

Outdoor Education Year 12 & 13 out for Consultation

EONZ is delighted that Outdoor Education | Akoranga tū-ā-nuku has been confirmed as a Ministry-led subject within the senior secondary curriculum. This is a significant milestone for Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and we thank everyone who has supported, advocated for, and contributed to getting us to this point.

For the first time, Outdoor Education will have its own national curriculum for Years 12–13. The curriculum is knowledge-rich, but that does not mean learning will be knowledge-only or classroom-based. It sets out the knowledge students need to learn and the disciplinary practices they use to apply that knowledge in outdoor contexts.

What does a knowledge-rich, whole-subject curriculum mean?

The draft curriculum sets out knowledge statements, covering the facts, concepts, principles, and theories students need to know, alongside practice statements, covering the skills, strategies, and applications they need to learn. All knowledge and practice statements for each year level must be taught.

This does not mean every statement needs to become a separate unit or topic. Teachers have flexibility over how they organise the curriculum. Knowledge and practices can be integrated across strands and elements and taught through contexts that suit the school, students, local environment, iwi and hapū relationships, and teacher expertise.

There is no required sequence for teaching the strands, elements, knowledge, or practices (i.e. its non-linear). Teachers can organise and integrate them in the way that best suits their programme, students, and context.

Examples introduced by words such as “for example” or “such as” are guidance only and are not prescribed contexts.

A journey, sea kayaking trip, local restoration project, climbing programme, or aquatic experience, for example, can be used to teach and integrate knowledge and practices from across different strands and elements.

The new NZCE and NZACE qualifications will use whole-subject assessment, combining coursework and external assessment rather than separate Achievement or Unit Standards.

What happens to Outdoor Recreation Unit Standards?

We know this is one of the biggest questions for schools.

Nothing changes immediately. Current Outdoor Recreation Unit Standards remain available within the current NCEA system. NZCE will begin for Year 12 in 2029 and NZACE for Year 13 in 2030. Until then, schools can continue to use existing standards within NCEA.

EONZ is working with the Services Industry Skills Board (ISB), which manages the current unit standards, to help retain assessment options and flexibility in the future system.

Our aim is for appropriate Unit Standard or Skill Standard assessment options to remain available alongside the new Outdoor Education curriculum. Although these would not count

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towards NZCE or NZACE, they could provide formal recognition of students' outdoor skills and achievement on their New Zealand Record of Achievement.

EONZ will continue working with the Services ISB as the future standards framework develops and will keep schools updated.

What about Year 11 Outdoor Education?

Year 11 Outdoor Education is not included in the Ministry-led subject development process. EONZ recognises that this creates uncertainty for schools, particularly as NCEA Level 1 is removed in 2028.

EONZ intends to develop a Year 11 Outdoor Education curriculum and supporting resources to support schools to continue to offer a coherent Year 11 programme that prepares students well for the Ministry-led Year 12 and 13 Outdoor Education curriculum.

For schools that already offer Year 11 Outdoor Education, **we strongly encourage you to continue**. Year 11 provides an important foundation for students to build outdoor knowledge, practical capability, confidence, relationships with place, and the understanding needed for more advanced learning in Years 12 and 13.

Our aim is to give schools clear guidance and practical support so Year 11 Outdoor Education remains a strong and viable part of the senior Outdoor Education pathway, even though it sits outside the Ministry-led curriculum development process.

Who has been involved?

EONZ has been privileged to be involved in developing the new Outdoor Education curriculum.

The writing and review process has brought together a wide range of Outdoor Education expertise and experience, including experienced teachers and practitioners, curriculum specialists, mātauranga Māori expertise, and specialist reviewers.

It has been particularly valuable to have people involved who understand both what makes Outdoor Education a distinctive discipline and what high-quality Outdoor Education looks like across different schools, communities, and outdoor environments.

The curriculum must also meet the Ministry's wider Phase 5 requirements, including being knowledge-rich, showing clear progression between year levels, fitting within the national curriculum structure, and being teachable within the available curriculum time. Within those parameters, our focus has been on creating a curriculum that is authentic, coherent, practical, and relevant to the widest possible range of students and schools.

We need your feedback

The consultation period is only four weeks, so we strongly encourage you to take part.

We want Outdoor Education teachers, schools, students, providers, and others across the outdoor sector to read the draft and provide feedback. The Ministry will consider this feedback as the curriculum is finalised.

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As you review it, consider whether the curriculum:

- identifies the knowledge and practices that are genuinely important for Outdoor Education
- appropriately reflects mātauranga Māori, te ao Māori perspectives, and relationships with place and te taiao.
- provides enough flexibility for different students, schools, and local contexts
- maintains the practical and experiential nature of Outdoor Education
- is achievable within the time schools have available
- works for students with a wide range of interests, abilities, and future pathways.

Because this is a knowledge-rich curriculum, it may look bigger than what you are currently used to. When considering whether it is achievable within the time available, think about how the knowledge and practices could be designed into an integrated programme, rather than taught one by one.

There are constraints within any national curriculum development process, so not every aspect of Outdoor Education can be included but strong sector feedback will help strengthen what is included, identify gaps or unintended consequences, and ensure the final curriculum works for as many students and schools as possible.

Having Outdoor Education recognised as a Ministry-led subject is an important milestone. **Our focus now is ensuring the curriculum behind that recognition is as strong, inclusive, practical, and distinctly Outdoor Education | Akoranga tū-ā-nuku as it can be.**

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