



Aspiring Principal Programme Referee Guidance

Endorsement process

As part of the application process, referees endorse applicants for the Aspiring Principal Programme. To make an endorsement, you must:

- have your applicant's Ministry of Education number ready
- complete the online endorsement form by the closing date.

A referee should know the applicant well enough to assess their suitability for the programme and readiness for principalship. You could be their current principal, a recent principal they worked with, or an alternative referee with relevant education sector and principalship experience.

Your endorsement form is linked to the aspiring principal's application. Their application will be incomplete if you do not submit your endorsement by the closing date.

Your endorsement will make up 20% of the applicant's overall assessment.

Completing the endorsement form

Access and submit the online endorsement form on the [Education Workforce website](#). The following information explains the questions you will be asked and how you should assess the applicant in the form.

If you use the same device and browser, and do not delete your browser history or cache, your progress will be saved so you can complete it later.

Confirmation

Confirm you have read this guidance document before completing the endorsement form.

Confirm you have agreed to act as a referee for the applicant and have considered their readiness for principalship.

Privacy statement

Read and agree to the privacy statement about how the Ministry will use the information you provide.

Section 1: Your details

Provide your full name, email, Ministry of Education number (if applicable), your role title, school number and school name.

Section 2: Applicant details

Provide details of the applicant you are the referee for. Provide the applicant's name and Ministry of Education number. This information links your endorsement form to the applicant's application form.

Section 3: How do you know the applicant?

Confirm how you know the applicant and the length of time you have known them for.

Section 4: Applicant assessment

This section asks you to assess the applicant's leadership competency in five capability areas. These are:

- Leadership impact
- Career pathway and progression suitability
- Learner outcomes and system leadership
- People and relationships
- Self and learning.

You will use a scale of 1 to 5 to mark competency in each capability area:

- 1 (Limited). The applicant rarely demonstrates competency.
- 2 (Developing). The applicant partially demonstrates competency.
- 3 (Competent). The applicant adequately demonstrates competency.
- 4 (Strong). The applicant performs confidently and effectively.
- 5 (Exceptional). The applicant demonstrates outstanding capability.

If you have not seen the applicant's competency in a capability area or feel they have not had an opportunity to demonstrate it, select 'No opportunity to demonstrate/observe'. Include any notes in the comments section.

Capability areas

Leadership impact

You will assess the applicant's leadership potential and impact. Assess their influence on teaching, learning, and educational improvement.

1 Limited	2 Developing	3 Competent	4 Strong	5 Exceptional
Impact largely limited to their own classroom, no evidence of wider influence.	Contributes to team or school initiatives, impact beyond own classroom is emerging or inconsistent.	Leads within a team or area, has a positive impact on teaching practice or learner outcomes.	Leads across teams or the school, evidence of clear, measurable improvements in practice and/or outcomes.	Leads sustained improvement across the school, their influence extends beyond the immediate school setting.

Career pathway and progression suitability

You will assess the applicant's career pathway and progression suitability. Assess if they are motivated, demonstrate moral purpose and have been deliberate in their career development.

1 Limited	2 Developing	3 Competent	4 Strong	5 Exceptional
Not yet demonstrating readiness for principal-level responsibility, knowledge of, and engagement in, leadership activity is limited.	Showing early leadership capability, further formal experience and development needed before next step.	Demonstrates solid capability within current role, leadership learning is being undertaken, progressing toward readiness for principal leadership.	Undertaking self-initiated leadership development, has wide leadership experience, handles complexity well, likely to be ready for principalship within 1 to 3 years.	Leadership development is core part of applicant's approach, already operating at a level close to principalship, strong confidence in their readiness for appointment.

Learner outcomes and system leadership

You will assess the applicant's commitment to learner outcomes, system leadership, excellence, understanding of equity and system change and if they are future focused.

1 Limited	2 Developing	3 Competent	4 Strong	5 Exceptional
Limited focus on equity within teams, curriculum areas or wide-school leadership.	Demonstrates awareness of equity, some involvement in supporting priority learners or school initiatives in teams or curriculum area.	Actively supports equitable outcomes with their team/context, contributes to school improvement efforts.	Actively leads strategies to improve outcomes for priority learners, demonstrates whole-school thinking, looking to influence beyond school setting.	Drives equity-focused improvement and excellence, contributes beyond the school and shows strong system leadership potential.

People and relationships

You will assess the applicant's people and relationship skills. Assess if they clearly communicate with emotional intelligence, build inclusive teams and lead with integrity and fairness.

1 Limited	2 Developing	3 Competent	4 Strong	5 Exceptional
Communication and relationship-building are inconsistent, limited evidence of building trust with colleagues, whānau or of team influence.	Communicates adequately, working on building relationships, impact on team culture is uneven.	Communicates clearly, builds positive relationships and contributes to an inclusive team/school environment.	Builds trust, communicates with clarity and emotional intelligence, leads inclusive teams effectively, highly effective with whānau.	Highly structured leader. Shapes a strong, inclusive culture and consistently leads with integrity, fairness, and excellent judgement.

Self and learning

You will assess the applicant's management of themselves and their learning. Assess their leadership identity, resilience, responsiveness to change and ability to effectively manage priorities and wellbeing. Assess if they are motivated and take initiative.

1 Limited	2 Developing	3 Competent	4 Strong	5 Exceptional
Struggles to manage demands or responses to challenge, limited evidence of initiative or reflective growth.	Some resilience and adaptability evident, beginning to manage workload and progressional learning more deliberately.	Manages responsibilities effectively, shows resilience and engages in ongoing professional learning.	Demonstrates self-management and adaptability, responds well to pressure and change, actively drives their own development.	Very self-aware and resilient, thrives in complex environments, models continuous learning, initiative, and sustainable leadership practice.

Overall recommendation

Finally, assess the extent that you think the applicant is ready for principalship in the next one to three years and explain your evaluation.

1 Limited	2 Developing	3 Competent	4 Strong	5 Exceptional
Minimal or unclear evidence — not yet demonstrating readiness.	Some evidence for readiness — impact or capability is narrow or inconsistent.	Clear evidence for readiness within current school setting — some impact and reflection.	Consistent high-quality evidence of readiness, broader influence and impact leadership evident.	Sustained and strategic impact, already operating near principal level.

Declaration

Confirm that the information you have provided is accurate to the best of your knowledge.

Submit your endorsement form.

Contact us

If you have any questions, we're here to help.

Email: principal.pathway@education.govt.nz



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education



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