

Strategic Business Review

Research survey – analysis of responses

In March 2010, NZQA invited responses to a survey into the structure and content of qualifications for Business, to inform a strategic review of the qualifications and unit standards in Field Business for which NZQA is the standard-setting body.

In total, 26 responses were received, representing a range of stakeholders including:

- 5 from the ITO sector
- 6 from the ITP/Polytechnic sector
- 7 from PTEs.

All responses were gratefully received and have contributed to this analysis. There is a marked degree of consensus in these responses, as this analysis demonstrates.

The feedback was received before the Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ) consultation document was published. The results of this consultation are nevertheless still relevant and will contribute significantly to the development and review of qualifications in Business post-TRoQ.

There is a broad consensus that qualifications in Business need to be flexible in order to be relevant to a wide range of workplace contexts, and of delivery and assessment options, including the full range from real workplaces to explicitly academic contexts. ITOs, employers, and small business stakeholders want qualifications to be more focused on actual workplaces, and prefer where possible on-job assessment using naturally occurring evidence.

Business qualifications at the lower levels should reflect relevant generic skills and knowledge, as a sound base for broad competence and for increasing specialisation at higher levels.

It is also clear that the qualifications in Business are expected to be linked not only with each other (including mutual cross-crediting) but also with other qualifications in industry. Clear pathways are important, with multiple entry and exit points. There are some minor differences about the extent to which qualifications should recognise credits already included in another qualification, particularly when they are at a lower level. There is, however, general recognition that all qualifications should reflect accurately the outcomes that need recognition to achieve their purpose.

There is a clear acceptance of the need for choice within qualifications, to allow the inclusion of standards that reflect specific workplaces and delivery options. This allows providers, industry, and employers to cater for the wide variety of needs in a very generic area such as Business. Better integration of classrooms and workplaces for delivery and assessment options was suggested as a way of achieving this.

Respondents generally focused on qualifications at levels 3-6, and there is general acceptance that Certificates should be smaller than Diplomas (45-60 credits compared to 120+). The feedback focusing on on-job relevance and assessment generally also favoured smaller qualifications, to focus mainly on what people can do rather than the theoretical underpinning knowledge – although it is recognised that this has a clear place as well in the qualifications structure.

There is general agreement that the needs of Māori (and other groups) should be reflected in two ways:

- in the assessment context – i.e. there is an expectation that assessment can take place in a range of contexts, including in culturally explicit ones such as a marae

- in Business qualifications by the inclusion of options and/or strands, as is visible in the current National Diploma in Business (Level 5) with optional strands ..., or in separate qualifications.

It is not always easy to distinguish suggestions for broad content streams within generalist qualifications from suggestions for separate specialist qualifications. However, there appears to be an implicit acceptance that the former relate to the needs of people in non-specialist roles who need knowledge/skills in some specialist areas, but not at the level required by specialists themselves. The latter should be reflected in specialist qualifications.

Suggestions for content in Business qualifications have been listed below in approximate order of frequency (most frequent first), with similar labels combined (e.g. people management is a grouping that collects a wide range of names):

- People management, including -
 - o Human resource management
 - o Team leadership/supervisory management
 - o Performance management
- Leadership
- Financial competence (including references to accounting)
- Strategic thinking and skills
- Marketing
- Sustainability
- Operations/production management
- Business administration
- International focus, including the effects of globalisation and importing/exporting
- Change management
- Communication
- Personal attributes/skills including emotional intelligence, time management, initiative, speed reading, assertiveness, literacy and numeracy, critical thinking
- Project management
- Governance
- (New) technology/IT
- Entrepreneurship
- Small business
- Procurement
- Business law
- Quality
- International focus, including relevance for overseas students
- Business administration
- Economics
- Policy analysis/development
- Management theory
- Ethics and values
- Innovation
- Information management.