



**TOITŪ TE WAIORA**

**Community, Health, Education  
and Social Services**

Workforce Development Council

## **Feedback Summary: Disability Support Skill Standards (Level 3)**

The proposed Disability Support Skill Standards (Level 3) are designed to underpin the new *New Zealand Certificate in Disability Support (Level 3)*. Together, the qualification and its associated standards aim to build a strong, rights-based foundation for people entering the disability support workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand. These standards have been co-designed with the disability community, whānau, employers, providers, and subject matter experts, and reflect contemporary practice, including the *Enabling Good Lives (EGL)* approach and the *New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016–2026*.

Title	Credits
3.1 Recognise the lived experiences and support considerations of people with physical disabilities	5
3.2 Recognise the lived experiences and support considerations of people with sensory disabilities	5
3.3 Recognise the lived experiences and support considerations of people with intellectual disabilities	5
3.4 Recognise the lived experiences and support considerations of people with learning disabilities	5
3.5 Recognise the lived experiences and support considerations of neurodivergent people	5
3.6 Apply rights-based and person-directed approaches to support a disabled person	10
3.7 Identify the principles and practice of Enabling Good Lives	5

The national consultation on the draft skill standards has now closed. We would like to thank everyone who shared their expertise, experiences, and perspectives during this process. Your feedback is helping ensure the standards reflect the realities of the disability community, whānau, employers, educators, and the wider sector.



## What we heard

### Strong support for rights-based practice

Feedback confirmed wide support for the shift away from a medicalised view of disability. Contributors welcomed the alignment with the *New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016–2026*, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*, and the Enabling Good Lives approach. The standards were seen as an important opportunity to embed rights, inclusion, and person-directed practice.

### Making practice real

While the concepts were well received, many respondents asked for clearer links to everyday support practice. This included ensuring that the indicative content illustrates how principles such as Enabling Good Lives are applied in real settings.

### Language matters

A consistent theme was the need to use respectful, contemporary terminology. Changes suggested include:

- Removing medicalised terms such as *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)* and *co-morbidities*, replacing them with *autism/autistic people* and *co-occurring conditions*.
- Clarifying the distinction between *learning disability* and *intellectual disability*. Feedback suggested this should be further developed in partnership with People First New Zealand.

### Intersectionality and diversity

Respondents emphasised that disabled people hold multiple and diverse identities. The standards should acknowledge intersectionality across the suite, recognising experiences shaped by culture, gender, sexuality, age, faith, and neurodivergence.

### Whānau, Māori and Pacific perspectives

Feedback highlighted the importance of reflecting Māori and Pacific worldviews, including *tāngata whaikaha* (Māori disabled people) and their whānau. Contributors recommended stronger alignment with *Ngā Paerewa Health and Disability Services Standard (NZS 8134:2021)* and with Māori and Pacific models of health and wellbeing.

### Supported decision-making and communication

There was strong endorsement of including supported decision-making (such as through the *Support My Decisions/Whaimana* website) and *Augmentative and*



*Alternative Communication (AAC)*. Respondents noted that these are essential to upholding choice, control, and rights.

## **Neurodivergence**

Contributors supported the inclusion of neurodivergence but asked for consistency in terminology (*neurodiversity* vs *neurodivergence*) and more emphasis on trauma-informed practice, whānau and sensory supports.

## **Organisational and system contexts**

Feedback recommended that learners also gain an overview of the broader disability support system, including *Disability Support Services (DSS)*, *Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)*, *Whānau Ora*, and organisational policies and procedures that influence everyday practice.

## **Structure and credit values**

Some respondents suggested that the breadth of certain standards may require more credits, for example shifting some from 5 credits to 10. This will be considered as part of final adjustments.

## **Next steps**

We are now reviewing the feedback and will share the outcomes with our Disability Support Consultation Group (DSCG). We will also connect with communities whose voices have had less representation in the process so far, to build a fuller picture and support the final changes to the standards.

Based on what we have heard, we are making changes to keep the standards clear, inclusive, and consistent with rights-based practice. Once finalised, the standards will be sent to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to be approved and listed on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards (DASS). This will happen before Toitū te Waiora is disestablished in December 2025.

We are very grateful to everyone who took the time to share their views. Your feedback is helping to make sure the standards are shaped by the experiences of disabled people, whānau, and the communities that support them. Together, we are working towards qualifications and skill standards that reflect modern disability support practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.