

# Briefing for the Incoming Minister of Education and Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment

December 2011

## **INTRODUCTION**

NZQA ensures the New Zealand qualifications system is credible and robust, nationally and internationally.

Enclosed is a reference book containing an overview of NZQA, which provides further information about NZQA, its services and people. Appendix 1 has a list of what is contained in that reference material. Appendix 2 contains the contact details of key NZQA personnel.

NZQA is an \$80 million Crown Entity governed by an independent Board, appointed by the Minister of Education. Revenue is almost equally split between Crown and third party. International best practice for third party quality assurance organisations is that they be 'independent' from a delivery perspective, whilst being highly responsive to the Government's objectives. This independence is achieved through the crown entity structure of NZQA.

NZQA is accountable for:

- managing the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF)<sup>1</sup>
- independent quality assurance of non-university education providers
- administering the secondary school assessment system (NCEA<sup>2</sup> and Scholarship)
- qualifications recognition for immigration purposes
- standard-setting for some specified unit standards
- development of qualifications in specific fields.

## **FUTURE LOOKING**

NZQA represents an assurance of quality in the education field. With a tight global economy for the foreseeable future, the opportunities that technology creates, and the increasing individualisation of education, NZQA must continue to be agile in its response and outstanding in quality assurance, so that learners, industry and employers can be confident about the value of qualifications.

Traditional borders are becoming more porous; qualifications may well be achieved across several awarding institutions, on shore and off shore. Robust and trusted quality assurance becomes even more critical in this environment.

NZQA's future direction is focused on securing recognition of New Zealand as a smart nation by ensuring choices are informed by knowledge regarding the quality of qualifications, institutions and assessment.

## **KEY WORK**

There are no burning immediate operational issues as NZQA continues to make significant progress against its current commitments whilst preparing for the future.

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<sup>1</sup> The New Zealand Qualifications Framework replaced the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications on 1 July 2011.

<sup>2</sup> National Certificate of Educational Achievement, New Zealand's main national qualification for secondary school students. Available at Levels 1-3, it is registered as part of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

## Key areas of focus are:

### 1. **Improving the New Zealand Qualifications Framework**

NZQA's work programme to improve the NZQF, and an uncompromising approach to quality assurance, mean that learners, employers and international partner countries can have confidence in the quality of New Zealand qualifications.

NZQA is working with industry and education providers to improve the NZQF, as this is crucial to ensure that New Zealand has a modern, flexible qualifications system fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A key component of NZQA's work programme is reducing the number of qualifications (at certificate and diploma level) and increasing their quality in order to make education and employment pathways clearer. NZQA originally planned for a 45 per cent reduction in the number of qualifications by the end of 2012. Current indications are that a 70 per cent reduction could be achieved. NZQA is focused on ensuring education providers and industry training organisations continue to work together to secure this trend. Qualifications will clearly state what a learner can be expected to know and do with that qualification. This work is called the Targeted Review of Qualifications at Certificate and Diploma Level of the NZQF.

### 2. **Provider Quality Assurance**

External evaluation and review<sup>3</sup> (EER) of tertiary education organisations (TEOs) commenced in late 2009. All existing TEOs will have undergone at least one EER by 2013. Sector performance will continue to improve through the application of incentives and sanctions based on the results of these reviews. Quality assuring mātauranga Māori will expand as this work progresses.

### 3. **Achievement for Secondary Students**

The robust and reliable delivery of NCEA and Scholarship, and supporting the implementation of Youth Guarantee remain a priority.

Administering NCEA and Scholarship is a major logistical exercise:

#### Examination 2011 facts and figures:

1,566,956 entries by 143,520 NCEA candidates with 373 standards assessed  
10,203 Scholarship candidates entered 33 Scholarship subjects  
approximately 7,000 examination centre managers, supervisors and markers temporarily employed  
400 Exam Centres in New Zealand, 6 in the Cook Islands and 1 in Niue

This year's introduction of course endorsement for NCEA candidates builds on work over successive years to raise learner achievement. The prior introduction of endorsement at certificate level proved to be motivating and we expect endorsement of levels of success for courses to likewise increase student motivation to achieve at a high level. The *NCEA and Whānau* toolkit and workshops, and NZQA's role in the implementation of Youth Guarantee, are further supporting learners and their families to make good decisions about education. The provision of more services online means NCEA results publication is faster and cheaper than ever before.

<sup>3</sup> The purpose of an EER is to provide a judgement of the quality and educational performance of a tertiary education organisation.

#### **4. *Māori and Pasifika***

Contributing to Māori achieving educational success as Māori and supporting Pasifika learners to become more highly skilled and qualified is integral to NZQA's role in supporting greater learner achievement. NZQA is working in partnership with communities and other agencies to develop the future direction in these areas, and to actively pursue those initiatives that fall within our role.

#### **5. *Mātauranga Māori***

The development of the initial tools and framework by NZQA for quality assuring mātauranga Māori within the qualifications system is a landmark for indigenous education internationally. NZQA's work in this area directly contributes to Māori achieving educational success as Māori and future Māori economic growth.

#### **6. *Qualification equivalence***

NZQA's Qualifications Recognition Service offers a user-pays service to people who need overseas qualifications assessed for immigration, employment or further study purposes. It checks overseas qualifications to make sure that a recognised institute has awarded them and that documents submitted by applicants are authentic. It then compares the overseas qualification to the nearest New Zealand qualification.

#### **7. *International education***

NZQA supports the Government's objectives for export education by maintaining New Zealand's strong reputation as a provider of quality education. NZQA has commitments with regards to China, Australia, the Cook Islands, Malaysia, the ASEAN, and Niue (refer to Section 9 of NZQA's reference book for a summary of NZQA's international memoranda, Free Trade Agreements and Closer Economic Partnerships).

#### **8. *Operational excellence***

NZQA's strong governance, financial and management systems have enabled it to be responsive to the economic environment and the special needs of Canterbury, whilst maintaining high levels of client satisfaction. NZQA aims to be both robust and responsive in all its work.

### **THE SUPPORT NZQA NEEDS**

To continue this trajectory, NZQA needs to understand your priorities, receive regular feedback and have your support. Whilst NZQA works closely with stakeholder groups, the nature of NZQA's regulatory role and its desire to achieve meaningful improvements for learners, can result in NZQA's decisions and actions occasionally being challenged through various channels.

Over the coming months there are several areas that are likely to require either your decision or advice.

#### **2011 NCEA round**

The last day of external examinations was held on 30 November 2011. Marking of examinations is underway and results for NCEA will be available in January 2012 and for Scholarship in February 2012. The Award Ceremony for top scholars, and the announcement of the Prime Minister's Prize for Top Scholar, is scheduled for April or May 2012.

**Text withheld under section 9 (2)(g)(i) of the Official Information Act 1982.**

### ***Managing risk in the tertiary education sector***

NZQA's "improve or exit" approach to poorly performing providers sometimes results in enforced closure of businesses by NZQA. A number of Private Training Establishments are at risk of closure over the next 12 months for not meeting requirements.

### ***Qualifications review***

Consolidating the number of qualifications on the NZQF to make it more meaningful and transparent requires the sector to work together and think more broadly than their individual mandates.

**Text withheld under section 9 (2)(g)(i) of the Official Information Act 1982.**

### ***Changes resulting from the Education Amendment Act 2011***

On 30 August 2011 the Education Amendment Act 2011 came into force. Changes of particular relevance were those giving NZQA stronger statutory and regulatory powers to carry out its functions. One of the most significant changes gave NZQA the power to make rules that give it a stronger legislative basis to quality assure the non-university tertiary education sector. Under section 253(4) of the Education Act 1989, NZQA's Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment must approve proposed rules.

**Text withheld under section 9 (2)(f)(iv) of the Official Information Act 1982.**

### ***Development of the 2012/13 – 2014/15 Statement of Intent***

The next Statement of Intent (SOI) is due to be tabled in Parliament on Budget Day 2012 (expected in May). Your Letter of Expectations and the Prime Minister's Letter of Enduring Expectations are pivotal to the development of the SOI. In previous years we have completed consultation on drafts with Ministers, the Ministry of Education's monitoring unit (the Education Sector Leadership Team) and Audit New Zealand by early March to ensure we meet Budget Day tabling requirements. ***NZQA will work closely with your office and the Ministry's Education Sector Leadership Team to provide you with a working draft and timeline for SOI completion as soon as possible following the receipt of ministerial expectations.***

### ***Current communications with Minister's offices***

***Over the coming weeks NZQA would like to establish the arrangements you find most suitable to ensure NZQA is well placed to be responsive to your requirements.*** Currently NZQA provides both the Minister of Education and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment with regular reporting on current and upcoming issues. The Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer have met with both Ministers approximately monthly. This regular dialogue ensures Ministers are appraised of strategic and current issues with a "no surprises" approach. Every three months a quarterly report detailing NZQA's progress against the Statement of Intent and areas of focus for the following quarter is submitted.

### ***NZQA's Board***

NZQA's strong performance over recent years shows the benefit of focussed governance, strategic input and the accountability of a highly effective Board. Two Board member positions are currently expired and a further six expire during 2012.

**Text withheld under section 9 (2)(g)(i) of the Official Information Act 1982.**

## Appendix 1 - Table of contents and description of NZQA reference book

Section	Content	Tab
Section 1	An overview of NZQA  This section describes the services NZQA provides, its operating environment, current work programme, sphere of influence, how we work with the sector and use advisory groups, our role in the recovery of Canterbury and a summary of resources available to the public.  (Available across a range of sources including the links below.)	Overview
Section 2	NZQA's <a href="#">Client Charter</a>	Client Focus
Section 3	Information on the NZQF ( <a href="#">2011/12 - 2013/14 Statement of Intent</a> )	NZQF
Section 4	Information on the Quality Assurance cycle ( <a href="#">2011/12 - 2013/14 Statement of Intent</a> )	QA
Section 5	Information on NCEA <a href="#">What is NCEA?</a> <a href="#">Understanding NCEA</a> <a href="#">How NCEA works video</a>	NCEA
Section 6	NZQA's statutory obligations	Statutes
Section 7	Details on the <a href="#">Board</a> and <a href="#">Strategic Management Team</a>	Governance and Management
Section 8	Financial overview and summary ( <a href="#">2011/12 - 2013/14 Statement of Intent</a> )	Financials
Section 9	Summary of NZQA's international memoranda, free trade agreements and closer economic partnerships  Information withheld under section 9 (2)(g)(i) of the Official Information Act 1982	International
Section 10	Details on NZQA's <a href="#">external advisory groups</a>	Advisory Groups
Section 11	<a href="#">2011/12 - 2013/14 Statement of Intent</a>	Accountability Documents
Section 12	<a href="#">2010/11 Annual Report</a>	
Section 13	<a href="#">Te Rautaki Māori Strategy</a>	
Section 14	<a href="#">Pasifika Strategy</a>	
Section 15	Glossary ( <a href="#">2011/12 - 2013/14 Statement of Intent</a> )	Glossary

## Appendix 2

### NZQA Contact List In Confidence

Name	Position	Mobile	DDI	E-mail
Karen Poutasi	CEO			
Tim Fowler	DCE Quality Assurance			
Richard Thornton	DCE Qualifications	(appointment date 16/1/2012; contact Karen Poutasi in the interim)		
Catherine Williams	DCE Strategic & Corporate			
Daryn Bean	DCE Māori			
Sue Suckling (contact through Board Secretary)	Board Chair Board Secretary			

**Some details in the table have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.**