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Twelve months ago I spoke to you about NZQA's strategic plan to ensure we remain responsive to learning in the 21st century – our Future State programme. I outlined in general terms the journey that NZQA was planning to embark on and today I will update you on the progress we have made.

We are all very aware of the way the world is changing and the part that technology plays in this. Marshall McLuhan's concept of the global village is more real today than it has ever been and the internet has played a significant role in bringing the world closer. Our children are growing up in a digitalised global environment.

It is the global environment that has brought us MOOCs and upped the importance of credit recognition and transfer and RPL. And before I lose you in a blur of acronyms – I'm talking of Massive Open Online Courses and recognition of prior learning. These are important in the tertiary sector when thinking of global digital influences, but it is important to be aware that our whole education sector is affected by the digitalised global movement. From pre-schoolers who swipe pages of books thinking they are digital devices through to tertiary institutions considering unbundling their offerings – we are all affected. Unbundling higher education means thinking about curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and student experience, all as components of a degree. A good paper if you are interested in the Higher Education debate is Michael Barber's *An Avalanche is Looming* (UK Institute of Public Policy Research). The thinking challenges us to consider the components separately – we may re-bundle them up the same as or differently to before but we should examine them in the light of today's offerings.

For instance, course curricula can go online but what about student experience? Teaching and learning with tutoring and peer input can work in either environment - but it may be "flipped learning". If certain course components are accredited by RPL, what does that mean in qualification recognition terms? These are issues that have no right or wrong answers and indeed they are not necessarily new issues – they could be regarded as known issues dressed in digital clothes! – but they do need to be grappled with if we are to be responsive to student demand.

This is the first generation of people that work, play, think and learn differently than their parents.....They are the first generation not to be afraid of technology. It's like air to them.

Don Tapscott (2012)

So what about your leadership space?

Inevitably you are leading professionals for whom technology is not like air to them. And that applies to most of us.

A series of Government initiatives such as the roll-out of the UltraFast Broadband to schools, the access to a managed network and the recent release of the Network for Learning search engine POND mean NZ

students will be able to be even more connected to the world of learning within the school context, which has the potential to be of immense benefit to them.

The current generation is used to using technology. If students are learning in a digital environment then a digital environment is a better environment for today's (and tomorrow's) students to undertake assessment. And this is the challenge for NZQA. Speaking in general terms, students can type faster than they write; they prefer a digital environment and they are intuitive users of technology. The world in which they live, and will spend their adult lives, is one in which extensive use is made of technology for work, play and communication. Technology permeates their lives, is an integral aspect of the way they live, and is seen as an extension of themselves. *It is indeed like air to them.*

And NZQA needs to respond to the leadership Principals are showing in this regard. NZQA realises that we have both an obligation and an opportunity to make extensive use of technology in the work we do. With schools and tertiary institutions making more use of technology and today's learners having a preference for working in a digital medium, NZQA has an obligation to provide its services in this medium. But there is also an opportunity for NZQA to improve the service it offers to the sector – to do things better and more efficiently for all concerned.

NZQA is committed to its vision of assessment anywhere, anytime, online and on demand.

What does this mean? It means that assessment

- can occur when the learner is ready
- can be undertaken using technology
- can occur anywhere the learner has access to the internet
- can occur 24/7

This vision will clearly not be realised overnight but in the last 12 months NZQA has developed and consolidated its plans for the future and has been able to put some detail around the plans for the near future while keeping our longer term responsiveness in mind. This has been both a challenging and exciting exercise.

The challenge has been centred around the need to maintain high standards in the work we currently do while diverting sufficient resources to ensure we can undertake our Future State work. But it is also with a sense of anticipation that we are looking to be involved in some interesting and exciting projects that we believe will have a profoundly positive effect on teaching and learning and assessment in secondary schools.

As part of our planning we have imposed a two-step process to digital assessment.

We intend to take all the activities NZQA currently undertakes and place them onto a digital platform. Once this is complete then we can make use of the technology to enhance these activities. Last year I raised the notion of on-demand assessment. We see this as part of the second phase, once a series of other elements are in place. But depending on how technology develops and on how much and how quickly schools become digitalised the timeframe for both elements may morph together and we need to be flexible enough in our planning and implementation to allow for this.

So what steps have we made apart from planning?

We have just completed a small scanning project in which we scanned all of the New Zealand Scholarship examination booklets from the 2013 examinations after they were marked. We then provided digital access to all candidates and our scholarship panel leaders completed the reconsiderations using the digital image. We are currently reviewing the project and looking at our next steps. We are currently leaning towards scanning all Level 3 booklets as well as New Zealand Scholarship in the 2014 examinations and investigating the issues involved with only making the digital copy available and not returning the hard copy.

Scanning examination booklets is a new activity for NZQA but a necessary one for the future. Our next step will be to introduce onscreen marking which will require booklets to be scanned prior to marking and marked using a marking application. We will still return booklets to candidates but in digital form rather than as a hard copy. We hope to have some initial testing around this in the 2014 examinations.

Onscreen marking provides NZQA with the opportunity to strengthen the quality assurance processes around the marking, select the best markers through virtual panels and provide schools with better feedback on their students by being able to report on each question.

A few years ago we looked into this but the internationally available options did not give us confidence of a cost effective solution. Now the situation is quite different and there are good solutions elsewhere that we can look at.

We have already started the process of enabling schools to submit their material for moderation through the internet, and have them moderated online. Some moderators receive only a URL from a school and they access student work through this. Currently, much of this material is still in the traditional hard copy and then digitalised but some schools (and subjects) are already preparing the assessment for use in a digital environment and I would hope that within 2-3 years we will see a significant increase in the uptake of schools doing their assessments this way. NZQA has as yet set no deadline regarding a full uptake of digital assessment for internals and, at present, we are allowing individual schools to set their own pace of change. However, as part of the Future State work, NZQA will steadily make available more opportunities for schools to have their digital work moderated within a digital system.

And our moderation systems will become less manual and make more use of the technology available.

The biggest challenge with the move towards digital assessment lies in the underlying principle that what occurs in assessment should reflect what is happening in the classroom. We acknowledge that many schools have already begun the journey towards a digital school but we also have to acknowledge that many other schools are at the beginning of this journey. To that end NZQA will be offering a dual assessment model similar to that practiced in British Columbia and Israel. Students will be able to sit their examinations on computer or on paper with the same questions being offered in both media. We are confident that we can begin to roll this out in some levels or some subjects for the 2016 examination round.

It is important to note that dual assessment will be an interim measure as schools grapple with their own challenges regarding the provision and use of technology in their classrooms. The objective is to reach a

point where paper examinations become a thing of the past and all students who undertake external standards will complete the assessment using technology.

I have to acknowledge that all this is a huge challenge for you all as it is for NZQA. It's why I think the theme of the 2014 Conference is so important, sustainable leadership is the lifeblood of managing in a complex environment. The only way in which this challenge will be overcome is if all elements in the sector are working together. We need to respond to your leadership and to comprehensively understand the varying capabilities of colleges throughout the country. We are constantly talking with the Ministry of Education and they are fully represented on our reference groups. Our reference and advisory groups are drawn from groups across the sector and we have already received some fantastic advice from them. NZQA has had some preliminary discussions with Network for Learning and Massey University and we are looking at ways that we can work better together. NZQA is also making extensive use of its international networks to gain further understanding of international trends and to obtain advice. We are also working with several countries who have extensive experience in implementing computer based examinations so that we can learn from their experience.

We are very aware we are responding to the environment you find yourselves in, and are indeed creating, so we must reflect that in our work. NZQA will need your advice at various stages throughout the process and will need to draw on the knowledge, experience and expertise within your schools for piloting and trialling of various elements of digital assessment. We are also aware that there are some very difficult issues to resolve and we hope you will work with us to resolve them.

We are going to set up a webpage shortly where you will be able to see ideas that we are testing – our general approach will be to pilot and test with partner schools while continuing with our current approach. We want this to be very visible.

So what does this mean for the sector? And for sustainable leadership by yourselves in the sector?

Assessment, while important, is only one component in the teaching and learning process. I know within your schools discussion is already taking place about the sorts of changes that you want and the future direction of teaching and learning and I urge you to continue to encourage these discussions.

At NZQA we believe the opportunities for significant positive change that technology offers cannot be underestimated. Having said that, we have two underlying principles in what we do:

1. The changes should be driven by the needs of the students and not by the assessment.
2. Decisions must be made with the focus on the students, not on the technology.

Herein lies the neat challenge we have.

NZQA has set itself a target of moving to on demand assessment. This is achievable from what we know now, and should prove to be positive for students and cost effective in the long term. NZQA is being proactive in the use of technology in assessment, but at the same we are working with the sector so that the pace of change is managed by the pace of change in schools. The issues raised in terms of developing a model of technology-managed assessment for New Zealand are not insurmountable, but will require good communication, commitment and “buy in” from all parties concerned.

The critical element in the increased use of technology in the classroom is that teachers and schools recognise the pedagogical changes that the use of computer technology in the classroom requires. It would not be acceptable to place 21st century technology in schools and use it in a 19th century teaching, learning and assessment environment. Not when it is like air to this generation who are so digitally and globally connected – and need to be for their success in life.

At NZQA we want to be responsive to these changes in teaching and learning so we are aiming to support these initiatives with quality online assessment.

To conclude, NZQA has done some significant thinking around what assessment will look like in the future, and digital assessment in particular, and we are committed to the implementation of digital assessment within the secondary school sector. The shape will become clearer over the next short while and, while I am excited about the journey ahead, I am very aware of the challenges it will pose. It will only work if we work together on these challenges.

Thank you.