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## NZQA Board approves new quality assurance framework

The NZQA Board has approved key decisions on the new quality assurance framework.

In recent months NZQA has consulted with the tertiary education sector on a number of aspects of the new framework, including:

- the policy framework for self-assessment and external evaluation and review
- criteria, policies and guidelines for initial and ongoing registration as a private training establishment (PTE)
- policies for maintaining registration as a PTE
- the consequences of low confidence in the educational quality of a tertiary education organisation (TEO).

The reports on these various consultations will be available on the [New Quality Assurance Framework](#) section of the NZQA website in mid-June.

Comments from the sector, discussions with sector organisations and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), advice from the Quality Assurance Expert Advisory Group and further consideration by NZQA staff informed the papers presented to the NZQA Board on 28 May 2009.

### **Self-assessment and external evaluation and review**

The following are the NZQA Board's key decisions concerning the proposed policy framework.

#### *Focus areas*

Where required, there will be periodic mandatory focus areas for all appropriate TEOs:

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eQuate is the newsletter from the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. QAD is responsible for quality assurance of private training establishments (PTEs), government training establishments (GTEs), wānanga and Unitec.

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- The focus areas will have a limited time-span and will change from time to time.
- There can be more than one mandatory focus area.
- The mandatory focus area(s) could reflect NZQA, TEC or Ministry of Education interests and priorities.
- Consideration will be given to the appropriate balance between limited resources, the desire for mandatory focus areas and the overall flexible approach of external evaluation.

It has also been decided that TEO governance, management and strategy will be a mandatory focus area for the initial period of external evaluation and review.

Further, arrangements have been made with the Ministry of Education for including evaluation of support for international students as a mandatory focus area for the external evaluation of TEOs that are signatories to the Ministry's [\*Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students\*](#).

#### *Statements and levels of confidence*

Four levels of confidence have been retained and will be stated as:

- Highly confident
- Confident
- Not yet confident
- Not confident.

The revised levels provide for two statements to describe TEOs that demonstrate acceptable quality and two to describe TEOs that do not demonstrate acceptable quality. *Not yet confident* and *Not confident* allow a distinction to be made between the TEO that is close to an acceptable status and the TEO where there are major concerns about its organisational capability and/or educational quality.

#### *Sixth key evaluation question (KEQ)*

In recognising the importance of sound governance and management in a TEO the NZQA Board decided that a sixth KEQ will be included, with the current draft wording being: "How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?"

#### *Public reporting*

The NZQA Board decided that there will be only one report following the external evaluation of a TEO.

#### *Structure and content of external evaluation and review reports*

NZQA is continuing to work with TEC to further develop the structure and content of the external evaluation reports. NZQA will also discuss this work with sector organisations and other end-users.

#### *Nomenclature*

The NZQA Board also decided to retain the current nomenclature of "self-assessment" and "external evaluation and review".

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### **Guidelines for PTE registration**

NZQA has consulted with PTEs on *Guidelines for the Initial Registration of PTEs*. Sector comments were supportive of the new guidelines, which outline the statutory requirements for PTE registration.

The guidelines will support new PTEs in making applications for registration and will simplify the applications process by outlining the type and level of evidence PTEs will be required to submit. The guidelines will be available on the NZQA website in July.

### **Policies and criteria for ongoing PTE registration**

Following consultation with PTEs, the NZQA Board approved changes to streamline the policies and criteria for the ongoing registration of PTEs, which are established under section 253 (ca) of the Education Act.

The revised policies and criteria replace [\*Quality Assurance Standard One\*](#), which will be revoked in time for the introduction of external evaluation and review in September 2009.

Any audits conducted between September and December 2009 will be against the new policies and criteria. No further quality audits will be carried out after December 2009.

The revised policies and criteria will support changes to the new system for maintaining PTE registration. They will be available on the NZQA website in July.

### **Maintaining registration as a PTE**

A new system for maintaining PTE registration will be introduced in June/July 2009, to sit alongside the external evaluations.

PTEs will need to submit annual returns that include:

1. a statutory declaration attesting that the PTE meets the policies and criteria for PTE registration (if not, the PTE must provide an explanation of planned actions to meet the requirements)
2. a review statement from a chartered accountant attesting to financial practices and performance
3. supporting information about the PTE's operation.

NZQA will supplement the annual returns with information received from other government agencies and complaints. Consultation with PTEs prompted some improvements to the original proposals. The consultation results will be available on the NZQA website in mid/late June.

### **Consequences of low confidence**

New NZQA policies on the consequences of low confidence in the educational quality of a TEO are an integral part of the new quality assurance framework.

Following consultation, NZQA will proceed with the proposed requirement that ITPs, PTEs, wānanga and GTEs achieve and maintain a level of at least *Confident* in their educational performance and organisational capability.

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The change will be reflected in the policy requirements for the evaluative approach to quality assurance and in the revised policies and criteria for PTE registrations established under section 253 of the Education Act 1989.

### **Concluding comments**

Comments from individual TEOs and sector organisations on all of the consultation documents have been appreciated and have assisted with more in-depth consideration of the issues raised.

The feedback will also inform future initiatives, communications and work associated with the transition and roll-out of the evaluative approach to quality assurance.

NZQA will continue to discuss the implementation of the framework at the regular meetings with sector organisations and their executives, and at the meetings of TEOs convened by individual organisations.

As identified in the consultation, there is a need for ongoing evaluation capability-building in the sector and the quality assurance bodies. Part of NZQA's recent change management process has involved the establishment of a small unit, Quality Development, to lead evaluation capability-building.

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## **Call for contract evaluators**

NZQA and ITP Quality are jointly seeking a pool of more than 50 evaluators to take part occasionally in teams conducting external evaluations.

NZQA and ITP Quality will be releasing an Expressions of Interest document this month, and providers will be notified when more detailed information is available on the NZQA website.

Selection and training will be phased in with approximately 25 pool evaluators being recruited and trained around September 2009, and the remainder in November 2009 and March 2010.

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## **Self-assessment workshops end**

The final batch of self-assessment workshops has now been completed.

Since October 2008 more than 80 workshops have been held, reaching most providers and helping them become familiar with the evaluative approach to quality assurance.

The organisers wish to thank those providers who have taken part and who have provided helpful and constructive feedback. Thanks also to the facilitators who structured the workshops with useful activities and discussions.

The documents used in the workshop will be available soon on the NZQA website.

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## Reminders

### **Computing standards transition dates**

Providers currently offering the National Diploma in Computing (Level 6) and/or the National Diploma in computing (Level 7) have until December 2011 to report student results. No certificates will be awarded after 31 December 2011. For more information see the [April 2009 eQuate](#).

### **NZQA exits Electronic Media Standards**

NZQA's National Qualifications Services has exited from standard-setting responsibility for the subfield of electronic media. This includes all standards within the domains of Radio, Electronic Multimedia, and Computer-Generated Imagery. For more information see the [April 2009 eQuate](#).

### **Refunds to be paid direct to students**

Under [Section 236A\(1\)\(d\)](#) of the Education Act refunds of fees are to be paid directly to the student concerned.

Training organisations are not entitled to remit fees to people other than the student that has withdrawn from a course. Exceptions would be where funding is supplied by a body such as StudyLink, or where the student requests refund to a third party. (From the [February 2009 eQuate](#).)