



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Guidelines for assuring national consistency of graduate outcomes for qualifications listed on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework

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Introduction

A key feature of New Zealand qualifications is that the qualification can be obtained through different programmes, pathways and education organisations. Quality assurance is intended to assure stakeholders that despite graduates completing different programmes they are achieving the same outcomes at an equivalent standard. The process used to achieve this is called 'assuring national consistency of graduate outcomes' and applies to New Zealand qualifications listed on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

Assuring national consistency of graduate outcomes is a new quality assurance process developed to maintain the integrity of the qualifications and the underlying knowledge, skills and attributes that graduates gain.

A specific approach will be developed for assuring the national consistency of graduate outcomes resulting from Mātauranga Māori qualifications.

These guidelines outline the intended approach. It is expected there will be significant learning about this process as it is implemented. These guidelines will be amended and new versions published as the approach for Mātauranga Māori qualifications is developed, and in order to incorporate learning and experience gained from the initial consistency reviews.

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) is designed to optimise the recognition of educational achievement and its contribution to New Zealand's economic, social and cultural success.

The NZQF will list qualifications that:

- convey the skills, knowledge and attributes a graduate has gained through completing a qualification
- require the development of integrated and coherent qualifications
- enable and support the provision of high-quality education pathways
- enhance confidence in the quality and international comparability of New Zealand qualifications
- contribute to Māori success in education by recognising and advancing Mātauranga Māori
- represent value for money, be sustainable and robust.

NZQA is responsible for protecting the integrity of New Zealand qualifications listed on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework and therefore is responsible for co-ordinating the overall system and processes for assuring national consistency.

The system has been designed to take into account the cumulative effect of the complete set of activities in the quality assurance framework that will contribute to assuring national consistency.

It is not an external moderation of assessment process although information from moderation may be used to inform the tertiary education organisation about how well its graduates are achieving the graduate outcomes of the qualification. The focus is on the comparing graduates in relation to the qualification outcomes, not on the quality assurance of the learning or assessment.

Mātauranga Māori Qualifications

The NZQF lists qualifications where the outcomes directly and specifically address the distinctive needs and aspirations of Māori by advancing Mātauranga Māori and the Māori world-view.

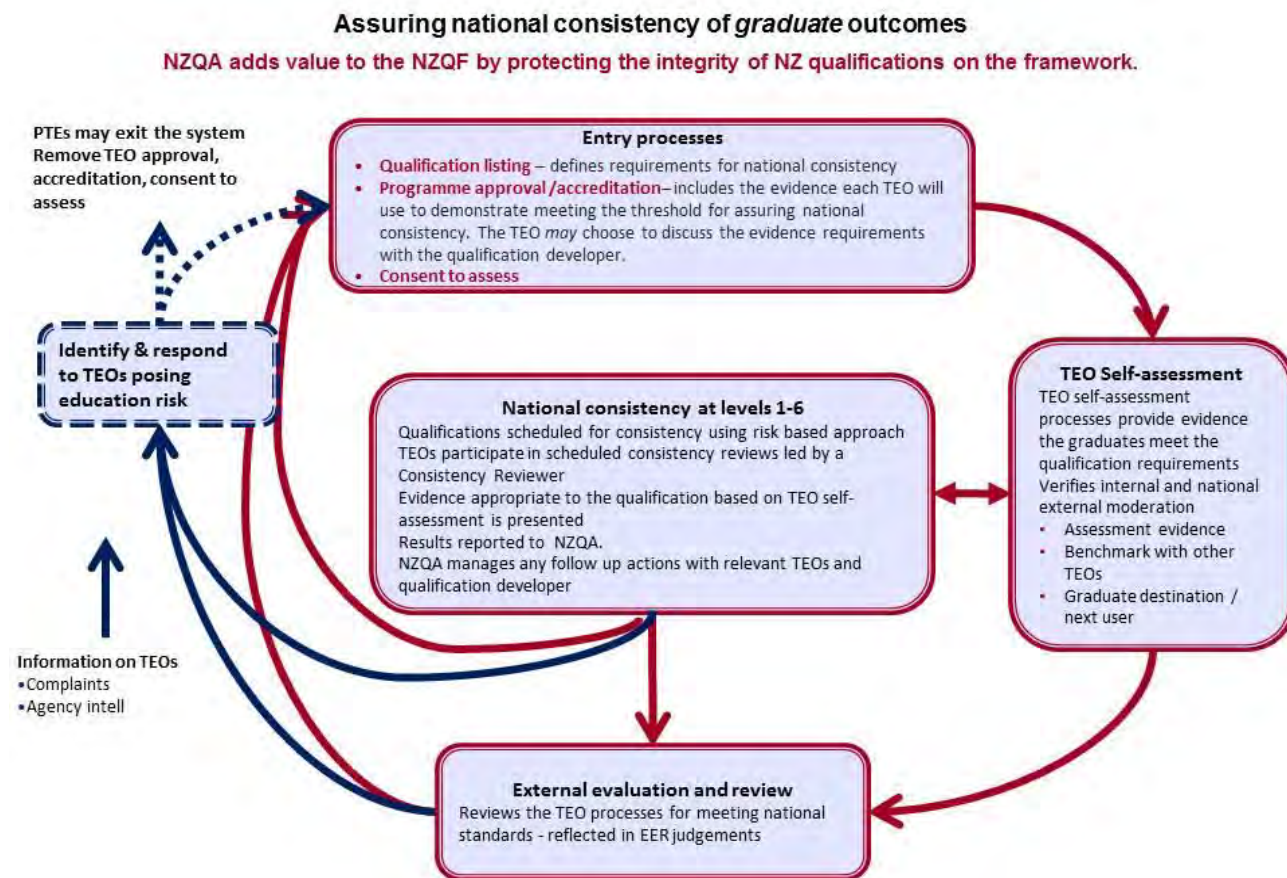
Quality assurance framework

The quality assurance framework integrates 'front-end' quality assurance, such as qualification and programme approval and education organisation accreditation, with the ongoing self-assessment activities a tertiary education organisation undertakes to assure itself of the quality of the graduate outcomes it achieves for its learners. The framework uses an evaluative approach and is underpinned by the following principles:

- strategic needs based
- focused on outcomes
- quality as a dynamic concept – ongoing improvement
- flexibility
- trust and accountability.

The responsibility for demonstrating how graduates meet the qualification requirements and outcomes rests with each tertiary education organisation, through its self-assessment processes. Programme providers will participate in a review meeting to assure the consistency of graduate outcomes. Review meetings are thought to be the most effective way for tertiary education organisations to develop their understanding of qualification requirements and how well the graduates of their programmes meet those requirements and outcomes. The conduct of these reviews needs to be flexible to respond to the wide range of qualifications, including those responding to the distinctive needs and aspirations of Māori.

The following diagram embeds the steps involved in assuring national consistency into each step of the quality assurance framework process.



Responsibilities

The respective responsibilities of NZQA, consistency reviewers, qualification developers and programme owners in relation to assuring national consistency of graduate outcomes are set out below.

The qualification developer is responsible for:

- determining, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, the core evidence requirements for demonstrating consistency for the qualification; the information is included in the listing details of the qualification
- providing advice to NZQA on which qualifications should be included in the annual qualifications schedule for consistency reviews
- clarify the evidence requirements for assuring national consistency arrangements in the qualification when requested by programme owners and other stakeholders
- as a subject matter expert advising the consistency reviewer on the qualification outcomes
- assisting with arrangements for consistency reviews.

The tertiary education organisation is responsible for:

- ensuring that the needs of learners, including Māori learners, are addressed within the

development of programmes leading to qualifications

- identifying the evidence it is going to gather to demonstrate how its graduates will meet the qualification requirements for national consistency in its programme application
- choosing to engage with the qualification developer (the organisation that listed the qualification) to clarify and discuss the evidence requirements before their programme is developed
- demonstrating how its graduates meet the qualification requirements and outcomes through its self-assessment processes including benchmarking and evidence of the real-world validity of their judgements about consistency
- bringing, and being able to explain, the answer to the **evaluation question** and the evidence that supports their self-assessment including recommendations for improvements to their programme and the qualification
- demonstrating that the evidence they bring is sufficiently representative both of its graduates and of the range of knowledge, skills and aptitudes within the graduate profile
- assuring itself that all its graduates have achieved the graduate profile to an equivalent and appropriate standard
- participating in periodic national consistency reviews built around *networks* engaged in assessing learners in the programmes
- responding to any recommendations arising from the consistency reviews.

Consistency reviewers are responsible for:

- working with the range of qualification developers and programme owners on behalf of NZQA
- using an appropriate approach when working with Māori tertiary education organisations and qualifications developed to meet the needs and aspirations of Māori learners
- preparing for and conducting the consistency review
- using an evaluative approach to reach a decision and report on the extent to which graduates from different programmes are achieving qualification outcomes at an equivalent level
- the final judgement, and are assisted as required, by subject matter experts, particularly qualification developers and, where available, sector representatives

Consistency reviewers need to be:

- acceptable to participants
- able to work in a range of cultural contexts
- credible in vocational education and assessment practice
- strong, open-minded facilitators able to make robust decisions and report appropriately to NZQA.

NZQA is responsible for:

- oversight of the effectiveness of the processes for assuring national consistency of graduate outcomes
- supporting capability through networks for reviewers and update training as required
- oversight and co-ordination of consistency reviewers by contracting and training reviewers
- publishing an annual schedule of qualifications for ongoing national consistency reviews in consultation with qualification developers which incorporates risk and other information
- following up with education organisations and qualification developers where the evidence was judged “not sufficient”
- publishing the results of consistency reviews

Overview of consistency reviews

Listing qualifications

During the development of a qualification, all stakeholders need to discuss and agree on the nature of the evidence to be used to assure national consistency of graduate outcomes. Stakeholders will include industry, employers as well as the qualification developer and other tertiary education organisations. This information is included in the qualification listing details.

Programmes leading to the qualification

Each tertiary education organisation will identify the evidence it proposes to use in their programme leading to the qualification.

Consistency review schedule

A schedule of qualifications for review will be developed and published annually in conjunction with the relevant qualification developers. All organisations accredited to deliver or with an approved programme are required to participate in the scheduled review.

Consistency reviews

Prior to the consistency review, each participating tertiary education organisation gathers evidence, through its self-assessment and its other processes, to meet the requirements specified in the listed qualification and the approved programme.

The consistency reviewer facilitates the review by helping to:

- identify and agree on what constitutes good evidence of consistency, and on the real-world evidence tertiary education organisations have to demonstrate this
- reach agreement on rating the quality of evidence each individual tertiary education organisation has about the consistency of its graduate outcomes. The assessment of evidence occurs through the active and effective participation of each tertiary education organisation during the consistency review.

Following the review

While it is expected the majority of tertiary education organisations will have sufficient evidence available, those unable to present sufficient evidence at the review will have an opportunity to submit further evidence immediately after the review. For these initial reviews, the final decision on consistency of the qualification will not be made until further evidence has been considered. Organisations unable to provide sufficient evidence will be subject to further follow-up action by NZQA.

Reconsiderations

Individual tertiary education organisations who were unable to provide sufficient evidence to the consistency review may request NZQA reconsider the decision. The details of the reconsideration process (including any fee) are still being developed.

Evaluative approach

The decisions about the quality and sufficiency of individual tertiary education organisation evidence, and the consistency of the qualification are made using an evaluative approach. Confidence in the overall standard or level that has been achieved is implicit in this approach.

The evaluative methodology enables conclusions about quality, value and importance to be reached on a transparent and robust basis. The approach requires consistency reviewers to:

- be explicit about the evidence on which judgements are made as well as the logic of its interpretation (i.e. the evidence does not speak for itself) and
- make the outcome available in a written report.

This makes clear the basis on which evaluative conclusions are reached and also allows the results to be understood and verified by stakeholders.

There are two steps to reaching the decision about the consistency of the qualification.

Step one - conclusions at tertiary education organisation level

This step is about the evidence that the individual tertiary education organisation brings to the consistency review to show how well its graduates meet the graduate outcomes of the qualification.

Tertiary education organisations must be able to demonstrate the extent to which there is good, real-world evidence that their graduates demonstrate an appropriate fit with the graduate profile of the qualification.

This is determined by answering the **evaluation question**:

How well does the evidence provided by the education organisation demonstrate that its graduates match the graduate outcomes at the appropriate threshold?

The question applies to each individual tertiary education organisation. The answer to the question is informed by the following criteria:

- the nature, quality and integrity of the evidence presented by tertiary education organisation
- how well the organisation has analysed, interpreted and validated the evidence, and used the understanding gained to achieve actual or improved consistency
- the extent to which the tertiary education organisation can reasonably justify and validate claims and statements relating to the consistency of graduate outcomes, including in relation to other providers of programmes leading to the qualification.

The conclusion, based on the answer to the evaluation question, is a judgement about the extent and validity of the evidence the tertiary education organisation uses to demonstrate how well its graduates meet the graduate outcomes.

Rating the answer to the evaluation question in relation to each tertiary education organisation

Rubric one sets out the expected levels of performance in relation to the evaluation question for an individual tertiary education organisation. The quality of the answer to the evaluation question is rated according to the rubric.

Rubric one Performance criteria for rating answers to the evaluation question for individual tertiary education organisations

	Performance criteria
<p>Sufficient Evidence is sufficient to demonstrate consistency of graduate outcomes effectively</p>	<p>ALL of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good evidence that graduates meet all, or nearly all, of the most important outcomes of the graduate profile of the qualification • Good evidence of highly effective processes for ensuring real-world validity of the judgements in relation to the graduate profile / outcomes across tertiary education organisations • Areas of weakness in the evidence or judgements are not serious and are being effectively managed or improved
<p>Not sufficient Evidence is not sufficient to demonstrate consistency of graduate outcomes effectively</p>	<p>ANY of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature, quality and integrity of the evidence does not justify the real-world validity of the tertiary education organisation's judgements about graduates meeting the most important outcomes of the graduate profile • Insufficient evidence that the tertiary education organisation has taken all reasonable steps to ensure their graduates match the graduate outcomes • Insufficient evidence the tertiary education organisation uses external evidence to reasonably validate claims about consistency of graduate outcomes

Step two - Conclusions about the qualification across participating education organisations

A conclusion is reached about how well graduates match the graduate outcomes of the qualification, at the appropriate level, across all tertiary education organisations providing programmes leading to the qualification. This includes the real-world evidence that validates the judgment of graduate outcomes for the end user.

The conclusion is based on synthesising the overall evidence available through individual tertiary education organisations. In essence, it is an overall professional judgement of the

national consistency of graduate outcomes relating to an individual qualification. It is more like a ‘well-informed professional opinion’ than an absolute grade-based judgement.

The conclusion on the national consistency of graduates of the qualification is based on synthesising the answers to the evaluation question answered for each tertiary education organisation participating in the consistency review. The performance criteria for reaching a conclusion about the national consistency of the qualification are set out in rubric two.

A decision on the consistency of the qualification will be made once there is confidence in the agreed threshold and tertiary education organisations have had the opportunity to demonstrate the quality and sufficiency of their evidence where this wasn’t available at the time of the review.

Rubric two Criteria for judgements about the national consistency of graduate outcomes of qualifications across all tertiary education organisations providing relevant programmes

	Performance criteria
<p>National consistency confirmed</p> <p>Evidence confirms graduate outcomes are being achieved to a consistent and appropriate threshold</p>	<p>ALL of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient evidence that graduates meet all, or nearly all, of the most important outcomes of the graduate profile of the qualification • Sufficient evidence of effective processes for ensuring real-world validity of the judgements in relation to the graduate profile / outcomes across tertiary education organisations • Areas of weakness in the evidence are not serious and are effectively managed by relevant tertiary education organisations
<p>National consistency not confirmed</p> <p>Evidence indicates significant questions about the consistency of graduate outcomes</p>	<p>ANY of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature, quality and integrity of the evidence does not justify confidence in the real-world validity of tertiary education organisations judgements about graduates meeting the most important outcomes of the graduate profile • Insufficient evidence that the tertiary education organisations have taken all reasonable steps to ensure their graduates match the graduate outcomes

Cost

The cost for participating in consistency reviews is the responsibility of the participating tertiary education organisations.

NZQA collects a fee per graduate on an annual basis from tertiary education organisations. The fee is intended to cover the costs of managing the overall system. The fee is set by the NZQA’s Board and published in the NZQA Schedule of Fees.

The consistency review

PREPARING FOR THE CONSISTENCY REVIEW

Actions

1. NZQA publishes a schedule of qualifications to be included for consistency and allocates a consistency reviewer to each review.
2. NZQA advises all tertiary education organisations with qualifications to be reviewed and negotiates and publishes the details of the review in conjunction with the qualification developer and the consistency reviewer.
3. Each tertiary education organisation uses the consistency evidence specified in the qualification listing and its programme to prepare a summary self-assessment report which uses evidence to demonstrate how the organisation is confident its graduates have met the graduate outcomes for the qualification.

Guidance

Scheduling qualifications for consistency review

The following factors are considered in scheduling a qualification for consistency review:

- previous judgement of 'consistency not yet confirmed'
- high volume of graduates
- leads to registration / licensing
- benchmark qualification in a suite of qualifications
- involves risky activities
- request from qualification developer or other key stakeholder
- an identified risk
- diverse range of qualification awarders
- range of categories of tertiary education organisations resulting from external evaluation and review
- multiple parties are assessing / participating in the programme.

The schedule will be published on the NZQA website and will be updated as required. Over time all qualifications will be scheduled for a consistency review. However, there is no expectation that it is normally an annual review for a specific qualification.

Arranging the consistency review

The following factors are considered in arranging the details of a consistency review:

- the number of tertiary education organisations with graduates of a programme
- the geographical spread of the tertiary education organisations
- identifying the approach required, in particular that a purpose specific approach for qualifications designed to meet the distinctive needs and aspirations of Māori, including the selection of a suitable reviewer
- identifying the appropriate mechanism for conducting the review, these may involve meeting of a cluster at a specific venue, teleconference or videoconference or through other suitable electronic media.

CONDUCTING THE CONSISTENCY REVIEW

Actions

1. Reviews will primarily be facilitated by a single independent consistency reviewer contracted by NZQA.
2. Participants make their own arrangements to attend the consistency review.
3. Participants present their evidence and summary self-assessment report at the review.
4. The national consistency reviewer facilitates the review and reports the results to NZQA.

Guidance

Participants

Participants comprise authorised representatives from tertiary education organisations who have sufficient knowledge to present and discuss evidence on behalf of their organisation. All tertiary education organisations with graduates of the qualification must participate.

The qualification developer is a mandatory participant in the consistency review and can provide clarification and guidance on the standard expected by the end users.

Expectations of the consistency review

Successful reviews will be those conducted in a spirit of trust, co-operation and collaboration – kotahitanga, manaakitanga and whanaungatanga - between the participants.

The discussion is directed to reaching an understanding, using the evidence provided, on the answer to the evaluation question.

The consistency review will take an education and evaluative approach.

Consistency review

Each participating tertiary education organisation will bring to the review evidence to demonstrate how they are confident their graduates have achieved the graduate profile for the qualification. As well, they will bring a summary report of their self-assessment. There are three distinct activities to be undertaken by the review:

a. Use the graduate profile and the range of evidence to agree the threshold to be achieved

The first activity in the review is to understand and agree the threshold / level to be achieved by graduates of the qualification. This will involve a structured conversation about the range of evidence presented *and how each education organisation has understood the 'standard' through their evidence.*

Depending on the size of the group this activity could be done in the whole group or in small groups.

b. Reach an initial decision about the quality and sufficiency of each education organisation's evidence

The second task is to systematically review, compare and discuss the evidence presented by each tertiary education organisation and identify variance from the agreed threshold. Each participating tertiary education organisation will explain how their evidence demonstrates their graduates meet the graduate outcomes. The rating of sufficient / not sufficient will be agreed.

c. Reach an initial decision about the consistency of the qualification outcomes

An initial view of the consistency of the qualification will be reached based on the evidence and the discussion by the consistency reviewer using rubric two to answer the overall evaluation question.

At the completion of the review meeting, each participant will be asked to reflect on the quality and sufficiency of their evidence and address the following questions on their self-assessment and identify:

- what will you continue to do
- what will you change in your evidence / assessment in the future

- any change to their initial rating on the evaluation question - sufficient / not sufficient.

The material brought to the review meeting will be retained by the consistency reviewer at the completion of the meeting for consideration in preparing the report.

NB: Focus is on the *comparing graduates* in relation to the qualification outcomes not quality assurance of the learning or assessment. This is not a moderation process

Examples of sources of evidence

The individual tertiary education organisation's self-assessment plan and action plan is the primary source of evidence. Conclusions should be supported with multiple sources of real-world evidence, for example triangulation between what the tertiary education organisation states in their report, what the graduates say and what the end user says. Sources of evidence may reference:

- employer surveys
- graduate surveys
- community surveys
- hapū, iwi surveys
- destination or end user data (where it is clear who is the end user)
- portfolios of work
- assessment samples
- capstone event
- benchmarks
- other relevant and reliable evidence.

Examples of ways of validation of the self-assessment include:

- comparison with formally established internal or external benchmarks or expectations, or professional, licensing or discipline standards
- data on employment outcomes or progression to further training over time
- comparison with similar graduates from other tertiary education organisations.

Alternative mechanisms

For some qualifications an existing panel or other body such as a registration body, has been established for the purposes of moderation or other quality assurance. In these instances, NZQA may, in discussion with the qualification developer, determine the relationship between assuring consistency and existing arrangements. The mechanism will be agreed on a case-by-case basis.

One qualification awarder

When there is only one qualification awarder, there is still a requirement to participate and assure national consistency of the graduate outcomes. This independent assurance is important if the qualification is offered, for example, in multiple workplaces.

It is likely the consistency reviewer will work directly with the qualification developer and any programme owners.

Managing consistency for designated Foundation qualifications

The purpose of qualifications designated as Foundation is to prepare learners for further training. Hence the focus of the consistency review is on the successful completion of the qualification and evidence of entry into and successful completion of further training or study.

REPORTING THE RESULTS OF NATIONAL CONSISTENCY OF GRADUATE OUTCOMES

Actions

1. Consistency reviewer reports to NZQA using the template within 10 working days of the completion of the review(s) for the qualification.
2. NZQA reviews and accepts the report then publishes it on the NZQA website.
3. NZQA follows up with individual tertiary education organisations and the qualification developer on specific issues or recommendations raised in the report.

Guidance

Report

The report will address the overall quality and sufficiency of evidence provided for the reviewer to reach a judgement of *Consistency confirmed* or *Consistency not yet confirmed* on the qualification outcomes.

The decision on the quality and sufficiency of evidence for each tertiary education organisation (sufficient / not sufficient) will be included in the report to NZQA.

The report will include tertiary education organisations that have not engaged in the process and those who have engaged but the self-assessment information is insufficient, incorrect or irrelevant.

The focus is on improving both the qualification and tertiary education organisation understanding of the requirements of the qualification, and will include:

- findings and recommendations on improvements to the qualification. For example, there may be evidence that some outcomes are not fit-for-purpose based on real-world evidence
- examples of good practice
- clarification of the threshold to be reached

Following the consistency review, NZQA will publish the names of education organisations where the decision on the evidence was sufficient.

The names of tertiary education organisations that are not able to present sufficient evidence at the consistency review will not be listed. These organisations will have a defined period to present further evidence after the consistency review, or to demonstrate how this will be done in a prompt, agreed timeframe.

Follow up actions

If the decision in relation to the qualification is Not Yet Consistent then the qualification may be scheduled earlier for the next consistency review or qualification review.

It is NZQA's responsibility to follow up with individual tertiary education organisations where the decision is *Not sufficient* or where tertiary education organisations do not engage in the consistency review. Possible actions include:

- initiating an Action Plan
- requiring a review of the approved programme
- conditions on tertiary education organisation accreditation, or other action, on confirmation that the organisation is not complying with the relevant Act or NZQA Rules.