

NEW ZEALAND

In keeping with New Zealand's long-standing commitment to lifelong learning, the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) was established in July 2010. The NZQF is a unified and outcomes-based framework which provides quality assurance for all New Zealand qualifications. The structure of the NZQF is consistent with that of other mature national qualifications frameworks around the world.

The NZQF replaces the dual qualifications system which was in place until 2010, consisting of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), developed in 1992, and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (NZRQAQ), developed in 2001. NQF qualifications were based on units and standards of achievement, mainly at levels 1–6. The NZRQAQ was more comprehensive, covering all qualifications including degrees.

The establishment of the NZQF followed a targeted review of New Zealand's qualifications system in 2008 and 2009. The purpose of the review was to identify ways to make New Zealand's qualifications better adapted to the current and future requirements of learners, industry and other stakeholders. At the end of 2008, there were almost 6,000 qualifications on the NZRQAQ.

Approximately 76 per cent of these were certificates and diplomas at levels 1 to 6. Focusing on these qualifications, the review found that there was a good deal of duplication and overlap, making the qualifications difficult for employers to understand. A series of changes were therefore made to improve the way qualifications are described, developed, and quality assured:

- Firstly, with the establishment of the NZQF, all qualification type definitions and level descriptors were reviewed and redeveloped with a stronger outcomes focus (using domains of knowledge, skill and application). Qualification outcome statements were strengthened to include a graduate profile describing the knowledge, skills and application of graduates of that particular qualification.
- Secondly, it was stipulated that proposed new qualifications must fulfil a demonstrated need identified by relevant stakeholders, such as industry, employers and/or communities.
- Thirdly, more flexible rules were recommended to allow qualifications at levels 1-6 to be achieved in different ways.
- Finally, it was decided that all qualifications at levels 1 to 6 would be reviewed over a three year period in order to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose and to meet the needs of industry.

The last of these reviews will be completed by the end of 2014, by which point it is expected that the number of qualifications at levels 1 to 6 will have been reduced to approximately 1,300. At the end of June 2013, the number of qualifications in the NZQF had already been reduced by 45 per cent from July 2010.

1. CHALLENGES THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

One of the most important challenges the qualifications framework addresses is the need to recognize and compare qualifications both within and across nations, on the basis of common learning outcomes, irrespective of how, when or where the learning was achieved. The NZQF works towards this goal by applying the language of learning outcomes across all levels of the framework and making explicit the relationships and links between levels. Increased global labour mobility has made this more important still.

2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The NZQF is designed to optimise the recognition of educational achievement and its contribution to New Zealand's economic, social and cultural success.

Specifically, the NZQF:

- clarifies the skills, knowledge and attributes a graduate has gained through completing a qualification;
- supports the development of integrated and coherent qualifications;
- enables and supports the provision of high-quality educational pathways;
- enhances confidence in the quality and international comparability of New Zealand qualifications;
- contributes to the strengthening of the Māori¹ people by enhancing and advancing Māori² mātāuranga Māori;
- represents value for money;
- is sustainable and robust.

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

The legislative basis for the NZQF is derived from the Education Act 1989. The Act was amended in 2011 (The Education Amendment Act 2011) in order to:

- provide a legislative basis for key quality assurance processes;
- revise the functions and powers of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and create a rules framework;
- establish the NZQF and the Directory of Assessment Standards (DAS).

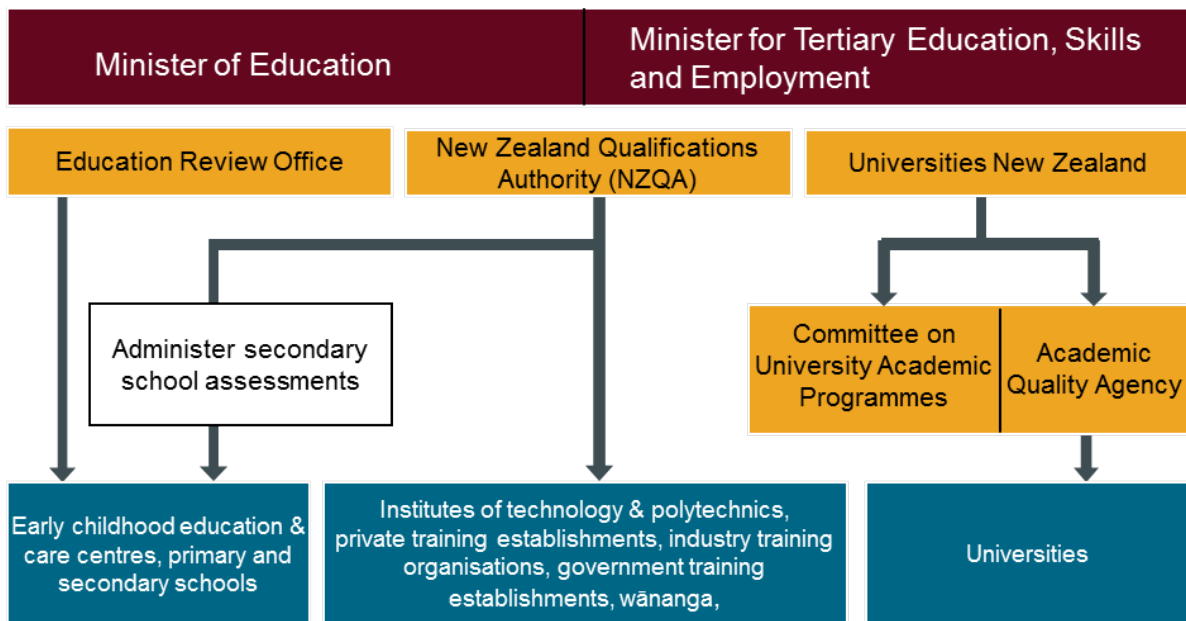
New Zealand has two quality assurance bodies: the NZQA and Universities New Zealand. Together, these bodies stipulate the overarching regulations for the quality assurance of qualifications programmes and the educational organizations that provide them. The NZQA is responsible for the non-university higher and vocational education sector, while Universities New Zealand oversees the quality assurance of universities, their qualifications and programmes. The NZQA also shares quality assurance responsibilities for secondary schools with the Education Review Office.³

¹ Indigenous New Zealander.

² Māori knowledge' – distinctive knowledge created by the Māori (usually) in history and arising from their living circumstances, their worldview and their experiences.

³ The Education Review Office evaluates and reports on the education and care of students in early childhood services and primary and secondary schools.

Figure 1: Authorities responsible for quality assurance in New Zealand



* A wānanga is a publicly-owned tertiary institution that provides education in a Māori cultural and traditional context.

Legislation is also in place to regulate international students pursuing education and training in New Zealand. In particular, there is a Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. This sets out the minimum standards of advice and service that an international student can expect from an education provider or the agent of a provider. The NZQA has rules for the protection of student fees that cover all payments made to a private training establishment by or on behalf of a student.

As for the development of qualifications, qualifications exist to meet the needs of learners and of New Zealand's society and economy. NZQF qualifications may be developed by a tertiary educational organization that meets the NZQA's listing requirements. The NZQA periodically reviews the qualifications on the NZQF to ensure that they remain useful, relevant and fit for purpose. Qualifications are reviewed in groups to ensure that they meet the needs of the sector concerned. The reviews also check that all qualifications are aligned with the rules for listing qualifications on the NZQF.

The NZQA is responsible for prescribing rules concerning the process and criteria used to list qualifications on the NZQF, the approval of programmes leading to those qualifications, and the accreditation of providers to deliver the approved programmes. The criteria within these rules apply to the whole of the tertiary education sector.

Table 1 below illustrates the different bodies that may develop qualifications in New Zealand.

Table 1: Qualification developers in New Zealand

Qualification developer	Description
Tertiary Education Organizations (TEOs)	Qualifications may be developed by Tertiary Education Organizations, including Wānanga, Universities, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, Government Training Establishments, Industry Training Organizations and Private Training Establishments.
Industry Training Organizations (ITOs)	Develop unit standards and qualifications at levels 1-6 for specific industries and professions based on the needs of those industries and sectors. The coverage of ITOs is set out in the gazetted coverage statements that can be accessed on the Tertiary Education Commission website. ITOs are responsible for about two thirds of standards on the DAS.
Māori Qualifications Services (MQS)	Develops unit standards, qualifications and support material for Field Māori. ⁴ Recognized Māori experts, in partnership with Māori Qualifications Services, form expert groups known as Whakaruruhau to set national standards and qualifications. The Māori Qualifications Services is an NZQA business unit.
National Qualifications Services (NQS)	Develops unit standards and qualifications which are not the responsibility of an ITO or of MQS. The responsibilities of NQS include generic unit standards and qualifications. NQS is an NZQA business unit.
Ministry of Education (MoE)	Develops achievement standards for the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA), which are senior secondary school qualifications. Achievement standards are at levels 1, 2 and 3 and cover learning areas related to the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. ⁵
Other bodies	Are recognized by NZQA as qualification developers, for example, professional associations.

DAS standards are nationally agreed and are stipulated by bodies, specifically set up for the purpose of recognising learners' achievements in a number of contexts. Each standard has a defined credit value, which represents the notional learning time, and a level, which reflects the degree of complexity of the skills and knowledge gained. The common currencies of credit values and levels enable the credits gained from standards to be portable from one qualification to another. Standard-setting bodies are also responsible for the national external moderation system associated with DAS standards. The Industry Training Act 1992 links industry-based training and assessment to standards and qualifications.

ITOs develop standards and qualifications for specific industries and professions, and are currently responsible for about two-thirds of the standards on the DAS. ITOs are not education institutions or providers, but can become accredited to register assessors who assess learners and trainees against DAS standards. They coordinate structured training for employees, both on and off the job, enabling them to gain qualifications while working. ITOs are owned by a variety of companies, trusts and other entities, and cover a range of industries in New Zealand, including building, plumbing, retail, manufacturing, and government and community services. They are recognized by the government and receive funding from both government and industry.

4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The NZQF is a unified framework which includes all qualifications from senior secondary school through to doctorate level. It is outcomes based, with the outcomes at each level described in terms of knowledge, skills and their application. The framework has ten levels, level 1 being the least complex and level 10 the most. The aim is to ensure that the qualifications system is easy to understand, particularly for learners and employers.

⁴ Field Māori is one of the classification fields for the Directory of Assessment Standards that caters specifically to Māori knowledge, pedagogy and skills.

⁵ The national curriculum for Māori-medium.

All NZQF qualifications fit into a specified qualification type. Each qualification type is defined by an agreed set of criteria which includes the level at which the qualification is listed and the number of credits required at each level. Different learners will achieve the outcomes of qualifications in different ways, so outcome statements indicate the minimum achievement expected. Each outcome statement includes the following:

- **Graduate profiles** which identify the expected learning outcomes of a qualification. These are described in terms of what a learner will know, understand and be able to do when they achieve the qualification.
- **Educational pathways** which identify other qualifications a graduate can enrol in after completing the qualification in question. Where qualifications are stand-alone and do not prepare graduates for further study, the outcome statement should make this clear.
- **Employment pathways** (or contribution to the community) which identify the areas in which a graduate may be qualified to work, or the contribution they may make to their community having achieved the qualification in question.

The credit value relates to the amount of learning in the qualification. One credit equates to approximately ten hours of notional learning.

Figure 2: Level descriptors and qualification types in the New Zealand Qualifications Framework

LEVEL	NAMING SEQUENCE
10	Doctoral Degree
9	Master's Degree
8	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelor Honours Degree
7	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Diplomas and Certificates
6	Diplomas
5	
4	Certificates
3	
2	
1	

5. PROGRESSION PATHWAYS AND RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

The NZQF recognizes that learning can occur in informal and non-formal as well as formal settings. 'Informal learning' refers to learning acquired incidentally through general life experience. 'Non-formal learning' refers to learning acquired on the job or through structured work programmes. The NZQF integrates formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Education providers in New Zealand are required to have their own administrative and practical arrangements in place for the recognition of prior learning and credit recognition and transfer. This applies to individual learners, employing organizations, industry and professional bodies and educational organizations, and includes a number of institutes of technology and polytechnics which have 'Centres for the Assessment of Prior Learning'.

To assist education providers in meeting this requirement, the NZQA has established the following operational principles for credit recognition and transfer:

- Qualifications, courses and programmes should be designed in such a way as to promote and facilitate credit recognition and transfer.
- When making decisions regarding credit transfer, the chief consideration should be the extent to which the decision benefits learners and supports effective learning pathways.
- Transparency in decision-making is critical, particularly where credit recognition and transfer are concerned. Learners are much more likely to remain motivated and involved in their education in an environment where the decision-making process is transparent.
- Mechanisms for credit recognition and transfer should operate across cultural and national borders. Robust policies and procedures need to be in place to support this.
- Credit awarded as a result of recognition of prior learning or current competency is equal in value to credit awarded through other forms of assessment. Once awarded, credit should be portable by the learner from one qualification to another.

6. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The NZQA has learnt that reviewing and developing a new qualification requires all parties including ITOs and education providers to work collaboratively to identify and understand industry, community and cultural needs. The NZQA provides a wide range of guidance and help to qualification developers and others in order to prevent the duplication of qualifications.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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