

Language competency policy review – pre-consultation feedback summary

Background

In September and November 2023, a series of online and in-person hui were held with education agencies, stakeholder and peak body groups to discuss draft policy options for a review of our [Language competency for teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand](#) policy. The policy review is focused on potential approaches for amending the policy, including recognising competency in Pacific languages, and what English language competency (ELC) level might be appropriate for teaching in Pacific bilingual and immersion settings.

Participants in the hui discussed the following options:

- Option One: Adding a Pacific language competency (PLC) option with an evidence requirement for PLC and no evidence requirement for ELC.
- Option Two: No longer having the Council’s ELC requirement for entry into initial teacher education (currently higher than general academic entry) for speakers of Pacific languages.
- Option Three: Expanding evidence for demonstrating ELC for applicants coming to New Zealand from the Pacific to include schooling and tertiary studies in Pacific countries.
- Option Four: Introduce a scope of practice that recognises language competency in relation to a particular language medium setting and use the “collegial relationships (like mentoring) to support movement between language medium settings.

Five discussion questions were provided to facilitate conversation:

- Are there other options that could be considered?
- Are there issues/concerns you can see with any of the options outlined in the previous slides?
- Of all the options we discussed, which do you think are most likely to have a positive impact?
- How would your preferred option/s work in your sector?
- Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion?

What we heard

Option One: Adding a Pacific language competency option with an evidence requirement for Pacific language competency and no evidence requirement for English language competency.

Most participants welcomed the addition of a Pacific language competency option to the policy but also raised a range of issues or other considerations.

A small number of participants were opposed to this option, unless it also included a requirement for English language competency.

Table 1: Feedback on Option One

Theme	Feedback
The role that language, culture, and identity play in supporting teaching and learning.	Introducing a PLC option sends a strong signal about the value of Pacific languages and recognises the important role language, culture, and identity play in supporting teaching and learning.
The need for command of English for study and teaching.	<p>Concern that applicants using a Pacific Language Competency (PLC) option may not have sufficient command of English to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manage academic study (ITE). • move between language mediums (teacher registration). • deal with administrative and other aspects of a teaching role (teacher registration). <p><i>Note:</i> Initial Teacher Education (ITE) - Academic entry requirements mean ITE applicants would still need to meet language competency requirements (usually level 6).</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Overseas applicants from Pacific countries seeking to register as a teacher will need to meet teaching qualification requirements (L7). There are two NZQA pre-approved qualifications from the University of the South Pacific where the medium of instruction is English.</p>
How to develop a framework for evidence of Pacific language competency that captures language diversity and needs of different sectors.	<p>An evidence framework for PLC that can capture the diversity of Pacific languages needs to be developed, including considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different needs for those who may be developing competency in a Pacific language/s • whether there should be different capability requirements for different sectors (ECE, primary, secondary) • whether there should be different requirements for bilingual or immersion settings <p><i>Note:</i> If a Pacific language competency pathway is introduced, we would seek advice on appropriate criteria for an evidence framework.</p>
The importance of having registered kaiako teachers who understand the pedagogy of teaching	<p>For any language teaching – the importance of having registered kaiako teachers who understand the pedagogy of teaching – there is a high level of complexity in acquiring additional languages.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> The proposed policy changes seek to support an increased number of registered teachers who are proficient or fluent speakers of Pacific languages.</p>

Option Two: No longer having the Council's English language competency requirement for entry into initial teacher education (currently higher than general academic entry) for speakers of Pacific languages.

This option is likely to be most useful as an interim step, if a PLC option is introduced into the policy, by providing a pathway for applicants who might otherwise use the PLC option.

Participants had mixed views about this option, with many indicating support, but posing questions, and a small number being opposed to the option.

Table 2: Feedback on Option Two

Theme	Feedback
Important as part of a package of options to support increased numbers of Pacific teachers.	One aspect of an overall approach that would contribute to increased numbers of Pacific teachers in the profession and supporting bilingual/immersion settings.
Having a sufficient command of English for academic study.	<p>Concern about whether an ITE applicant who is a speaker of Pacific language/s would have a sufficient command of English to undertake academic study.</p> <p>Note: Academic entry requirements mean ITE applicants would still need to meet language competency requirements (usually level 6).</p> <p>Most applicants from the Pacific will have completed schooling where English is the medium of instruction or is part of a structured bilingual approach.</p>
Different English language requirements or processes between agencies create barriers.	<p>There would be difficulty in not having one clear pathway with agencies working independently, and applicants having to complete several English tests with different agencies.</p> <p>Note: The Council will continue to work closely with other agencies to identify where we can streamline information and processes.</p>

Option Three: Expanding evidence for demonstrating English language competency for applicants coming to New Zealand from the Pacific to include schooling and tertiary studies in Pacific countries.

Most participants were supportive of this option and saw it as a relatively easy change that could quickly have significant positive impacts for Pacific bilingual and immersion settings.

Table 3: Feedback on Option Three

Theme	Feedback
Having good information available about medium for teaching and learning in the Pacific.	<p>The Council should include a process to obtain national-level attestation of whether English as the medium of instruction.</p> <p>Noted – will include this information as background to this option. Most Pacific countries have English as the medium of instruction for schooling or as part of a structured bilingual approach.</p>
Need alignment between NZQA and Council requirements.	Note: The Council will continue to work with NZQA to ensure that where possible our processes are aligned.

Option Four: Introduce a scope of practice that recognises language competency in relation to a particular language medium setting and use “collegial relationships (like mentoring) to support movement between language medium settings.

This option generated a lot of discussion among participants, with many of the view that it has merit and should be explored further, but also noting issues that would need to be resolved.

Table 4: Feedback on Option Four

Theme	Feedback
Cost and time/resource impacts on centres, schools, and kura.	Any processes for movement from one language medium to another need to be robust and but also cost/resource effective. Participants made several suggestions about how this could be done. Would need to explore options for other approaches to language medium mentoring that have less impact on the setting.
Requiring a further qualification to attest language competency.	Whether a teacher seeking to move to another language medium should be required to do another qualification as evidence of competency in the language of the new medium.

Other feedback

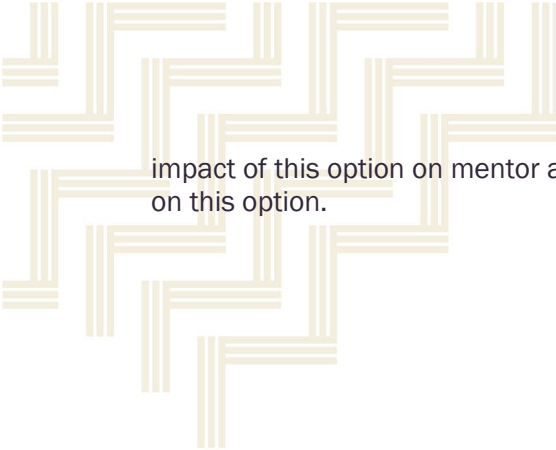
Theme	Feedback
Supporting pathways for teachers who are developing their competency in Pacific languages.	How pathways could be developed for teachers who are already registered in Aotearoa New Zealand, but who may be developing their competency in a Pacific language/s.
Changing qualification level requirements for teacher registration.	The level of qualifications required for registration as a teacher (level 7) was raised particularly in relation to the ECE sector. <i>Note: This issue is outside the parameters of this policy review, which is focused on language competency requirements.</i>
Consultation document	Ensuring that responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi to actively support the growth and revitalisation of te reo Māori is clearly outlined. Focus on positive impacts of the proposed changes/how they support greater recognition for the value of Pacific languages in education. Make the relationship of language, culture, and identity clear - language does not exist in isolation from culture and identity (and vice versa). Provide a range of visuals and design elements for easy engagement with the content.
Technical changes to the policy.	The Council's Exemptions Panel provided feedback on the draft policy options, but also noted other areas in the current policy that they considered could be amended or clarified.

Next steps

We have reviewed the feedback from the stakeholder pre-engagement hui and have made several amendments to the proposals.

These largely focus on presenting options more clearly as package that supports a proposed Pacific language competency pathway (rather than presenting this as singular options).

We have also decided not to progress the scopes of practice option for language competency. While this concept may have utility for the teaching profession in the future, the other options allow movement across mediums and provide assurance that a kaiako | teacher has sufficient command of English to undertake other aspects of a teaching role. We also noted the concerns raised about the potential



impact of this option on mentor and teacher workloads – this also influenced the decision not to consult on this option.