



Guidelines for listing, approval and maintaining degrees and related qualifications

NZQA

Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority



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1. Introduction

These guidelines explain the processes that tertiary education organisations (TEOs), other than universities, need to follow to:

- *list a qualification* on the New Zealand Qualification and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) at Levels 7-10
- *apply for approval of programmes* leading to a qualification at Levels 7-10
- *apply for accreditation to deliver an approved programme* leading to a qualification at Levels 7-10
- maintain approval and accreditation to provide a programme leading to a listed qualification on the NZQCF.

The process of listing a degree or related qualification and approving a programme is undertaken simultaneously.

The degrees and related qualifications at Levels 7 to 10 are:

- bachelor's degrees
- graduate certificates and diplomas
- bachelor honours degrees
- postgraduate certificates and diplomas
- master's degrees
- doctoral degrees

CONTEXT

Section 452 of the Education and Training Act 2020 (The Act) gives the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) the authority to make rules for the quality assurance processes for which it is responsible.

Section 454 of the Act states that NZQA may not consent to the granting of an award of a kind referred to in subsection (1) unless it is satisfied that the award recognises the completion of a programme of advanced learning that—

- (a) is taught mainly by people engaged in research; and
- (b) emphasises general principles and basic knowledge as the basis for self-directed work and learning.

Under section 436 of the Act, qualifications must be listed on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) register. [The Qualification and Micro-credential Listing and Operational Rules 2025](#) govern this listing.

Programme approval and accreditation is required under sections 439 and 441 of the Act. The [Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2025 \(PARA 2025\)](#) govern the approval of programmes of study and accreditation for these programmes.

The [Offshore Programme Delivery Rules 2022](#) govern programme approval and accreditation requirements for offshore programme delivery.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The decision to list the qualifications, approve, and accredit the programme is based on the quality and sufficiency of evidence provided against the criteria in the qualification listing, programme approval, and accreditation rules.

In the evaluation process, NZQA will be clear about the information and evidence on which decisions have been made. The overall quality of the application will determine whether it is approved or not. Before an evaluation decision is made, NZQA may issue a *request for information (RFI)* to address minor gaps in the evidence provided.

The degree and related qualifications will be evaluated through a panel evaluation and a site visit following the NZQA preliminary evaluation and the RFI. The panel findings will be the basis for the final evaluation decision.

See Section – **Process for granting approval and accreditation**

TE HONO O TE KAHURANGI QUALITY ASSURANCE

Rule 12. Requests for Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance

1. When applying for programme approval, New Zealand programme recognition or accreditation, an applicant may request that Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance is used for assessment of the application.
2. An applicant making a request under rule 12.1, in addition to providing the relevant information required under rules 4 to 7, must provide the information that the Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance framework and tools require.
3. NZQA will evaluate a request made under rule 12.1, together with the information supplied, in accordance with Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance.

Educational organisations must indicate whether they want the application evaluated using the general quality assurance method or through Te Hono O Te Kahurangi.

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi is the name of a unique whare ako framework and methodology used by NZQA to carry out quality assurance in the tertiary sector. The framework recognises ākonga Māori choosing to achieve educational success through Mātauranga Māori as relevant to their worldview, context and practices. Six dynamic and interconnected kaupapa are at the heart of Te Hono o Te Kahurangi. The kaupapa act as a common point of reference for educators and evaluators to guide evaluative conversations and decisions about:

- what quality looks like in the educational context of the organisation

- how the organisation knows they are meeting the needs of ākonga, whānau, hapū, iwi and other accountabilities
- whether the organisation has sufficient capacity and capability to deliver and sustain educational outcomes
- how well the organisation reflects upon its delivery to improve its overall educational performance.

Each education organisation is expected to demonstrate how its priorities relate to each application or review type through expressions of ngā kaupapa of Te Hono o Te Kahurangi.

The six kaupapa are:

- Rangatiratanga

Autonomy realised through the enactment of a Māori world-view in response to the aspirations and driving motivators of ākonga, whānau, hapū, and where relevant, the Māori community and sector stakeholders.

- Whanaungatanga

Connecting, fostering, and maintaining relationships based on respect, integrity and understanding for the benefit of all.

- Manaakitanga

Manaakitanga realised by mana-enhancing behaviour and practices for the care of ākonga, whānau, hapū, iwi, and community.

- Pūkengatanga

Represents the knowledge and skills to ensure the principles, beliefs, needs and aspirations of the people are sustained.

- Kaitiakitanga

Preservation, guardianship and enhancement of the world and its treasures for the benefit of all.

- Te Reo Māori

The Māori language is alive, vibrant, and flourishing.

For more information, please refer to the NZQA website: [Guidelines for Te Hono o Te Kahurangi evaluative quality assurance](#).

WHO CAN APPLY?

NZQA will accept applications from:

- Te Pūkenga - New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology
- Wānanga
- NZQA-registered private training establishments

NAVIGATING THESE GUIDELINES

Icons used throughout the document:



'Folder icon' signals suggestions for documents to provide evidence



'Arrow icon' draws attention to website resources

2. Using the evaluative approach

NZQA evaluates the qualification set out in part 4 of the Qualification and Micro-credential Listing and Operational Rules 2025, alignment with NZQCF Level descriptors and the programme against parts 1, 2 and 7 of the Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2025.

The decision to approve a degree or related qualification for listing on the NZQCF register and approve the programme leading to the qualification is made simultaneously by meeting the criteria and answering the evaluation questions.

Decision to list a qualification and approve the programme

How well does the qualification meet the overall requirements for listing on the NZQCF register? How well does the programme design match the qualification outcomes and strategic purpose?	
Listing and programme approved.	ALL of the following Good evidence shows a distinct need for the qualification and that the qualification outcomes meet the evidenced need. The programme matches the strategic purpose and requirements of the qualification. The programme consists of components (also referred to as courses, modules, and papers) structured coherently to achieve the qualification outcomes. Good evidence shows the programme is acceptable to the relevant communities and key stakeholders. No significant gaps or weaknesses in the application or evidence provided.
Listing and programme not approved	When ANY of the above is not evident.

Decision to accredit an education organisation

To what extent does the education provider have the ongoing capability and resources to support sustained delivery of the approved programme?	
Education organisation accredited	ALL of the following Good evidence the education organisation has the capability and resources to provide the programme. Good evidence the education organisation has suitable subject matter and educational expertise to monitor and moderate delivery and assessment of the programme. Formal arrangements with the programme approval holder where required. Good evidence of satisfactory and appropriate research that is adequately resourced. No significant gaps or weaknesses in the application or evidence provided.
Education organisation not accredited.	When ANY of the above are not evident.

3. Qualification Listing

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE DESIGN OF QUALIFICATIONS ON THE [NZQCF](#)

Needs-based

The usefulness, relevance and value of qualifications and credentials is based on their relevance to industry, Māori and iwi, the community, and the skill needs and aspirations of individuals and groups of learners. Qualification and credential pathways show how continued learning has been designed to contribute to growing and developing people's capabilities.

Qualifications may explicitly acknowledge the environmental, cultural, and social aspirations of Māori, Pacific people, disabled people and other communities.

Focused on outcomes

Clearly specifying the outcomes of a qualification or credential enables comparisons with other qualifications and credentials (both nationally and internationally) and assists portability. Outcomes describe what people know, can do, and the context in which they can operate on completion of their qualification or credential. They include transferable skills. They also indicate pathways to further education, employment and/or contribution to the community.

Flexibility

Qualifications and credentials can be achieved through a range of pathways and learning modes. Learning can be delivered and assessed in ways that meet the cultural and learning needs of learners and take place in a wide variety of locations. These include on-campus, online, in workplaces, marae, events, churches, sports clubs and organisations, community settings, sites of cultural significance and the kāinga (home).

Learning acquired both formally and informally – such as through recognition of prior learning – may be credentialed.

Trust and accountability

Qualifications and credentials are developed collaboratively with a wide range of relevant stakeholders in an environment of mutual trust, benefit, and accountability. The relationships between these parties are based on whanaungatanga (relationship), manaakitanga (support) and mahi tahi (cooperation), and reflect respect, understanding, communication and collaboration. Parties can rely on the integrity of the processes used and the information provided.

Listing

Title

Listing rules 4.1 (a), 7.1 and 7.3 - 7.4

4.1 The title for the qualification properly reflects the qualification:

Must not include the name of a person, organisation, or product unless the applicant satisfies the quality assurance body that there is a sound educational justification for the inclusion.

7.1 A qualification may be listed in te reo Māori instead of or in addition to English, and in place of the words "New Zealand" a reo Māori translation for "New Zealand" may be used for the purposes of rule 5.2(a).

7.3 The use of te reo Māori in all listed qualifications and micro-credentials must be consistent with aspirations for Mātauranga Māori.

7.4 Where qualifications or micro-credentials are listed in te reo Māori, the listing details in rule 4.1(c) and (d)(i) for qualifications, or in rule 6.1(d)(iii) for micro-credentials, will contain an English description.

The title of the qualification should provide an accurate indication of its general subject area and be consistent with the requirements on the nomenclature of the NZQCF.

When finalising the title of the qualification, remember that the title listed on the NZQCF will appear on the learner's New Zealand Record of Achievement (NZRoA) and will be used for certification purposes.

Type of qualification, level and credits

Listing rule 4.1 (b) and 4.1 (e)

List a suitable qualification type and level that recognises the achievement of a set of graduate outcomes for a particular purpose through formal certification.

List the credit value.

Each qualification type is defined by an agreed set of criteria, including the level at which the qualification is listed and the number of credits required at each level.

Section 4 of the [NZQCF booklet](#) provides the full definitions of qualification types, levels, and credit requirements according to each qualification type.

The level assigned must provide the best match between the level descriptors and the outcomes of the qualification. In cases where a qualification includes strands/specialisations, each strand must be at the same level as the qualification.

The qualification must be assigned a credit value that reflects the notional learning time for the learner to meet all the qualification outcomes. One credit represents a notional 10 hours of learning time. Notional learning includes all directed, self-directed and assessment time.

Purpose

Listing rule 4.1 (c) (ii)

A statement of the purpose of the qualification which clearly states:

(ii) [...], the use of the qualification in New Zealand, or the use of the qualification in one or more other countries, and its relevance to students, industry, employers, professions whānau, hapū, iwi, hapori Māori or community groups:

A strategic purpose statement clarifies why the qualification should be listed on the NZQCF. The qualification should explicitly acknowledge the cultural and social aspirations of Māori, Pasifika and/or other identified communities, including those with non-physical barriers to learning, where appropriate.

The strategic purpose statement is usually structured as 2-3 statements that identify the following:

- nature of the qualification
- target group of learners, industry and/or community that will benefit from the qualification
- standard level of responsibility and/or autonomy at which the graduate will operate or a definition of the scope of practice. This refers to any relevant industry or professional registration requirements.

Outcome statement

Listing rule 4.1 (d)

a suitable outcome statement that:

- (i) includes a graduate profile which describes the knowledge, skills, and attributes that the graduate will be able to demonstrate upon achieving the qualification
- (ii) identifies the education pathways to other qualifications if any
- (iii) identifies

(B) [...], either or both of the employment pathways or any contribution to the community whānau, hapū, iwi, or hapori Māori

GRADUATE PROFILE

Graduate profile outcome statements describe what a person awarded the qualification or credential knows, is able to do, and the context in which they can operate.

Knowledge

Knowledge is defined as what a graduate knows and understands within a body of knowledge. The knowledge domain includes facts, information, concepts and principles relating to a discipline, field of work or study, or professional practice, and may include Mātauranga Māori.

It is described as a progression from 'basic or factual' knowledge through to 'operational', 'theoretical', 'technical', 'specialised' and 'frontier' knowledge. Complexity of knowledge is described together with breadth and/or depth of understanding in the field of study or work.

Skills

Skills are the ability to complete an action well through deliberate and sustained training or practice. This domain has four sub-domains:

- Practice and performance refer to completing, adapting, researching or creating activities, practices, systems and processes.
- Critical thinking refers to examining, questioning, evaluating and challenging assumptions to address problems, issues or challenges, or achieve a goal.
- Collaboration refers to working with others towards a common goal.
- Communication refers to giving information for a range of purposes to a variety of audiences and receiving information to gain understanding.

Context

The context domain describes levels of autonomy and responsibility, and the environment in which graduates are able to apply their knowledge and skills. The levels progress from operating in structured, more predictable environments to more dynamic, increasingly complex and ambiguous environments. The context also includes expectations for:

- learning or working with or without supervision
- being responsible for self and others
- understanding the scope and limitations of the person's practice.

Ensure each graduate profile outcome statement aligns with the NZQCF Level descriptor:

Domain	Sub-domain	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
What graduates know Knowledge Te mātauranga	<i>Knowledge</i>	Has a broad knowledge of a range of technical or theoretical concepts and systematic understanding of an area of professional practice or body of knowledge	Has advanced, specialised, technical or theoretical knowledge and understanding of an area of professional practice or discipline	Has highly advanced, specialised, technical or theoretical knowledge and understanding, some of which is at the forefront of an area of professional	Has expert understanding at forefront of an area of professional practice or discipline and generates new knowledge in a specialist field

				practice or discipline	
What graduates can do Skills Ngā pūkenga	<i>Practice and performance</i>	Applies highly developed skills and specialised methods to perform complex activities	Applies advanced skills and specialised methods to perform and adapt complex activities or engage in research	Applies expert skills and methods to create new activities in an area of professional practice or to conduct critical, systematic research	Designs and conducts or supervises substantial research that drives innovation at the forefront of an area of professional practice or discipline
	<i>Critical thinking</i>	Examines an area of professional practice or body of knowledge and generates solutions for complex problems	Evaluates emerging complex problems in an area of professional practice or body of knowledge and generates and evaluates solutions using sound judgement and integrity	Conducts rigorous intellectual analysis of theories, concepts and issues in an area of professional practice or body of knowledge and demonstrates well-developed judgement and integrity to solve complex unpredictable problems	Investigates a body of knowledge or area of professional practice and demonstrates authoritative judgement through original research that challenges established knowledge and practice
	<i>Collaboration</i>	Leads or collaborates within a group or team on cross-functional projects and motivates others	Leads or collaborates with groups, teams, or leaders on complex or cross-functional projects and motivates others	Leads or collaborates with groups, teams, or leaders on complex or cross-functional projects and fosters a culture that values and incorporates diverse perspectives and contributions	Leads or collaborates with specialist and non-specialist leaders, peers, groups or organisations, taking account of social, cultural and ethical considerations
	<i>Communication</i>	Communicates complex information and shares insights with a range of audiences using optimised communication media and methods	Communicates complex information and shares insights with specialist and non-specialist audiences using optimised communication media and methods	Communicates highly complex information and shares insights with specialist and non-specialist audiences using a range of media and methods such as a sustained argument, proposition or professional decision	Communicates highly complex information and shares insights with specialist and non-specialist audiences through a wide range of media, methods and contexts, such as publication, critical dialogue, specialist and community forums

Where and how graduates operate Context Te whakapapa	<i>Environment</i>	Dynamic environments with frequent ambiguity	Dynamic environments with frequent ambiguity and change	Dynamic environments with frequent, emerging issues and change	Dynamic environments with frequent, complex issues and unpredictable or uncertain situations
	<i>Autonomy and responsibility</i>	Responsible for own professional practice and development	Responsible for contributing to the development of a profession or field of study	Some responsibility for leadership within a profession or field of study	Responsible for leading the ongoing development of a profession or field of study or creating substantial organisational or social change

Table 1: NZQCF Level descriptors

The graduate profile should start with the stem, "*Graduates will be able to*"

Each graduate profile outcome must be written in the form of:

- active verb which illustrates the use of the outcome, e.g. analyse, apply, examine
- subject/content which describes what the graduate will be doing
- context that reflects the conditions under which the graduate will perform.

Each graduate profile outcome statement should be broad enough to summarise a range of outcomes, as these are unpacked through the component learning outcomes. In this way, graduate profile outcomes are indirectly achieved with evidence gathered in the assessment of component learning outcomes in a programme.

Each outcome statement contributes to meeting the needs identified in the strategic purpose. Where the qualification includes strands, the graduate profile must clearly identify specific outcomes for each strand.

[Writing Learning Outcomes: Structure and Considerations](#)

STRANDS/MAJORS

These are needed where additional graduate profile outcomes recognise specific specialities in addition to the core graduate profile. These should be clearly separated from the core graduate profile outcome statements and reflected in the title of the qualification.

EDUCATION PATHWAY TO OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

An education pathway outlines the further learning a graduate of the qualification can undertake. This should be specific to the proposed qualification in the application.

EMPLOYMENT, CULTURAL, AND COMMUNITY PATHWAYS

The employment pathway identifies the areas in which a graduate may be qualified to work or the contribution they may make to their community. This should be specific and aligned with the proposed qualification in the application.

Classification

Listing rule 4.1 (f)

The assigned six-digit code from the New Zealand Standard of Classification of Education (NZSCED) system.

NZSCED is a subject-based classification system for qualifications and programmes, consisting of three levels of detail (broad, narrow, and detailed fields) that define each subject or field of study. Each qualification listed on the NZQCF requires an NZSCED code at the detailed field level. The application should specify the relevant NZSCED code, and education organisations may consider discussing the correct NZSCED prior with TEC if seeking funding.

↩ [New Zealand Standard Classification of Education \(NZSCED\)](#)

Review period

Listing rules 4.1 (i) and 15.1

The intended period for review is usually no longer than 5 years from listing and no longer than 5 years from each review thereafter.

The qualification developer must review the qualification within each review period specified for it, following the current guidelines published by on NZQA website.

Every qualification must have a review date. The qualification developer must initiate a formal review process before this date.

The period for ongoing review is a maximum of five years. Qualification developers are encouraged to set a review date in three to four years, depending on the duration of the programme.

A review of the qualification will include a review of the programme. See **Approval Criterion 7: Programme review, Accreditation Criterion 4: Programme review and Qualification Review**.

The application should specify a review date. At the time of approval, NZQA will discuss the date with the applicant in consultation.

4. Programme approval

Part 1 of Programme Approval, Recognition and Accreditation Rules 2025 requires:

4. Applications by institutions (other than universities) for approval of programmes leading to degree, graduate and postgraduate qualifications at levels 7 to 10 must contain the following:
 - a. programme documentation that includes:
 - i. a clear statement of title and aims of the programme;
 - ii. a clear articulation of the structure, components and length of the programme;
 - iii. specified learning outcomes for each component of the programme;
 - iv. clearly identified links between the programme component learning outcomes and the qualification graduate profile outcomes; and
 - v. allocation of appropriate levels and credits for each component;
 - b. information that demonstrates the programme meets the criteria specified in rule 4.1:
 - c. evidence of internal quality assurance approval of the programme by the institution.

NZQA evaluates applications using Rule 4.1 Criteria for the approval of programmes for institutions under Section 439 of the Act, as explained below.

Approval Criterion 1: Qualification to which the programme leads

The programme meets both the listing details for the qualification it relates to and the qualification-type description.

The purpose, outcomes, level, and credits of the programme must align with its NZQCF qualification type definition. The programme's overall level and credit value must be the same as the qualification (or qualifications) it leads to.

See **Qualification Listing**

↩ [NZQCF brochure](#)

Approval Criterion 2: Title, aims, learning outcomes and coherence

The title, aims, stated learning outcomes and coherence of the whole programme are suitable for the qualification it relates to.

The title of the programme should match the title of the qualification.

The aim of the programme can be the same as the strategic purpose of the qualification. If the intention is to include a separate aim of the programme, then consider, for example:

- the programme's use and relevance to learners, industry and communities

- the programme's aim in terms of the cultural and social aspirations of Māori, Pasifika and other communities
- information relevant to the programme's key stakeholders
- information that is aligned with the strategic purpose statement of the qualification
- teaching and learning philosophy, strand, context, site of learning (e.g. workplace)

The programme must illustrate a clear structure of its components. Each component descriptor needs to specify the:

- title
- level
- credit value
- learning hours (distribution of the learning hours directed/self-directed)
- aim statement
- learning outcomes
- indicative content
- assessment methodologies and weightings and
- compulsory or recommended resources (if applicable)

See Appendix 1: Component Descriptor

Programmes may contain components that are lower than the level of the qualification (e.g. some Level 5 components in a Level 7 qualification). However, overall, the graduate profile outcomes must be met at the level of the qualification.

Similarly, the programme may contain components that are higher than the level of the qualification; however, learners should be given appropriate support to enable them to succeed and to ensure consistency of outcomes.

↩ [NZQCF brochure](#)

COMPONENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

A component learning outcome statement (LO) describes the specific knowledge, skills, understanding and application a learner will achieve through each programme component.

Constructive alignment of the learning outcomes with the teaching and learning activities and assessments in each component will help ensure students achieve the learning outcomes and, therefore, meet the graduate profile outcome.

↩ [Writing Learning Outcomes: Structure and Considerations](#)

The application must include mapping of the component learning outcomes to the qualification's graduate profile outcomes (GPOs) with an explanatory matrix (see Appendix 2: GPO mapping matrix).

STACKING MICRO-CREDENTIALS INTO PROGRAMMES

Although micro-credentials are developed and delivered as standalone products, they can also build upon or complement one another.

Programmes may include micro-credentials as components, provided the programme's overall design is coherent and meets the qualification outcomes and strategic purpose.

Micro-credentials stacked towards a degree or postgraduate qualification must be designed to be taught primarily by individuals engaged in research.

Approval of a micro-credential does not guarantee that a programme composed of the same micro-credential will be approved.

The application must clearly state which components are standalone micro-credentials.

◀ [Stacking micro-credentials](#)

COHERENCE

Coherence is demonstrated when the qualification's strategic purpose (programme aim statement) is clearly aligned with the graduate profile outcomes. This alignment is reflected in the learning outcomes of each component and is evident in the proposed delivery modes and assessment methods.

Coherence within each component is essential, as the learning outcomes should align with the respective component's aim and content. The assessments within a component should also align with the learning outcomes.

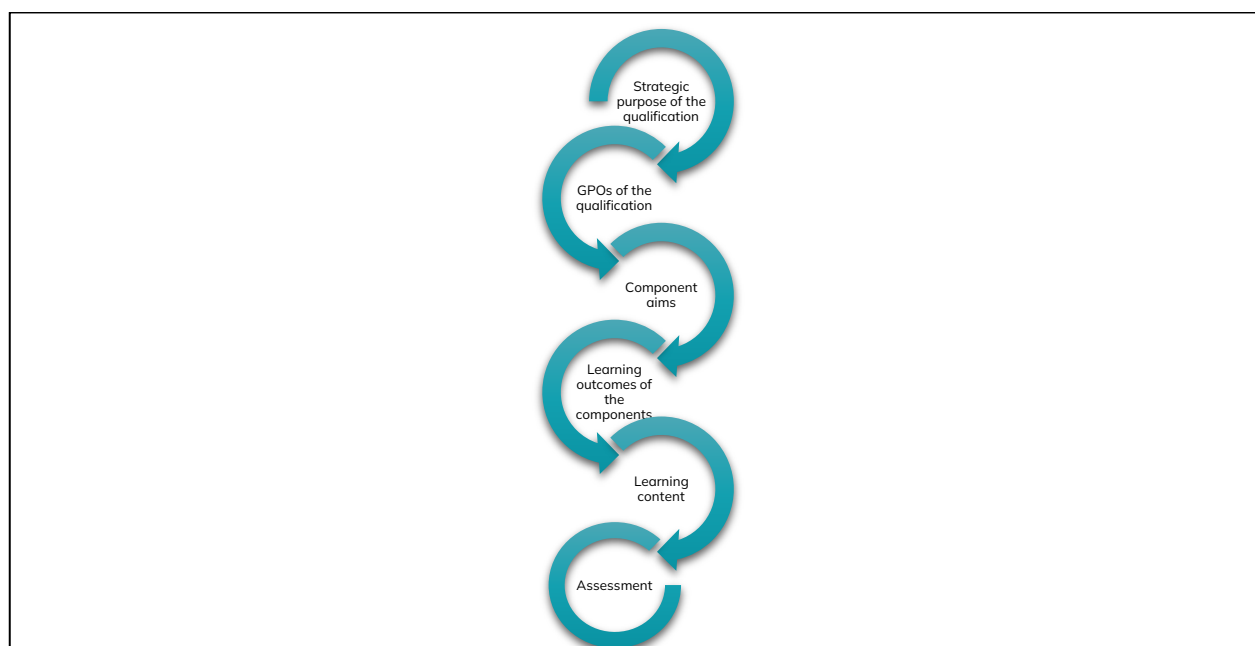


Figure 1: Programme coherence

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  Programme document and component descriptors
-  Graduate profile and component learning outcome mapping matrix

Approval Criterion 3: Delivery methods

The delivery methods are adequate and appropriate given the stated learning outcomes for the programme. Where specific resources are necessary for the programme to be provided those resources are clearly outlined.

Delivery methods are specific techniques or approaches used to deliver educational content to learners, such as lectures, discussions, case studies, group projects, simulations, and other forms of active learning.

When selecting delivery methods, consider:

- how each delivery method will assist the target learner group in achieving the learning outcomes of the programme
- the educational rationale for any practical, work-integrated learning
- the clear relationship between learning hours and credit value.
- the supply of, and learner access to, educational support, resources, or equipment
- ways of informing learners of the activities that will be expected of them.
- these do not place learners, stakeholders or the public at risk. The application must identify any potential risks and demonstrate how they will be addressed.

Delivery methods should be suitable for the delivery mode.

DELIVERY MODE

A programme can include a combination of delivery modes. NZQA currently records delivery mode for programmes as follows¹:

- a) Face to face – most of the study or training is proximate, in-person, either in provider-based or work-based settings.
- b) Distance – most delivery is distant from the provider-based or work-based settings, commonly in an online setting. This may be asynchronous learning, working through online activities, or synchronous online interaction attended by a facilitator and a number of participants.
- c) Blended delivery includes significant amounts of time attending in-person classes or work and learning at a distance from the educator or trainer.

¹ NZQA is reviewing delivery mode 'types' as part of updating its internal systems and will update programme and micro-credentials guidance in due course

NZQA uses these modes to distinguish between learning and training that relies entirely on distance (usually online) and learning and training that occur in the same physical space, at least some of the time, and are part of teaching and learning. Although remote videoconferencing involves face-to-face interaction, it is considered 'distance' in these definitions. Also, note that 'blended' learning is sometimes used to describe delivery that uses multiple learning contexts, such as offshore and onshore. In the NZQA definitions, 'blended' only refers to the blend of in-person and at a distance.

The application should indicate the programme's delivery mode and clarify the alignment of the delivery methods and modes.

ONLINE DELIVERY

Support and advice where the mode of delivery is distance learning online is available here:

↩ [Distance online delivery](#)

The guidance covers delivery through an online learning management system [LMS], which may include webinars / recorded or live lectures, online tutorials and discussions (synchronous or asynchronous), and individual and group work (synchronous or otherwise via online forums and chats).

Applications for degree programmes offered online to offshore students must include additional information addressing time-zone differences and providing support tailored to learners' cultural settings.

↩ [The Tertiary and International Learners Code of Practice](#)

PRACTICAL, WORK-BASED

The application must identify any practical, field-based or work-based components in the programme that are undertaken away from the stated delivery site.

The application must describe:

- how this is delivered – the hours and duration, and who delivers it
- how the delivery is quality assured through providing relevant evidence, such as a tripartite agreement specifying the roles and responsibilities of each party
- indication of a staff member whose role is to liaise with off-site providers,
- the health and safety policies and procedures, and any non-disclosure agreement in place
- how the learner's progress is monitored
- how the learners are supported

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

The programme learning hours are generally distributed to include directed and self-directed learning hours.

The percentage of independent, self-directed learning activities, such as reading and research, will be determined by the level of qualification, graduate profile outcomes, and component learning outcomes.

The application should indicate the self-directed learning hours and provide a general outline of the activities that the learner will undertake to meet those hours.

SPECIFIC RESOURCES

The application must outline all specific resources required for the delivery of the programme or its components and demonstrate that those resources are in place or provide a detailed schedule for their acquisition. Refer to **Accreditation Criterion 2: Resources**.

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  Programme document and component descriptors
-  Delivery Schedule / Timetable
-  A tripartite agreement for practical or work-based components, including non-disclosure agreement
-  Relevant policies related to work placements
-  Student Handbook

Approval Criterion 4: Acceptability of the programme and consultation

There is a written summary of the consultation undertaken, the views expressed, and consideration of the views. The consultation and summary must articulate the need for and acceptability of the programme to the relevant communities (*including ākonga, whānau, hapū, iwi and where appropriate, hapori Māori*) and other key stakeholders (*including the qualification developer and any relevant academic, employer, industry, professional and other bodies*). Any required endorsement by a WDC under section 366(1)(g) of the Act must have been obtained.

NZQA requires evidence of engagement and consultation that considers stakeholders' needs, including the relevant Workforce Development Council (WDC), where appropriate. Although WDC endorsement is not required for programmes leading to degrees and postgraduate qualifications, the WDC may be a key stakeholder and should be considered.

For education organisations engaged only in the international market, consultation with communities, industry or employers is still required even though graduates may only remain in New Zealand for a short time.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

The stakeholder consultation process requires that relevant, well-informed stakeholders are represented and involved, and to inform their contribution, they should be provided with information such as:

- The details of the qualification awarded on successful completion of the programme (particularly the strategic purpose statement and the graduate profile outcomes),
- an outline of the programme, including the aim, component structure and content, component description, graduate profile, delivery methods, and assessments; and
- the target learner groups.

Effective stakeholder consultation processes commence during the qualification and programme development stage at the start of the development cycle. It should be the catalyst that informs the need, aim, content, delivery methods and assessment.

NEED FOR THE PROGRAMME

The application must include evidence of the need for the programme, providing a needs analysis (or market analysis), as well as its acceptability to the relevant communities and stakeholders.

The need for the programme is linked to the need for the qualification, as outlined in the **Qualification Listing**.

Consultation on the need for the programme should be informed by engagement with each of the following, as appropriate.

Māori and Pasifika communities

Educational organisations with multiple delivery sites should consult with the local iwi or hapū associated with the catchment area of each site where the programme is to be delivered.

Educational organisations must maintain working partnerships with the Māori and Pasifika communities most relevant to them and their operations to seek feedback on the knowledge, skills, and other benefits the programme will bring to the communities.

Academic Bodies or Boards

Academic bodies are usually groups responsible for academic-related matters within an institution or who share academic connections in a particular area in different institutions or organisations. The rationale for including academic bodies as part of the stakeholder consultation, both within and beyond the institution, is to build up solid academic grounds for developing the proposed programme, including the programme structure and components, entry requirements, arrangements for assessment and moderation, and to foster consistency of graduates.

Industry and Employers

Industry includes advocacy groups, trade associations, associations of industries or groups with allied interests, and other non-profit organisations in general. Examples include chambers of commerce or business networks that aim to influence public policy, tertiary education, and resource allocation decisions. Consultation with industry may relate to the programme's design, appropriate learner projects, internships, or work placements. Ultimately, the industry must be asked to identify the relevant skills, knowledge, and attributes that ensure graduates meet the industry's needs.

Employers, as distinct to industry, have more specific and immediate requirements. They will employ graduates of the programmes and focus on graduates' work-ready skills, knowledge, and attributes. Improving graduate employability skills contributes to the long-term sustainability of the programme. Consultation with employers should also inform the development of authentic assessment requirements for the programme.

Professional Bodies

Professional bodies are usually non-profit membership organisations in a learned occupation that specify the requirements for entry to the profession or professional body, identify requirements for continued membership, and set out the code of conduct for the profession, as well as complaints and disciplinary procedures. For example, Engineering New Zealand, Human Resource Institute of New Zealand Management (HRINZ), NZ Institute of Safety Management (NZISM), Physiotherapy New Zealand, and The Property Institute of New Zealand (PINZ).

The rationale for consulting professional bodies is to ensure that the voice of the profession is heard and acted upon, so that the proposed programme is developed to meet the professional needs and standards.

Regulatory Bodies

Unlike professional bodies and non-profit membership organisations, regulatory bodies are public organisations or authorities established by the government on a statutory mandate to exercise a regulatory function, such as imposing requirements, restrictions, and conditions, setting standards, and enforcing compliance. For example, the Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ), the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ), the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ), or the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB).

Some professional bodies also have statutory and disciplinary responsibilities; for example, the Teaching Council of New Zealand is a professional body with statutory powers.

The rationale for including regulatory bodies is to ensure that the programme has considered the views and feedback of all relevant stakeholders and, if applicable, that the programme meets relevant regulatory requirements and conditions.

Advisory Group

Evidence of engagement and consultation must demonstrate that the educational organisation has/will appoint a designated advisory group within the specified subject area before or during the development of the programme and that this group has/will contribute to and support the development of the programme.

The advisory group should be composed primarily of external industry representatives, employers, academics in relevant disciplines, Māori, Pasifika and other relevant communities.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

The application should include a summary of the consultation that evidences the extent to which the consultation was undertaken. It should:

- identify the stakeholders involved (e.g. academic, employer, industry, professional and other bodies)
- clarify the aspects of the programme that were consulted and commented on
- views expressed by the stakeholders on the need and acceptability of the programme, its content, structure, delivery, assessment and any other aspect which is considered to be necessary
- Consider the views in the programme (e.g., where and how stakeholders' views have been incorporated, and if not, why)

See Appendix 3: Consultation Log Example.

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  Summary of consultation
-  Needs analysis
-  Evidence of support from relevant academics, employers, industry, professionals, and other bodies
-  Evidence of support from relevant Māori and Pasifika communities

Approval Criterion 5: Regulations

There are clear, relevant, and appropriate regulations that specify requirements for:

- admission
- credit recognition and transfer
- recognition of prior learning
- programme length and structure
- integration of practical and work-based components
- assessment procedures, including authenticity of student work
- normal progression within the programme, and completion.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The application must specify the requirements for admission, including requirements for:

- academic levels/qualifications
- proficiency in English/ te reo Māori or other languages if applicable
- related work or professional experience and
- equivalent qualifications and/or relevant work experience

↩ [English language requirements for international students are set out in Rule 22 of the Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2025. Refer to the Appendix.](#)

Where equivalent qualifications and/or work experience are considered for entry, the educational organisation must clarify how equivalent qualifications and/or relevant work experience are assessed and verified and justify such requirements and procedures.

CREDIT RECOGNITION AND TRANSFER (CRT) AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

The application must demonstrate clear, relevant, and appropriate regulations that specify the process and requirements for Credit Transfer (CRT) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), including clarification of the credit value and the level that can be granted through the CRT and RPL process.

↩ [Recognition of learning for credit](#)

PROGRAMME LENGTH, STRUCTURE, AND NORMAL PROGRESSION WITHIN THE PROGRAMME

The application must specify clear programme regulations. The programme regulations should:

- clarify the duration of both full-time and part-time study
- demonstrate the full structure of the programme by the year and/or semester
- illustrate the normal progression within the programme for different cohorts and intakes
- specify any pre-and co-requisite, compulsory and elective components
- specify the maximum duration for completion of the programme

INTEGRATION OF PRACTICAL AND WORK-BASED COMPONENTS

The application must clarify any practical and work-based components in the programme and specify how these components are delivered and assessed with relevant evidence, e.g.:

- a tripartite agreement for the practical and work-based components specifying the roles and responsibilities of each party
- non-disclosure agreement
- relevant evidence of support from a third party for such arrangements

Refer to the section under **Approval Criterion 3: Delivery Methods.**

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

The application must clarify how the programme is assessed and specify the procedures for

- equitable chance and access to assessment activities
- regular feedback on progress
- conducting assessment activities
- reassessment and appeals
- standards/criteria for assessment and/or requirements for achievement
- reporting on final achievement
- provisions for dealing with instances of impaired performance (e.g. aegrotat passes) and the circumstances in which they are permitted
- provisions for assessment in te reo Māori

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The application must outline the process and procedure to ensure that the authenticity of student work is upheld, and that academic misconduct is detected, prevented, and responded to accordingly.

➡ [Guidance and resources on Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#)

➡ [A Guide that addresses the prevention and detection of cheating through documented and systematised practices](#)

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  A complete set of the relevant regulations, e.g. separately referenced section of a Quality Management System (QMS)
-  Admission requirements and procedures; English language proficiency requirements, enrolment procedures
-  A tripartite agreement for practical or work-based components, including a non-disclosure agreement
-  Student or programme handbook
-  Practical, work placement or research handbooks
-  Assessment procedures and relevant supporting documents, e.g., requirements for academic integrity, procedures for the authenticity of student work, criteria/standards for assessment, requirements for achievement, assessment processes, appeals, and resubmissions
-  A code of conduct for researchers and a research supervisor's handbook

Approval Criterion 6: Assessment and moderation

The assessment methodology is fair, valid, consistent, and appropriate given the stated learning outcomes.

There is an effective system for moderation of assessment materials and decisions.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND STANDARDS

The application must clarify the assessment rationale and methodology to explain how:

- the learning outcomes are assessed
- the assessment methodology is appropriate
- all the learning outcomes are achieved through the assessments

↩ [Online assessment: guidance for providers](#)

↩ [Aromatawai and the Principles of Assessment](#)

ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH

The application must include evidence of the level and scale of research involved in the programme, taking into account the level of the programme and the type of qualification.

The application should include details relating to:

- the type of research activities learners are expected to undertake
- the research project approval, including the ethical approval process, where appropriate
- the requirements for submission (length, format, authenticity, presentation of evidence in a form other than written)

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  Assessment policies related to research, ethics, internships, and work placements
-  Research supervision policies

MODERATION

The educational organisation must demonstrate that it has appropriate policies and procedures and internal and external pre- and post-moderation plans for moderation of assessment to ensure:

- summative assessment materials and tasks are fair, valid and aligned to the learning outcomes
- assessment decisions are fair and consistent
- any assessment issues are addressed promptly, e.g. student appeals, differences of opinion between the moderator and assessors.

The moderation procedures should outline the roles and responsibilities of the moderators, the frequency of moderation, and the percentage of the programme that is moderated annually, both internally and externally.

Internal moderation

An effective internal moderation system:

- ensures that all assessment materials are moderated and approved before being used with learners (pre-assessment moderation)

- verifies the fairness, validity, and consistency of assessor decisions before results are reported (post-assessment moderation)
- provides feedback to assessors, assessment writers, and programme developers on the quality and effectiveness of assessment
- accommodates a variety of learning outcomes and assessment contexts (for example, onsite moderation for practical outcomes)
- informs about training and ongoing professional development opportunities
- provides participants with enough time to complete their moderation activities
- is viewed by participants as a value-added activity
- results in regular reviews, assessment updates, and improved assessment practices contribute to the programme's continuous improvement for stakeholders

External moderation

External moderation provides an assurance that assessment decisions are consistent when moderated outside the applicant's organisation.

The application must outline who the potential external moderation partners could be.

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  A summary document clarifying the assessment rationale and methodology, covering assessments, marking/grading rubric
-  Assessment policies and procedures covering equitable chance and access to assessment activities, regular feedback and reporting, assessment appeal, assessment in te reo Māori, assessment process including for research components
-  Moderation policies and procedures covering pre-assessment moderation of summative assessment tasks, external post-assessment moderation
-  Internal and external moderation plans and arrangements

Approval Criterion 7: Programme review

The institution:

- assesses the currency and content of the programme
- has adequate and effective processes for the ongoing review of the programme, taking account of the results of any review of the qualification
- has adequate and effective processes for monitoring the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders, and for reviewing programme regulations and content
- updates the programme accordingly.

The programme approval holder is responsible for the periodic review of the programme. Programmes at Level 7 and above, such as the bachelor's degree or Postgraduate Certificate, are also Qualifications; therefore, educational organisations should undertake

ongoing programme reviews that feed into the qualification review. See the **Qualification Review process**.

The application must clarify how reviews will be conducted for the programme in terms of:

- how the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders are monitored
- how the advisory committee is involved
- the procedures that are in place or are planned to update the programme accordingly

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  A statement clarifying the approaches and the procedures for ongoing review of the programme and the mechanism for addressing feedback from programme reviews
-  A statement specifying the processes and procedures for monitoring the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders, and updating the programme accordingly
-  Policies and procedures for programme review and monitoring

Approval Criterion 8: Research required for degrees and postgraduate qualifications

The links between research and the curriculum are clear, adequate, and effective.

This criterion relates to the research that underpins the curriculum and any research undertaken by learners in research-specific components of the programme.

Refer to **Accreditation Criterion 5** for guidance on staff active research and the research that underpins teaching.

The Committee on University Academic Programmes' (CUAPs) definition of research included in the NZQCF booklet is:

Research is an intellectually controlled investigation. It advances knowledge through the discovery and codification of new information or the development of further understanding of existing information. It is a creative and independent activity conducted by people with expert knowledge of the theories, methods and information of the principal field of enquiry and its cognate discipline(s). Research typically involves enquiry of an experimental or critical nature driven by a hypothesis or intellectual position capable of rigorous assessment. Its findings must be open to scrutiny and formal evaluation by others in the field, and this may be achieved through publication or public presentation. A long-term and cumulative activity, research is often characterised by fruitful new topics for investigation and unexpected uses for its findings.

For the PBR definition and requirements, refer to [Performance-Based Research Fund Guidelines for tertiary education organisations participating in Quality Evaluation, 2026 \(November 2023, pp.18-20\)](#)

RESEARCH- CURRICULUM LINKS

The application must clarify how research informs the development of the curriculum and how this has been structurally integrated into the programme design, as well as how learner research is linked to the curriculum.

RESEARCH COMPONENT

The application must indicate the research-based components along with the level and scale of the research involved. Refer to **Approval Criterion 6: Assessment and moderation**.

The level of learner research will vary according to the level of the qualification.

Research at the bachelor's level focuses on developing students' ability to design and undertake a project under supervision and report on it appropriately. In contrast, at the master's level, it will be significant work in the form of a thesis, dissertation, substantial research paper, industry-based project, or scholarly creative work.

A PROGRAMME MAY INCLUDE:

Research portfolio

A research portfolio typically consists of two to four research projects or essays, rather than a single project. The different projects form a coherent package organised around a central theme.

Research project

An individual or collaborative enterprise carefully plans to achieve a particular research aim.

Thesis

This could be a report on a research project or study, an extended topic analysis, or a work of artistic and creative merit. The NZQCF specifies the type of outputs and their credit value by degree type:

- Master's by thesis (120 credits): a thesis of 90 credits for a research project
- Master's by thesis and coursework (240 credits): a thesis, dissertation, research paper or scholarly creative work of 90 credits
- Master's by coursework (240 credits): through courses, project work, creative work and research in varying combinations
- PhD/DPhil: a thesis will constitute the entire body of work on which the qualification award is based (i.e. all 360 credits)

Research undertaken by learners at the Master's and PhD levels should be completed to internationally recognised standards and demonstrate the graduate's capacity for independent thinking.

Supervision and External Assessment

Research components exceeding 60 credits should be assessed by at least one external assessor who is suitably qualified and who undertakes research in the discipline. Typically, the assessors will be academics engaged in a similar field of research and employed by a university, polytechnic, wānanga, or private training establishment that delivers in that discipline.

Where the research component involves supervision, the application must include evidence of:

- policies and procedures for supervisor selection, management, reporting responsibilities and resolving differences of opinions (e.g. that may occur when awarding a thesis grade)
- intellectual property ownership rights
- a code of conduct for researchers and research supervisors
- mechanism for ethical approval of research projects

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  Relevant policies related to research, ethics, approval and publication
-  Student Handbook
-  Conduct of research handbook
-  Non-disclosure agreement for intellectual property rights
-  Sample component reading list
-  Policies and procedures relating to managing the student research component

5. Programme Accreditation

Applications for accreditation

3. For programmes leading to a degree or to graduate or postgraduate qualifications at levels 7 to 10, applications must contain the following information:
 - a. information that demonstrates the institution meets the criteria specified in rule 7.1:
 - b. evidence of internal quality assurance approval by the institution.

NZQA evaluates applications for programme accreditation using the criteria in Rule 7 of the NZQCF Programme Approval, Recognition and Accreditation Rules 2025.

Accreditation Criterion 1: Assessment and moderation

The institution has the capability and capacity to ensure assessment materials and decisions are fair, valid, consistent and appropriate for the level, given the stated learning outcomes.

The educational organisation must demonstrate that it has effective and documented systems for assessment and moderation, including policies and procedures for internal and external pre- and post-assessment moderation, assessment appeals, and authenticity of student work.

The policies and procedures for assessment and moderation should also include provisions for learners to be assessed in te reo Māori.

All learning outcomes are important because they all contribute to the GPOs. The assessment must ensure that a 'pass' reflects the minimum acceptable level of performance for each learning outcome.

When designing assessment materials, education organisations should ensure that:

- all learning outcomes are assessed
- marking guidance includes criteria specifying the minimum acceptable level of performance required for each learning outcome

Suggestions for supporting documents:

 Policies and procedures for assessment and moderation

Accreditation Criterion 2: Resources

The institution has the capability and capacity to support sustained delivery of the programme through appropriate academic staffing, teaching facilities, educational and physical resources, and support services.

The requirements of a programme vary depending upon whether it is at the bachelor's or postgraduate level, a general degree, or a specialised qualification. Resource requirements will vary with the mode of delivery, such as laboratory, studio, fieldwork, online, and teaching space.

The accreditation of degrees and postgraduate programmes is site-specific. Education organisations intending to deliver the degree programme on multiple sites must provide details about each proposed delivery site.

The application should detail the specific resources according to each delivery site.

ACADEMIC STAFFING

The education organisation must demonstrate the following:

- the teaching staff are appropriately qualified and experienced (typically qualified at a minimum of one NZQCF level higher than the degree they deliver, assess, and/or supervise) or have demonstrable relevant and suitable professional experience
- the teaching staff hold a tertiary teaching qualification or have equivalent teaching experience; where teaching staff do not hold a tertiary teaching qualification and do not have sufficient teaching experience, the education organisation must commit to enrolling teaching staff in such a programme
- the components are taught by teaching staff engaged in active research in the same discipline or a discipline that supports the delivery of the programme and underpins its theoretical framework
- the programme is staffed sufficiently to ensure effective delivery across the range of content and that programme components are delivered by those qualified in the subject area of the component(s) they will deliver
- a gap analysis to determine whether any additional staffing is required, and the application includes a detailed recruitment plan, job descriptions for intended recruits where appropriate, staff development plans, and research plans appropriate to the programme implementation timetable
- the teaching staff supervising learners' research are experienced and have expertise in research supervision at the appropriate level. Where teaching staff are developing such experience, they are expected to work in a co-supervision model with an experienced supervisor in a secondary capacity for the first supervision and a lead capacity in a subsequent supervision
- the education organisation employs a sufficient number of teaching staff capable of delivering and assessing learners' research
- evidence of how internal research supervision capacity will be developed
- the education organisation formalises roles and responsibilities of the learner, supervisory staff from the education organisation and the host and, where relevant, the registration body where the programme includes practical, field or work-based components
- internal staff experience in Māori language and culture, appropriate knowledge, skills and tikanga Māori or evidence of professional development and/or recruitment planning to address this gap, depending on the programme's discipline

TEACHING FACILITIES

All degrees are site-specific. The application should include details related to each delivery site, and that there are sufficient teaching facilities appropriate for the delivery of the programme and for the projected enrolments, including:

- teaching space, faculty offices, laboratory or studio, library facilities or access
- areas for student recreational and research activities, and
- space that is specifically designated for the programme, if applicable

Where a degree will be delivered at multiple sites, the education organisation must provide evidence that there is a consistent standard of facilities and resources at all sites and that

learners have equitable access to resources, support services, and a consistent standard of teaching and delivery.

RESEARCH FACILITIES

The application should demonstrate sufficient research facilities for students, including laboratories and equipment relevant and appropriate to the programme's nature, as well as dedicated space or areas for research activities. Additionally, it should provide access to databases and reference materials (both digital and physical) relevant to research in the programme's discipline.

The education organisation should include evidence of policies and procedures relating to:

- guidance, support, and management of student researchers
- the development and approval of student thesis/research projects
- mechanisms for ethical approval of student thesis/research projects
- the appointment of appropriately qualified, experienced supervisors, a code of conduct for student researchers and the supervisors
- the examination of the thesis and protection of intellectual property

EDUCATIONAL AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES

The application should include the range of resources necessary for the implementation and sustained delivery of the programme in all proposed modes of delivery, as well as a commitment to provide any additional resources and facilities required for its ongoing delivery.

This includes:

- adequate databases/e-journals, textbooks, reference materials, learning management systems (LMS), hardware and software, equipment for learning and teaching
- financial infrastructure, administrative systems, and resource management policies and practices
- development and acquisition schedules appropriate to the programme implementation timetable, if applicable

↩ [Distance online delivery](#)

SUPPORT SERVICES

The education organisation should:

- clarify how it supports its learners, academic staff, and support staff and specify the structured processes associated with supporting the delivery of the degree programme, such as an academic board or equivalent (with delegations to faculty or programme committees as appropriate)
- demonstrate that it has sufficient appropriately qualified and/or experienced support staff for learners and teaching staff. These include support systems and staffing for learner enrolment, pastoral care, learning and disability support, and support for Māori, Pasifika, and international learners

- provide evidence that it has policies and procedures to ensure learners and teaching staff are fully supported to meet the stated outcomes of the programme
- demonstrate that appropriate support services are in place or accessible to learners, including academic support, language support, library services, mental health and counselling, and other support services relevant to learners' study and life
- clarify how adequate and appropriate programme information, guidance and support systems are made accessible to learners

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  A table listing teaching staff who will deliver the degree, showing their discipline-specific qualifications, the component(s) they will deliver, their teaching qualifications, and research output specific to what they will teach
-  CVs, research plans, and professional development plans of teaching staff
-  Relevant documents for the selection of supervisors for research supervision, such as selection criteria for supervisors, roles and responsibilities for supervisors and researchers
-  Evidence of resources or the plan to procure the resources to deliver the programme
-  Evidence from the organisation's senior management about the availability of resources, including staff, finance and any special requirements for the ongoing viability/sustainability of the programme, e.g. a statement of attestation from the Chief Executive, Director, or equivalent

Accreditation Criterion 3: Support for delivery

If the applicant institution is not the holder of the programme approval, there is support from the holder of the programme approval.

Where an education organisation does not hold programme approval, it must demonstrate a formal agreement with the organisation that holds the programme approval.

An agreement between the parties is required and must include provisions for

- dispute resolution
- managing changes to the programme
- moderation of outcomes
- managing complaints about delivery and the quality of delivery
- involvement in programme and qualification review

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  An agreement with the programme approval holder

Accreditation Criterion 4: Programme review

There must be adequate and effective review of programme performance and the institution's capability to support the programme.

There must be monitoring of improvement following review, and processes for determining whether the programme should continue to be delivered.

The education organisation must demonstrate that there is an effective system for:

- the regular monitoring, ongoing evaluation and review of the programme, including structured processes associated with an academic board (or equivalent) and mechanisms for ensuring that the views of learners and representatives of relevant industries, professions, academic and research communities, Māori and other stakeholders are taken into account
- monitoring the efficacy of any improvements made to the programme as a result of any review
- making changes to the approved programme and ensuring that those changes are managed consistently with any external requirements, such as those mandated by professional registration bodies
- confirming that assessment and moderation systems support the credibility of learner outcomes
- confirming that academic staffing, support services, facilities, and educational and physical resources support sustained delivery of the programme
- determining whether the programme should continue to be delivered

Suggestions for supporting documents:

 Policies and procedures for programme evaluation, review, and monitoring

Accreditation Criterion 5: Research activity required to deliver degrees and postgraduate qualifications

Research facilities and the support of staff involved in research are adequate, the levels of research activity of staff involved in the programme are satisfactory, and the ways by which the research- teaching links are made in the curriculum are appropriate.

The Education and Training Act 2020 Section 454(3) states:

NZQA may not consent to the granting of an award of a kind referred to in subsection (1) unless it is satisfied that the award recognises the completion of a programme of advanced learning that—
(a) is taught mainly by people engaged in research;

Refer to **Approval Criterion 8** for the definition of research.

RESEARCH FACILITIES

The application should demonstrate that there are sufficient research facilities and resources for academic staff involved in delivering the programme, including laboratories and equipment relevant and appropriate to the programme's nature, as well as dedicated research spaces and areas, and databases and reference materials (both digital and physical) relevant to research in the programme's discipline.

SUPPORT OF STAFF INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

The education organisation must demonstrate that organisational structures and systems provide appropriate support for teaching staff to engage in research, including access to an appropriate ethics committee.

The ethics committee should include Māori membership or, at minimum, processes to ensure that staff and learner ethics applications for research incorporating aspects of te ao Māori are considered by Māori with the appropriate research and/or subject expertise.

The allocation of research time is an essential factor in supporting research engagement. Each educational organisation will have different methods of allocating time for staff to undertake research. Commonly, the workload formula with a staff research allocation is 0.2 FTE. Several cultural and capacity factors significantly influence research productivity and engagement, and educational organisations should adopt business and operational models that best suit their needs while ensuring that research time is allocated appropriately and that staff are encouraged to undertake research consciously.

The application should include details related to a quality assurance system for managing staff research, including documenting, monitoring, and reporting on staff research.

Activities that *support the conduct of research* include:

- management of staff who are either directly engaged in the conduct of research or are providing professional, technical, administrative or clerical support or assistance to those staff
- the development of training and activities for research components
- the supervision of students enrolled and undertaking research components

STAFF RESEARCH ACTIVITY AND LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM

Teaching is primarily carried out by individuals engaged in research, whose primary concern is advancing learning and scholarship, aiming to develop intellectual independence and analytical rigour.

The applicant should demonstrate how they will ensure that more than half of the programme's teaching staff, or the number of staff who represent more than half of the teaching hours of the programme, will be engaged in research either individually or

collaboratively and that institutional structures and policies are in place to support research.

A professional or applied degree may focus more on applied research, while a theory-based degree could produce more theoretical, strategic, and scholarly types of research. Educational organisations can consider inter, multi or transdisciplinary research as long as the knowledge is connected to the praxis of the programme.

The education organisation must demonstrate that it monitors the quantity and quality of research outputs of the staff teaching on the programme.

Evidence in the application should also be supplied of forward research planning (usually for a 3-5-year period) indicatively showing how the programme's research culture will unfold, how any emergent researchers will be developed to undertake independent projects, and how programme staff research will maintain an ongoing commitment to programme currency and contribute to knowledge in the discipline of the degree.

Active Research

In higher education institutions, an "active" researcher conducts research on an ongoing basis, produces outputs, contributes to the development of the research environment by participating in research activities and conferences, and may supervise research students. Research outputs differ according to the programme discipline. Posters and conference presentations, for example, should lead to more developed, published outputs.

A research culture should produce a balanced range of outputs appropriate to the discipline and nature of the degree. An institution's research culture should, over time, be developed to include engagement with and dissemination to broader domestic and international communities of research.

Note that staff who contribute to a programme's delivery but are not academic tutors, such as lab technicians or clinical placement assistants, are not expected to carry a research load; however, they can choose to do so.

Research activities

For further clarification, research includes:

- activity that leads to scholarly books, journal articles, and other nationally and internationally published outputs and presentations that offer new, recovered, or reinterpreted knowledge
- activity that leads to contributions to the intellectual underpinning of different ontologies and epistemologies, subjects, and disciplines (for example, dictionaries, scholarly editions, teaching materials that embody original research, or teaching practices or activities that produce original research)
- applications of existing knowledge to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products, designs, policies, granted patents, or creative outputs

- re-centring and revitalisation of knowledge (for example, the study of raranga, whakapapa narratives, waiata composition, navigational knowledge, translation studies, historical or literary archival studies, or ecological research) and
- the synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that the insights generated are new

It does not include:

- routine testing and data collection lacking analysis, interpretation and/or evaluation
- preparation for teaching that does not embody original research (for example, collation of existing research and research outputs into handbooks or textbooks where this does not embody new insights) or
- the legal and administrative aspects of intellectual property protection and commercialisation activities

↩ [Performance-Based Research Fund Guidelines for tertiary education organisations participating in Quality Evaluation, 2026 \(November 2023, pp.18-19\)](#)

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  Evidence of how the organisation is building its research culture, what facilities and systems are in place to support academic staff and student researchers in research
-  Research activities, output over the last five years (if already engaged in the delivery of a degree-level programme), research plans (indicative 3-5 years) of academic staff allocated for the delivery of the programme
-  Policies and procedures for research and research management of staff and students
-  Funding and support mechanisms for supporting the research of staff and students
-  Evidence of how staff research is linked to the components of the programme

6. Process for granting approval and accreditation

Rule 10. Granting of programme approval and granting of accreditation to institutions (other than universities)

1. NZQA will advise applicant institutions (other than universities) if any of the details in the application require further work.
2. NZQA may establish a panel to assess the application.
3. NZQA may carry out a site visit for accreditation applications.
4. Where NZQA is satisfied with the details in the relevant application, NZQA will grant, and advise the applicant institution of:
 - a. approval of the programme or recognition of the New Zealand programme:
 - b. accreditation to provide the approved programme, the New Zealand programme or part of the programme.
5. Where NZQA is not satisfied with the details in the application, NZQA will not approve the application, and will advise the applicant.
6. NZQA will publish on its website up to date and appropriate details of approved programmes, recognised New Zealand programmes and details of institutions accredited to provide approved programmes, New Zealand programmes or parts of them.

The process for application and evaluation

The degree programme approval and accreditation process involve both desk and panel evaluations.

Education organisations should inform NZQA at least three months before applying.

NZQA aims to complete the programme approval and accreditation process within six months of receiving the application, but this depends on the following:

- the quality of the application
- the time the applicant takes to respond to the RFI
- joint evaluation with another professional/regulatory body
- the availability of panellists
- the timing of panel visits
- the time the applicant takes to respond and meet any panel requirements after the panel visit

A general outline of the process:

- a. The preliminary evaluation process generally takes 30-45 working days. Depending on the quality of the application, it may take more time

- b. The education organisation has 20 working days to respond to the NZQA RFI. A request for an extension to submit the RFI response can be made
- c. Once the response is received, NZQA evaluates the response within 5-10 working days. Minor clarification may be sought
- d. NZQA initiates the panel evaluation process when all the requirements have been met. For details of panel roles, please refer to [the Guidelines for Degree Panels](#)
- e. The education organisation sends the final programme documentation to the panel members. The panel requires 4-6 weeks to review the documentation
- f. The panel visit typically lasts 2 days, with a pre-panel meeting held the day before. At the end of the second day, the panel may approve the programme, accompanied by a set of requirements, recommendations, or both
- g. The education organisation has 20 working days to respond to the panel's requirements, and the panel members have 5-10 working days to evaluate the response
- h. Simultaneously, NZQA prepares the final evaluation report, which usually takes 10 working days. The panel members and the education organisation have 2-5 working days to confirm the factual accuracy of the report
- i. Internal processing and approval generally take 5-10 working days

The diagram below outlines the process.

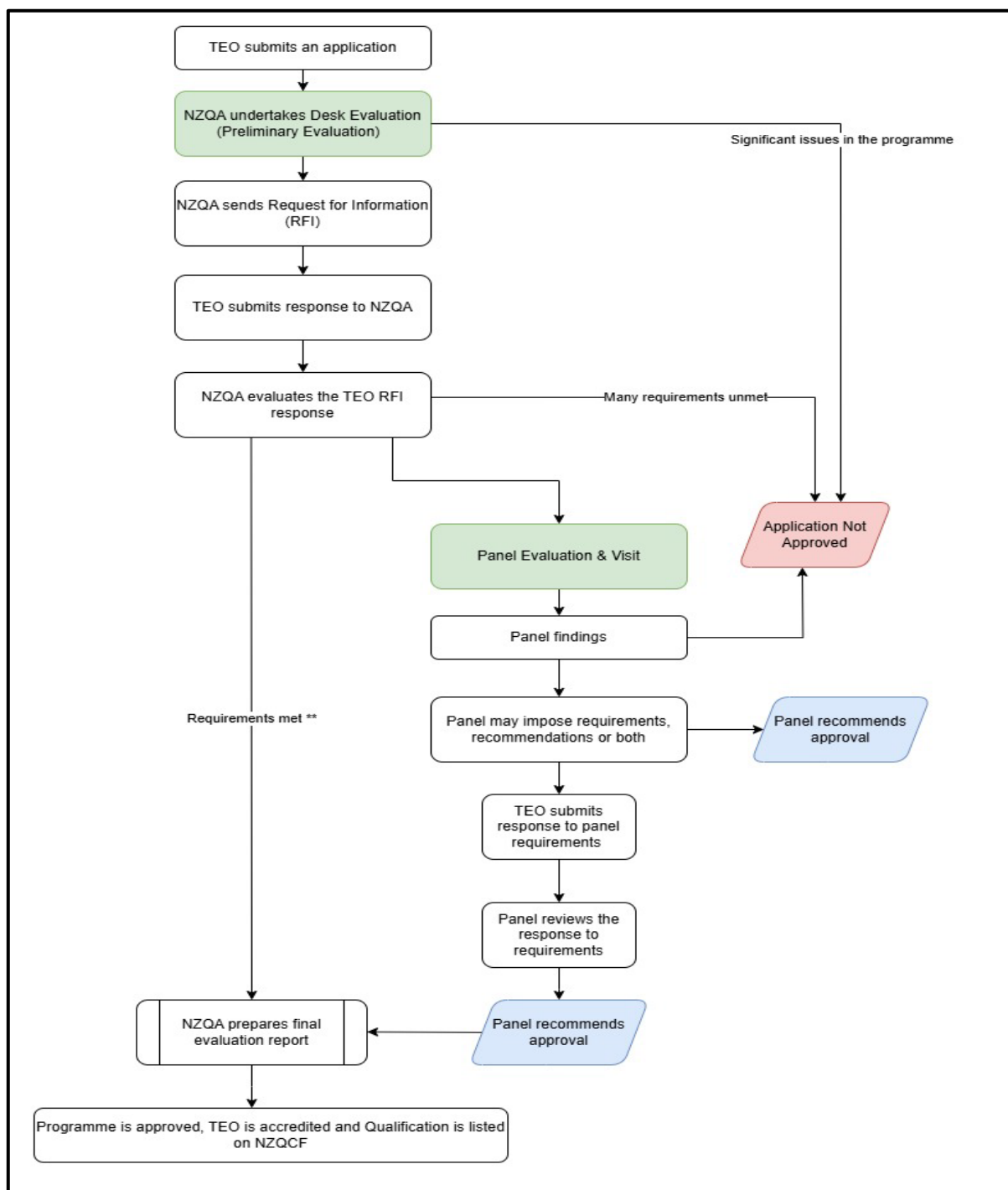


Figure 2: New application approval process

** Desk evaluation is appropriate for a new Level 7 or above programme only, where the proposed programme contains the same courses as an existing approved and accredited programme, such as

- a graduate diploma (Level 7) with the same courses and graduate profile outcome statements as part of a bachelor's degree or
- a postgraduate certificate (Level 8) with the same courses and graduate profile outcome statements as part of a (Level 9) master's programme

How to apply

↩ [Application instructions are set out in the *Online TEO applications* section of the NZQA website](#)

When the application is received, an email quoting an NZQA case number will be sent to the applicant. This number remains associated with the application throughout its outcome.

The application will be assigned to the Approvals and Accreditation or Quality Assurance Māori team. A separate email will be sent to the applicant, advising them of the Evaluator's name and contact details.

The Evaluator will commence the evaluation and contact the applicant if the submission lacks sufficient evidence.

NZQA will process applications within 130 working days, not including requests for information (RFIs). During an RFI, the application is on hold.

What will it cost?

↩ [Degree fees](#)

↩ [NZQA Fees](#)

7. Post-approval

Maintaining degree programme approval

13.2 To continue to maintain approval of a programme leading to a degree, graduate or post-graduate qualification at levels 7 to 10, institutions (other than universities) must:

- a. ensure the criteria specified in rule 4.1 continue to be met;
- b. ensure regular reviews of the programme are undertaken.

See Approval Criterion 7: Programme review.

Maintaining accreditation to provide a degree programme

15.2 To continue to maintain accreditation to provide an approved programme, New Zealand programme or part of them leading to a degree, graduate or postgraduate qualification at levels 7 to 10 institutions (other than universities) must:

- a. ensure the criteria specified within rule 7.1 continue to be met;
- b. undertake self-assessment;
- c. provide the programme (or part) as it was approved, including adhering to the programme regulations, unless a specific change has been approved in writing by NZQA;
- d. participate and cooperate in external evaluation and review;
- e. participate and cooperate in monitoring, which will consist of either:
 - (i) annual visits to the institution by the NZQA appointed monitor, reports by the monitor on the implementation of the programme, and reviews of the first graduating years of programmes by the institution; or
 - (ii) where NZQA permits, self-monitoring in accordance with any conditions imposed by NZQA.

Ongoing monitoring of the quality of the programme and the educational outcomes for learners. This includes reviewing data on graduate outcomes, such as employment outcomes and student engagement, with further investigation.

Lapse of Accreditation

Under Section 439(1) of the Act, an accreditation to provide an approved programme lapses when—

- (a) 12 months have passed since accreditation was granted and the institution has not during that time provided all or part of the programme to which the accreditation relates
- or
- (b) 12 months have passed since the institution last provided all or part of the programme to which the accreditation relates;

- or
- (c) the programme to which the accreditation relates ceases to be an approved programme;
- or
- (d) the status of the qualification to which the accreditation relates is discontinued on the Qualifications and Credentials Framework. Education organisations must contact Approvals and Accreditation to request an extension to accreditation.

Please contact qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

DEGREE MONITORING

NZQA requires all degree programmes to be monitored annually.

Following approval and accreditation of a degree programme, NZQA and the educational organisation will agree on who is best placed to act as the degree monitor.

For more information, see [the Guidelines for monitoring programmes leading to degrees and related qualifications at levels 7 to 10](#).

Reviewing Qualifications

- Qualification and Micro-credential Listing Rules 2025 4.1(d),
- (i) the accredited organisations are required to undertake a comprehensive review of a degree programme at least once every five years.

Qualification reviews are a key element of an institution's quality assurance and enhancement framework, which is based on engagement with various internal and external stakeholders, as well as self-assessment of programme delivery.

The qualification review includes a review of the programme, as both are intertwined. Refer to **Approval Criterion 7: Programme review**

Depending on the resulting changes, a Type 2 or a new programme approval and accreditation may be required.

Below is general guidance on conducting a review. Each educational organisation must have internal policies and procedures for qualification and programme reviews.

Stage 1 - Planning the review

The objective of the review is to determine whether the existing qualification and programme is still relevant, fit for purpose, and continue to meet the needs of the

stakeholders. Additionally, an internal plan clarifies the agreed-upon approach, timelines, and respective roles and responsibilities.

The review should be conducted according to the internal processes underpinned by relevant policies and procedures in the educational organisation's quality management system (QMS).

Stage 2 - Preparing for a review

The educational organisation will need to, but not be limited to:

- a. gather data to help inform the review, for example:
 - industry, employers' community, Māori^[1], Pasifika, graduates and learners' views
 - educational organisation holding accreditation to deliver the same programme [if any]
 - workforce and skill trends
 - occupational skill profiles
- b. feedback on the utility of the current qualification and programme
- c. legislative changes or social, industrial and technological shifts
- d. requirements of relevant professional recognition bodies

Stage 3 – Conducting the review

Self-assessment is at the centre of a qualification review process.

The self-assessment exercise should include the following:

- a. the delivery of the programme over the duration of the period under review
- b. considerations of the recommendations made by the degree monitor and relevant professional body where the qualification leads to any form of registration
- c. the relevance and need for the qualification and programme from the perspective of students, graduates, industry, professional bodies, Māori, Pasifika, and relevant communities
- d. strategic purpose, graduate profile outcomes, further study, and employment pathways
- e. areas for improvement and how the educational organisation plans to rectify any identified problem areas
- f. areas of strength and weaknesses of the qualification, programme and its delivery
- g. analysis of the previous degree monitoring reports and APERs
- h. future development of the qualification and programme

^[1] *whanau, hapu, iwi and where appropriate, hapori Māori*

8. Changes to approved degree programmes

Rule 16.1 and 16.2

1. Before an institution carries out a Type 1 change to an approved programme, the institution must notify NZQA of the change.
2. Before an institution carries out a Type 2 change to an approved programme, the institution must:
 - a. [..]
 - b. obtain approval from NZQA for the change after applying to NZQA and providing the information in rule 16.3.

Changes to a programme may result from ongoing quality management and improvement or changes in the industry or sector.

If changes made to one programme impact associated or linked programmes, updated programme documents must be supplied for all affected programmes. If several Type 2 changes below are incorporated within an application, NZQA may deem the cumulative changes sufficiently significant to affect the programme to the extent that a new programme approval and accreditation application may be required.

TYPE 1 CHANGES:

Rule 3.1:

Type 1 change means one or more changes to components of an approved programme which do not impact on the programme as a whole

Below are some examples of changes considered to be as Type 1:

- updates to the strategic purpose of the qualification or aim of the programme to improve the legibility while retaining the same intent. *For degrees and above, the strategic purpose of the qualification is generally the programme's aim.*
- minor changes or amendments to the content section of the qualification
- minor changes to education or employment pathways as long as these continue to align with the strategic purpose and graduate profile outcomes of the qualification.
- updates to indicative component content
- minor changes to the wording of component titles, aims, and some learning outcomes
- adjustments to the delivery order of components
- amendments to practical/non-practical assessment methods and assessment weightings
- minor change to the redistribution of the learning hours (directed and self-directed hours)

- minor changes to the approved practicum hours (in alignment with the requirements of the professional and other regulatory bodies, where relevant) that do not have an overall impact on the programme
- addition of online-only offshore delivery (if the programme is already approved for 100% distance/online and qualification is appropriate for the intended countries)
- change to holiday weeks
- addition of the part-time duration of the programme
- change to entry requirements (if the programme does not involve a professional or regulatory body), e.g.:
 - changing the English Language requirements while meeting the minimum requirements set in the Programme Approval, Recognition and Accreditation rules.
 - minimum age requirements or selection criteria
 - procedures, e.g. literacy and numeracy tests or applicant interviews
- adjustment to Assessment Grade Key

Rule 16. Changes to approved programmes by institutions

1. Before an institution carries out a Type 1 change to an approved programme, the institution must notify NZQA of the change.

Email the changes to qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz. The changes must be approved by NZQA before the implementation.

TYPE 2 CHANGES:

Rule 3.1:

Type 2 change means one or more changes to components of an approved programme which do have an impact on the programme as a whole

Below are some examples of changes considered to be as Type 2:

- update to the strategic purpose and GPOs, where the intent of the qualification is changing, and there is an impact on the programme structure. The GPOs of the qualification are linked to the component learning outcomes; therefore, any changes to the GPOs may impact the component learning outcomes
- change to programme title. *Generally, at degree and above, the qualification title is the same as the programme title.*
- major changes to learning outcomes, e.g., impacting on alignment with GPOs
- change to the programme structure, including removing, replacing, and adding components (compulsory and elective), major/specialisation/pathway components
- significant change to programme length and structure, e.g. moving from a semester to trimester delivery
- change to the entry requirements to include or exclude a requirement for learning/assessment to be undertaken in a place of work
- change to delivery mode, including online delivery

- change to the overall assessment methodology, e.g., from achievement-based to competency-based, or from practical to theoretical

Rule 16.3

3. The information required for the purposes of an application for a Type 2 change under rule 16.2 is:
 - a. full details of the changes made to the approved programme and any impacts on the accreditation of institutions to provide the programme or part of the programme:
 - b. information that demonstrates the programme continues to meet the criteria specified in rule 4.1:
 - c. evidence of internal quality assurance approval by the institution:

Rule 17. Process and notification of result of application for Type 2 programme changes

1. NZQA will advise applicants if any of the details in the application for a Type 2 change requires further work.
2. NZQA may establish a panel to assess the application.
3. NZQA may carry out a site visit.
4. Where NZQA is satisfied with the details in the application, NZQA will approve the application and advise the applicant.
5. If there are a significant number of changes made to the programme NZQA may decline the application and require a new programme approval application to be submitted.
6. Where NZQA is not satisfied with the details in the application, NZQA will decline the application, and will advise the applicant.
7. NZQA will publish on its website up to date and appropriate details of the approved changes to the programme.

Type 2 change applications for an approved degree programme must also include the following:

- rationale for the changes
- evidence of consultation
- evidence of support from stakeholders, including relevant registration body if applicable

Suggestions for supporting documents:

-  Programme document with tracked changes, including mapping of learning outcomes and GPOs, where applicable
-  Evidence of consultation with the relevant stakeholders

8. Delivering degree-level or higher programmes at additional sites

Graduate and postgraduate certificates, diplomas, and degrees are accredited for delivery at specific delivery sites only.

NZQA approval is needed to deliver degree-level or higher programmes from a new or additional site, whether it's permanent or temporary.

Temporary delivery sites for degrees

Email our Client Services team before commencing the delivery at a temporary site.

Only once the temporary site is approved should the institution begin delivery.

Email qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz.

Permanent delivery sites for degrees

To begin delivery at an additional permanent site, submit a site accreditation application to NZQA.

If the proposed additional site is new to NZQA, submit an 'Other' application titled 'Site accreditation' in the MyNZQA providers portal and email the permanent delivery site form following the above set out process.

NZQA will evaluate the Site accreditation application alongside the requested permanent delivery site.

If the permanent site is already approved

If the site is already registered with NZQA as a permanent delivery site, then submit an 'Other' application titled 'Site accreditation' in the MyNZQA providers portal only.

9. Joint degree between a university and non-university institution

These can occur between a New Zealand university and another non-university tertiary education organisation where the contribution of each is substantial. For jointly awarded qualifications, both Universities New Zealand and NZQA engage for the purposes of approval and accreditation.

The information below should be provided with an application for a joint degree programme.

The following procedures have been agreed upon between NZQA and Universities New Zealand (UNZ). There are three possibilities with three different requirements:

- If the qualification is awarded solely in the name of a university, Universities New Zealand's Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) procedures would apply, as set out in the CUAP booklet.
- If awarded solely in the name of a non-university tertiary education organisation, the relevant procedures outlined in NZQA policy would apply.
- For a degree awarded in the name of two tertiary education organisations, one of which is a university, a combination of the procedures will apply (e.g., negotiated between the institutions).

ONE SET OF DOCUMENTATION

If the application involves a university and Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, wānanga or a PTE, the applicant should submit only one set of documentation.

The documentation needs to be submitted to NZQA first. After the initial evaluation, and only if it addresses all requirements, the application will be submitted to CUAP by one of the due dates specified below.

ONE APPROVAL PROCESS

When NZQA receives the application, an initial analysis of the documentation will be undertaken to ensure the application meets the relevant criteria.

NZQA will follow the standard application process, which includes a panel visit. If the application is satisfactory, NZQA will engage with CUAP in a timely manner, aligning with CUAP's cycles, i.e., by 1 May or 1 September.

NZQA will attach any comments to the documentation so that CUAP can consider them in the same manner as comments from any university.

If there are concerns, CUAP will discuss these with NZQA.

When the application meets the relevant criteria, CUAP will recommend approval and notify NZQA.

CUAP will advise NZQA and the applicant if the application is not approved.

10. Sub-contracting

An accredited education organisation can arrange for another organisation to provide all or part of an approved programme on their behalf. NZQA considers this a sub-contracting arrangement.

There are different requirements when an education organisation engages a sub-contractor. These requirements depend on whether the sub-contractor involved has accreditation for the programme or not.

Sub-contractor has accreditation

If the education organisation proposes to use a sub-contractor, and both have accreditation the education organisation should notify NZQA of the arrangement and provide a copy of the signed agreement.

Sub-contractor doesn't have accreditation

If the education organisation has accreditation for the programme but the sub-contractor does not, the education organisation must apply to NZQA for approval to engage the sub-contractor and provide the required information, including a copy of the signed agreement.

Rule 20

1. Where an institution (other than a university) proposes to use a sub-contractor to provide an approved programme, a New Zealand programme, or part of a programme on the institution's behalf, and the institution and the sub-contractor are both accredited to provide the programme (or part), the institution must notify NZQA of the sub-contracting arrangement prior to the programme (or part) being provided, and supply the following information with that notification:
 - a. a copy of the sub-contracting agreement which must outline the responsibilities and obligations of the parties:
 - b. the duration of the arrangement:
 - c. the reasons for the arrangement:
 - d. confirmation that any advertising and other information provided to prospective students clearly shows that the study or training involved is provided under a sub-contracting arrangement.
2. Where an institution (other than a university) proposes to use a sub-contractor to provide an approved programme, New Zealand programme or part of a programme that the institution is accredited to provide, and the sub-contractor does not itself hold accreditation, the institution must apply to NZQA for approval to engage the sub-contractor prior to any provision of the programme (or part) by the sub-contractor.

3. Applications under rule 20.2 for approval to engage the sub-contractor must include the following information:
 - a. the name of the sub-contractor:
 - b. identification of the programme(s) or part(s) to be provided under the arrangement:
 - c. the rationale for the proposed sub-contracting arrangement:
 - d. a copy of the sub-contracting arrangement between the institution and the sub-contractor:
 - e. evidence of internal quality assurance approval by the institution.
4. NZQA will grant approval to an application under rule 20.2 where it is satisfied that:
 - a. the institution remains responsible for the sub-contractor meeting all of the institution's obligations that are relevant for the accreditation:
 - b. the sub-contractor will meet all relevant obligations in the Act and in rules made under section 452 of the Act in relation to the provision of the programme or part:
 - c. there is a formal documented arrangement between the holder and the sub-contractor that includes provisions to ensure that NZQA is able to exercise its quality assurance and enforcement powers and functions in respect of the acts or omissions of the sub-contractor relating to the provision of the programme or part:
 - d. the information and advertising for the study or training clearly states that it is provided through a sub-contracting arrangement:
 - e. all student enrolments are through the institution, and the institution maintains all student enrolment and academic information.
5. To continue to maintain approval under rule 20.4 an institution must ensure the sub-contracting is conducted at all times in accordance with the requirements set out in paragraphs (a) to (e) of rule 20.4.

A clear rationale is required if the accredited organisation is not delivering the programme itself, and delivery of the entire programme by a sub-contractor is proposed.

A panel and a site visit may be considered depending on the subcontracting arrangement.