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Frequently Asked Questions – 2011 Charters

What do you mean by charter?

According to the Education Act 1989 (Section 61), a school charter must include the following sections:

- a. aims for developing policies and practices that reflect cultural diversity and Māori culture and the aim of ensuring reasonable steps are taken for the provision of tikanga and te reo where it is asked for
- b. a long term strategic planning section for the next 3 to 5 years. This is often referred to as the 'strategic plan'
- c. an annually updated section. This is often referred to as the annual plan.

The charter must also include the board's aims, objectives, directions, priorities and targets in the following categories:

- d. student achievement (including against national standards)
- e. activities to meet government policy objectives (NEGS and school specific actions)
- f. management of the school's and board's resources and ownership matters
- g. other matters that the Minister may determine.

If schools develop long-term or annual plans outside of the charter, a copy, summary, or reference to each plan must be included in the charter.

Charters must be updated every year. In practice, many schools send in only the annually updated section each year, in the form of their annual plan. 'Charter' in this FAQ refers to the full charter, including the strategic and annual plans. If a school wishes to update the annual plan section and keep the rest of the charter the same, they may send in just the updated section.

Why has the Secretary set an expectation that charters will be updated by the beginning of the school year?

The Secretary has set the expectation that charters for schools with students in years 1-8 (in particular the annually updated or 'annual plan' section of the charter) be updated by the beginning of the school year (31 March for schools with students in years 9-13 only), in the year in which they apply, to help:

- schools plan effectively for the coming year. It is important that schools have their charter, with its goals and targets for the whole school year, in place for the beginning of the school year. This means that before students come through the gates, the school knows what they are trying to achieve for the year, and how they will do it. They are able to prioritise their resources to help them achieve this. If schools do not develop their goals and targets till later in the year, they will have less time in which to achieve those goals and targets, and may have already committed resources elsewhere
- the Ministry do its job in effectively allocating and targeting a range of different support for schools. In order to do this, the Ministry needs to know what schools are trying to achieve during the year, areas of particular need for each school, where students are at and where schools want to get them to, and even which schools need further support to develop robust charters with appropriate goals and targets.

While some schools may update their charters (or the annually updated section) early in the year but not send them in to the Ministry till later, receiving the charters is the only

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way the Ministry can ensure that they are both up to date and effective. They also provide an early indication to the Ministry of areas where additional resources are most needed.

Is the Secretary's expectation that all charters be updated by the beginning of the legally binding?

The Secretary can make clear her expectations of Boards, although this is an expectation not a legal requirement. The legal requirements on boards have not changed, however expectations around good practice have. Boards would not be acting in good faith if they did not attempt to meet clear expectations set by the Secretary.

What do we do if schools don't meet the expectations?

If schools do not meet the expectations set by the Secretary, appropriate encouragement and support can be provided. The Ministry can:

- provide assistance in charter development to schools that, for capability reasons, struggle to develop their charter in the timeframe expected (and to an appropriate quality)
- remind those schools that are initially tardy in updating their charters, of the Secretary's expectations
- explain why the Secretary expects the charters to be updated by the beginning of the school year and emphasize the need for the Ministry to have information from charters to allocate support over the year. If schools do not provide an updated charter early in the year it will be difficult to provide them with any support other than support to develop a robust charter.

What type of support are we talking about?

Charters will be one of the inputs that the Ministry uses to allocate the following types of support:

- assistance in target setting
- Professional Leadership Development
- Student Achievement Function/ ECP support

What further information will the Ministry provide to assist schools develop their 2011 charters?

The following information/training will be provided:

- a booklet with more in-depth guidance on incorporating National Standards into 2011 Charters, including advice for special schools – **early November**
- a webinar on developing your 2011 charter – **starting 15 November**
- further training for board trainers in each region so they in turn can provide further training to boards – **between now and early next year**

What are the legislative requirements in relation to timing of feedback for charters and what will this mean for the workload in regional offices?

A school charter takes effect on the 25th working day after it is received by the Ministry (Secretary) (Education Act 1989, Section 63A). This is unless it is determined that the charter was not developed or updated in accordance with the Education Act or is inconsistent with the Education act or the National Administrative Guidelines. Then it takes effect, either on a date agreed by the Ministry and the board, or, on the date the Ministry determines.

This means that you have 25 working days to decide whether each charter meets the requirements of the Act. If you need to work further with the school to improve the

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charter, then the Ministry is able to determine when the charter takes effect (i.e. when you consider it to meet the requirements).

The expectation around when charters should be completed may mean that regional offices will receive most charters within a short timeframe. This could create a significant amount of work for you over a short period of time. We anticipate that you will initially sift the charters to determine whether or not they meet requirements, and identify those which will need further work. Some schools may be able to do this work themselves others may require your support.

This is the first year of a different way of working. Knowing when charters will arrive in your office, and when to expect an intense period of work helping schools improve/develop their charters, may be useful for you in planning how you manage your work over the year. However, it may take a year or two for you to work out the best way to process this large influx of charters in a short period of time.

Sometime over the next month, we will provide regional and local offices with a business process to follow.

Is any information being provided to Maori Medium schools?

Schools using Te Marautanga o Aotearoa will be setting their first targets in relation to Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori in 2012 charters. Guidance will be provided closer to that time (during 2011).