



2 November 2016

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Ms Rhona Lever
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Dear Rhona

The Acting Secretary for Education, Katrina Casey has asked me to reply to your email of 17 October 2016 outlining your concerns about the recent assessment for the Level 1 Mathematics and Statistics achievement standard, 90127 *Apply algebraic procedures in solving problems*.

The Ministry of Education sets standards for NCEA and we take our work in this area very seriously. We owe it to students to get it right and work hard to make sure we do. We welcome comments and suggestions about those standards, particularly from people who work or have worked in education. We will continue to listen to maths teachers, as well as representatives from all disciplines.

Mathematical problem solving skills are critically important for any young person to learn and we need to ensure standard-setting and assessment is accurate. The standard makes it clear that situations can be set in a real life or mathematical context. The curriculum refers to 'a range of meaningful contexts' and encourages the use of contexts that are relevant to the needs, interests and talents of the students. At this stage we have seen no evidence that indicates a need to change the standard.


As you will know, the achievement standard 91027 is derived from the Mathematics and Statistics/Pāngarau curriculum learning area and reflects its focus on mathematical thinking and solving problems. Students are required to select and use algebraic procedures in solving problems, and these procedures are indicated in explanatory note 4 of the standard. The student must select the appropriate procedures and apply them. They cannot be told which procedures to use.

We have not responded to your queries relating to the design of the questions in the 2016 assessment. These queries are more appropriately addressed to NZQA.

We are happy to discuss any concerns you may have. If you would like to do so, please contact Geoff Gibbs at Geoff.gibbs@education.govt.nz to arrange a time to meet.

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to thank you for your service as a teacher in such an important learning area. Your passion for the subject, and for the success of students, is greatly valued.

Yours sincerely



Karl Le Quesne
Deputy Secretary (Acting)
Early Learning and Student Achievement