

Pacific Early Childhood Education Fono 2026

May 2026



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Question 1: Registration and Certification pathways

Teaching Council absolutely hear the concern that registration and certification processes can feel slow or complex, particularly for internationally qualified teachers and those trying to move from provisional to full certification.

We also hear very clearly the question about whether lived experience, prior learning, Pacific community leadership, and long service in ECE can be better recognised.

The Teaching Council deeply values the experience and contribution of Pacific educators, including those who have served their communities for many years. However, registration decisions are made within the current legislative and regulatory framework, which includes qualification and standards requirements.

Where questions relate to changing entry criteria, qualification levels, or alternative pathways into registration, those are policy settings that may need to be considered through wider system reform and with agencies such as MoE and NZQA.

Once someone is registered as a teacher, they remain registered for life. What needs to be renewed is the practising certificate, which allows someone to be lawfully employed in a teaching role in Aotearoa New Zealand. Practising certificates are issued for three years.

For a teacher moving from Tōmua | Provisional to Tūturu | Full Category One, the usual requirement is a supported induction and mentoring process. For newly graduated New Zealand-trained teachers, this is typically around two years. The mentor teacher and professional leader then endorse the teacher as ready to move to full certification.

For overseas-trained teachers, some overseas mentored teaching experience may be able to count towards this requirement. Up to one year of eligible overseas teaching under the supervision of a mentor may be considered, provided it was in a recognised school or learning centre.

Can Teaching Council shorten the provisional period?

The Council needs to work within the current regulatory settings. Where there are possible policy or legislative changes, we need to be careful not to pre-empt decisions, particularly with system reform changes underway. But we do understand the issue and recognise the need for pathways that are clear, fair, and do not create unnecessary barriers.

Regarding international teachers and faster processing

The Council has been working to make the overseas teacher application process more efficient. Processing times for overseas-trained teachers have been reduced, additional Registration Officers have been employed, and the online application form has been updated to make it easier for applicants to submit the right information.

Kia Maia | Future Ready Teaching Plan for those teachers who wish to renew their practising certificate:

Kia Maia enables professional leaders to employ and support teachers through an on-the-job refresh. This enables kaiako to renew their practising certificate while actively engaging with learners and embedding curriculum, cultural context, and pedagogy into practice.

Kia Maia builds on what many of you have already been doing through the temporary policy using the Return-to-Practice Plan. This approach has worked well, and we've decided to make it permanent and to expand it to include some teachers who would otherwise need to complete an external Teacher Education Refresh programme – a process that can keep them out of the workforce for three months or more. The Return-to-Practice Plan has been renamed to Kia Maia | Future Ready Teaching plan.

The details are being finalised, but the pathway will be available from 1 January 2026. Keep an eye on this webpage on our website: <https://teachingcouncil.nz/en/news-and-advocacy/news-and-articles/introducing-kia-maia>

Question 2: Recognition of Pacific Knowledge and Cultural Competence

This is a really important area. The Code and Standards set expectations that teachers work in ways that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and supportive of learners' identity, language, culture, wellbeing, and belonging.

The Teaching Council recognises that Pacific languages, identities, cultural knowledge and community-based experience are deeply important to quality teaching and to the wellbeing, belonging and learning of Pacific children.

For Pacific learners, this means more than general inclusion. It means teaching practice that recognises Pacific identities, languages, values, family and community connections, and supports children to be confident in who they are.

We also acknowledge that Pacific educators often bring rich cultural and community knowledge to their work. In certification and professional growth processes, this can be recognised through evidence of practice, professional conversations, mentoring, reflection and endorsement.

For example, a teacher might show how they build strong relationships with aiga, support Pacific language development, affirm children's identity and belonging, and create learning environments that reflect Pacific values and ways of knowing.

At the same time, registration and certification decisions must still be made within the current regulatory and legislative settings. So, while cultural and community knowledge is highly valued, it sits alongside the professional standards and certification requirements that apply to all teachers.

The Professional Growth Cycle is one of the key ways teachers and professional leaders make this practice visible. It provides a structured way to show how teaching practice is culturally responsive, inclusive, and supportive of learners' identity, language, culture, wellbeing and belonging.

In 2026, teachers and leaders should begin aligning PGC goals with the updated 2026 Standards, ahead of those Standards coming fully into effect in 2027. Several of the updated Standards and focus areas support teachers to reflect on how they are meeting the needs of diverse learners, including Pacific learners.

The Professional Growth Cycle is assessed through evidence of practice, professional conversations, reflection, mentoring, and endorsement processes. For example, a teacher might show how they are supporting Pacific language development, engaging with families, using culturally responsive teaching approaches, or creating environments where Pacific learners' identities are affirmed. Here is the link to the PGC website: <https://teachingcouncil.nz/en/grow-my-practice/professional-growth/professional-growth-cycle>

Regarding translated resources

At this stage, the Code and Standards and registration guidance are not currently available in Pacific languages. We recognise that language accessibility matters. Work is underway as part of the development of the 2026 Standards to translate key materials into a number of Pacific languages, including Gagana Samoa, Lea Fakatonga, Vagahau Niue, and Cook Islands Māori.

That is an important first step, alongside culturally grounded engagement and guidance that makes the Standards meaningful in practice.

Regarding Pacific resources

The Council has resources that support culturally responsive and inclusive practice, including Tapasā, which supports teachers to strengthen practice with Pacific learners. There are also inclusive practice resources that help teachers reflect on their beliefs, remove barriers to participation, and work in partnership with whānau and communities.

Question 3: Mentoring, Induction, Professional Support and Homebased educators

The Teaching Council recognises that strong mentoring and induction are critical, especially for beginning teachers, provisionally certificated teachers, overseas-trained teachers, and teachers working in settings where they may feel isolated or under-supported.

Our role is to set the expectations for induction, mentoring, certification and professional growth. Employers and professional leaders are responsible for providing the actual induction and mentoring support in the workplace, but the Council provides guidance on what good induction and mentoring should include.

For mentoring and induction, it is the responsibility of your employer to provide a formal induction and mentoring programme. The Teaching Council has guidance on what an induction and mentoring programme should include and what beginning teachers can expect. This can be found on our website.

For moving from provisional to full certification, a teacher needs appropriate mentoring and endorsement. That endorsement usually involves the mentor and professional leader confirming that the teacher has met the Standards and is ready to move to full certification.

Induction and mentoring are a structured programme that helps new teachers in Aotearoa build confidence and capability. You'll work with your mentor and professional leader to:

- set goals
- reflect on your progress
- keep records of your learning and development
- show how you're meeting the *Standards | Ngā Paerewa* with support

At the end of the programme, usually for two years, your professional leader will make an evidence-based decision about whether you're ready to move to a Tūturu | Full (Category One) Practising Certificate. Here is the link to the induction and mentoring webpage: <https://teachingcouncil.nz/en/become-a-teacher/Induction-and-mentoring>

One question we were asked is whether the mentor must be from the same centre or ECE service? The key point is that the mentor needs to be appropriately placed to support, observe, guide and assess the teacher's progress against the Standards. In some settings, that may be someone within the same centre or service. In other situations, there may need to be a different arrangement, but it still needs to provide proper professional support, evidence, and endorsement.

Regarding professional support the Council does not provide professional development courses in the same way MoE or providers may, but we do point teachers and leaders to resources that support professional practice and wellbeing. Here are some links to free online professional practice and leadership courses:

- <https://teachingcouncil.nz/en/grow-my-practice/professional-learning/wall-of-identity>
- <https://teachingcouncil.nz/en/grow-my-practice/professional-learning/rauhuia-leadership-space/unteach-racism>
- <https://teachingcouncil.nz/en/grow-my-practice/professional-learning/rauhuia-leadership-space/stepping-into-leadership>

From our perspective, strong induction, mentoring, professional growth cycles, good leadership, and clear professional expectations all contribute to safer and more sustainable practice environments.

For home-based educators

Teaching Council recognises that home-based educators and teachers can experience the system differently from centre-based teachers, and that their context is unique.

The Standards apply across teaching settings, but how they are enacted will look different depending on the context. For home-based settings, it is important that mentoring, induction, professional conversations, and evidence of practice reflect the realities of that teaching environment. Mentoring and professional support need to reflect the reality of the teaching context, including the ways teachers work with children, families, visiting teachers, coordinators and service leaders.

For those home-educators who wish to go back into ECE service delivery and renew their practicing certificate they can access Kia Maia in the future which enables professional leaders in an ECE service to employ and support teachers through an on-the-job refresh. This enables kaiako to renew their practising certificate while actively engaging with learners and embedding curriculum, cultural context, and pedagogy into practice.





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