

# Strengthening Digital Technologies | Hangarau Matihiko in the curriculum

SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

## About this submission

Kei te rangatira, tēnā koe,

This submission is made on behalf of Netsafe, an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety and security. Its purpose is to enable all New Zealand internet users to confidently access digital opportunities and prevent online harm. This purpose is complemented by Netsafe's statutory role providing 'Approved Agency' functions under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015.

Netsafe has received an annual grant from the Ministry of Education since 2004, to ensure that Māori medium kura and schools and their communities have access to quality advice and support for digital safety and security.

This submission is focuses on two aspects of the draft Digital Technologies - Hangarau Matihiko curriculum content that Netsafe believes could be strengthened further; namely, making use of the curriculum content; and future focus of the proposed content.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission, and how Netsafe can assist in the implementation of the curriculum.

Nā mātou noa, nā

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## Key points

1. Netsafe takes a broad view of the digital skills and strategies, attitudes and values, understanding and knowledge that young people should develop. Netsafe defines 'online safety' as a specific outcome of being 'fluent' across these digital competencies.
2. Schools are experiencing increasing levels of digital challenge. There is an urgent need to align technology uptake in schools with a greater understanding of the related safety risks and issues to ensure the capability exists to manage them effectively.

*Netsafe believes the implementation of the Digital Technologies - Hangarau Matihiko (DT-HM) curriculum cannot be separated from this broader context. Therefore, initiatives supporting the implementation of the DT-HM curriculum should purposefully connect to Netsafe's work and other system-level digital capability building initiatives (and vice versa).*

3. The DT-HM curriculum addresses computational thinking and technological design and development processes, excluding other creative uses of digital technology.

*Netsafe believes the DT-HM curriculum and supporting materials could more clearly state how it will help young people to develop broader digital fluencies and competencies e.g., the "ability to both safely navigate and create new technologies" (Kaye, 2017).*

4. Netsafe is ready to work with the Ministry of Education to support the implementation of the DT-HM curriculum.

## Making use of the new curriculum content

*What do you anticipate being the biggest challenge in teaching and integrating the DT | HM curriculum content into teaching programmes?*

### Schools are experiencing increasing levels of digital challenge

The way young people are using the internet is producing new and evolving challenges for them and those who support them. At the same time, schools and their communities are increasingly reliant on digital technology. This has created a more complex environment to keep safe and secure. Netsafe's operational experience suggests an urgent need to align digital technology uptake in schools with a greater understanding of the related safety risks and issues to ensure the capability exists to manage them effectively. Netsafe's view is that it is not possible to separate the implementation of the DT-HM curriculum from this broader context.

## Policy interventions need to be joined up

This implies that system-level policy interventions to support the implementation of the DT-HM curriculum cannot happen ‘in a vacuum’ i.e., it must be purposefully connected to Netsafe’s work and to other digital capability building initiatives [e.g., 1, 6, 7], and vice versa. Schools should be able to clearly see how initiatives supporting their Technology Learning Area teaching practice and their broader implementation of digital technologies are linked.

## Future focus of the proposed content

*To what extent do you agree that the proposed new content ensures students have the skills, knowledge and capabilities they need to fully participate in the 21st century and beyond?*

*To what extent do you agree that the intent and direction of the proposed new content will have a positive impact on students’ competencies in thinking, using language, symbols and texts, and participating in and contributing to communities of the future?*

## Defining digital fluencies and competencies

Netsafe believes that to fully realise the contribution of Digital Technologies - Hangarau Matihiko to achieving the vision and principles of the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (NZC & TMoA) requires young people to be able to combine the confident and fluent use of three key elements [7]:-

- **Skills and strategies** to access technology to communicate, connect, collaborate and create;
- **Attitudes**, underpinned by **values** that support personal integrity and positive connection with others;
- **Understanding and knowledge** of the digital environments and contexts in which they are working, and how they integrate on/offline spaces;

and then, *critically*:

- Develop the **ability to draw on this competency of ‘digital fluency’** to participate in life-enhancing opportunities (social, economic, cultural, civic) and achieve their goals in ways that make an important difference.

Online safety is a specific outcome of being digitally fluent across digital skills, knowledge and values.

## DT-HM curriculum & digital technologies implementation

The DT-HM curriculum addresses computational thinking and technological design and development processes as part of the Technology Learning Area. This excludes other creative uses of digital technology (e.g., to communicate or create digital media) in the broader implementation of digital technologies across the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.

Netsafe believes the DT-HM curriculum and supporting materials could more clearly state how it will help young people to develop broader digital fluencies and competencies e.g., the “ability to both safely navigate and create new technologies” (Kaye, 2017 [4]).

Again, it should also be clear how the DT-HM curriculum aligns with broader government policy initiatives promoting digital technology use in schools [e.g., 1, 3, 4, 6], including those aimed at strengthening online safety.

### Young people as creators and consumers

Young people develop digital competency through their experience of both creating and consuming. This is a symbiotic relationship and both contexts need to be ‘in play’ and interwoven to ensure young people become digitally fluent. This relationship could be made more explicit in the DT-HM curriculum statements and – more significantly – by expanding and extending the exemplars to reflect students’ own digital experiences across a range of contexts e.g., how they navigate safety and security challenges.

Further, DT-HM support materials need development to address issues related to the environmental, social and cultural impact of digital technology [e.g., 2]. For example, the ethical and human impacts of digital outcomes should be strengthened in the supporting materials so that students can view their projects from the perspective of the ‘consumers’ they already are.

## How Netsafe can assist

Netsafe is ready to work with the Ministry of Education to support the implementation of the DT-HM curriculum. Currently Netsafe:-

1. Delivers educational content and services to kura, schools and their communities;
2. Works with partners to support their development of content and services for kura and schools;
3. Receives, assesses and investigates online safety and security queries and incident reports;
4. Provides direct assistance through advice and/or prompt referral to other agencies; and
5. Provides advice to Ministry on policies and guidance related to digital safety issues.

## References

- [1] *\$40m digital fluency package*. (2017, June 28). Retrieved from <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/40m-digital-fluency-package>
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- [3] *Digital curriculum changes connect young people to the future*. (2017, June 28). Retrieved from <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/digital-curriculum-changes-connect-young-people-future>
- [4] *Ensuring young people are digitally fluent for our nation's future*. (2017, June 28). Retrieved from <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/ensuring-young-people-are-digitally-fluent-our-nation%E2%80%99s-future>
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- [6] Ministry of Education. (2016). *Towards Digital Fluency*. Retrieved from <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Towards-Digital-Fluency.pdf>
- [7] Netsafe. (2016). *From literacy to fluency to citizenship: Digital Citizenship in Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/NETSAFE-WHITEPAPER-From-literacy-to-fluency-to-citizenship.pdf>
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