present versions of the world</b>	> <b>identify</b> how texts present versions of the world, <b>supporting</b> their arguments with evidence  > <b>analyse how texts present versions of the world</b>	> <b>identify</b> how texts present versions of the world, <b>supporting</b> their arguments with evidence  > <b>critique how texts present versions of the world</b>
IDENTIFY IDEAS AND KNOWLEDGE	> <b>make</b> connections between the ideas expressed in texts <b>and</b> their own knowledges and experiences, their own or others' cultures, ideas in other texts, and the world around them	> <b>compare and contrast</b> the ideas expressed in texts with their own knowledges and experiences, their own or others' cultures, the ideas in other texts, and the world around them		> <b>analyse</b> multiple interpretations of increasingly complex and varied texts, including their own	> <b>evaluate</b> competing interpretations of increasingly varied and complex texts, including their own, <b>using a range</b> of critical theories (analytical frameworks) to make informed judgments about the text
CONNECTION BETWEEN TEXTS	> <b>make</b> connections within and between other texts to help them form their interpretations of a text.	> <b>make</b> connections within, between, and beyond texts to help them form and defend their interpretations of texts.			> <b>critique literature through applying critical theories.</b>
THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS			> <b>use</b> critical theories (analytical frameworks) to make informed judgments about the text  > <b>identify how an analytical framework can enhance understandings of a text</b>	> <b>use</b> critical theories (analytical frameworks) to make informed judgments about the text, <b>analysing</b> multiple interpretations, including their own  > <b>analyse literature through applying critical theories (analytical frameworks)</b>	

The example covers Phases 4 & 5. The highlights indicate issues across the levels with verb usage and the lack of knowledge progression. The column on the far left is an attempt to identify the 'key' English knowledge intended to be covered. Questions were raised about timing and coverage of key English knowledge coverage.

These edits took some time. Consideration was given to the content knowledge, progression, and the connection between these. Some of the language used created vagueness or was inappropriate at the level. Checks were made for repetition and redundancies in knowledge coverage.

A deliberate use of the UKD language alongside the progress outcomes would go a long way to support greater clarity of the missing elements within Phase 5. We need a shared language across all Phases

that clearly aligns with the UKD framework. This would improve the coherence of the document as a whole. One way to do this is to be intentional with the headings—make these more explicit and match the Know and Do.

### **A Creating Texts Strand in Phases 4 and 5**

The inclusion of a ‘Creating Texts’ strand is essential for an English curriculum.

Extracting the vague or implicit references to the creation of texts (oral, written or multimodal) will provide greater clarity and highlight the importance of an aspect of the English discipline that cannot be left to chance.

References to students creating texts often appear in the form of *‘their own’* across all phases. Clearly defining the creation of texts and removing these embedded references, is likely to address wider coherence and consistency issues in the progress outcomes. For example, *‘evaluate competing interpretations of increasingly varied and complex texts, **including their own**, using a range of critical theories (analytical frameworks) to make informed judgments about the text’* implies that students should have created texts for interpretation, but provides no real clarity on the process of text creation necessary in preparation for the evaluation of “competing interpretations”.

We see it as critical that the requirement for English teachers to teach the creation of texts is not left to chance. A clear ‘creating’ process should be included in the Curriculum. Phase 3 (page 56-59) sufficiently addresses the creation of texts, and this should be continued through to phases 4 and 5.

### **Layout**

NZATE would like to see an interactive section of the MOE website that allows teachers to see:

- a phase as a whole,
- a progress outcome over the phases, and
- links out to the teaching considerations (and activities, if wanted) to links or explanations if you hover over the words.

This will help support teachers in understanding how specific progress outcomes develop over a student’s schooling, while also knowing the expectations of the several-year phase.

### Text Choices

The selection of texts is fundamental to the curriculum that students experience. The ability for teachers to effectively select texts for teaching and learning is at the heart of English teaching. The text selection criteria goes some way to supporting teachers in selecting quality texts. Having time to meaningfully engage with a range of texts will support the joy of teaching and learning literature.

The current presentation of text selection criteria creates unrealistic expectations and a potential reduction in the quality of text interactions experienced by students. Text selection criteria should better reflect the lived reality of the phase classroom at the same time as maintaining clear expectations for meaningful engagement.

In Phases 3 and 4, a more realistic approach would be an expectation that the required ‘text forms and numbers’ occur across the entire phase, not within a single year. This aligns with common practices in English classrooms of designing ‘junior’ learning programmes which cover essential learning. Further addressed is the potential for cognitive overload where students are required to digest a significant number of texts in a single year, where timetables are often restrictive on the time teachers have to meaningfully engage with texts.

In Phase 5, a more realistic approach would be a year-by-year expectation. This reflects the nature of learning for senior students and creates a clear expectation of text coverage more appropriate to the progression of the English discipline.

In this way, the text selection criteria would be strengthened and provide greater clarity for teachers. Below is an example of how the text selection criteria could be presented across all three phases:

Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5		
Years 7 & 8	Years 9 & 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13
During this phase,	During this phase,	In this year, students	In this year, students	In this year, students

students must engage meaningfully with: › at least one work of extended written text › at least one collection of poetry › at least one film › at least one drama text › a range of text forms, including short texts, and visual, spoken, multimodal, and digital texts.	students must engage meaningfully with: › at least one work of extended written text › at least one collection of poetry › at least one film › at least one drama text › a range of text forms, including short texts, and visual, spoken, multimodal, and digital texts.	must engage meaningfully with: › at least one work of extended written text › at least one collection of poetry › at least one collection of short texts › a range of text forms, including film, drama, and visual, spoken, multimodal, and digital texts.	must engage meaningfully with: › at least one work of extended written text › at least one collection of poetry › at least one collection of short texts › a range of text forms, including film, drama, and visual, spoken, multimodal, and digital texts.	must engage meaningfully with: › at least one work of extended written text › at least one collection of poetry › at least one collection of short texts › a range of text forms, including film, drama, and visual, spoken, multimodal, and digital texts.
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To support changes to the text selection criteria, adjustments should be made to the ‘Range of Texts’ criteria. The ‘Range of texts’ should clearly articulate those text types that ‘must’ be covered and those that ‘should’ be covered. It is our view that there are texts that should not be left to chance. Below is a recommended framework that highlights the difference between ‘must’ and ‘should’:

<b>Range of texts</b>	
<b>Students must experience:</b> › historical and contemporary texts by Aotearoa New Zealand creators that represent a diversity of experiences of Aotearoa New Zealand › texts by Māori creators that reflect Māori histories, experiences and voices › texts by Pacific creators that reflect Pacific histories, experiences and voices › texts they have chosen for personal interest and enjoyment.	<b>Students should experience:</b> › fiction and non-fiction texts that are widely regarded as quality literature › texts from around the world that reflect diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, including texts that have stood the test of time › texts from popular and youth cultures

Text selection criteria needs greater coherence.

Further, we see a difference between age-appropriate texts and the disciplinary demands of a text. The selection criteria should specifically highlight the difference between age-appropriateness and

disciplinary demands. This could be explored in a more explicit way to support teachers understanding the difference when suggesting texts for personal reading, enjoyment or selecting texts for specific curriculum demands.

### **Oral language**

Oral Language needs to be further explored in Phase 3 and included more explicitly in Phase 4 and 5. It is woven throughout these Phases 4 and 5 but needs to be more obvious. We would like to see an addition of progress outcomes that specify confidence in speaking and expressing their views; seeing their ideas as valid; and being able to listen effectively as well as the need for students to structure and develop ideas for oracy and be aware of oracy skills in Phase 3 and beyond.

## Conclusion

Despite the quick turnaround between receiving this draft Curriculum and having to deliver our response, NZATE is confident that we have unpacked it thoroughly. As is, we feel the document is not fit for purpose as a curriculum document for teaching subject English in Aotearoa New Zealand. We have indicated specific areas for improvement, with suggestions on how to achieve this. However, it is important to note that these suggestions are only a beginning and many can be applied to other areas of the Curriculum. Given the short timeframe, we were unable to revise all sections in depth and so we began to do this with the Critical Analysis section as a starting point. The revision of the Critical Analysis can provide a solid exemplar for ways to ensure coherence within the Curriculum.

Our concerns are based on the need to ensure that no learning is left to chance. NZATE knows the importance of ensuring that all kaiako are fully supported to teach English brilliantly.

As a subject association, NZATE remains open to working collaboratively to develop a curriculum document which reflects our unique contexts, English disciplinary demands and an aspirational future for our rangatahi. We view collaboration with the association as an essential part of any future discussions or iterations.

The New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English