Quality Assurance Arrangements for Providers of Adult and Community Education

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NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Contents

Introduction

During 2003 and 2004 the Government made a number of significant decisions relating to funding for the adult and community education (ACE) sector.

The following five national priorities were agreed:

1. Targeting learners whose initial learning was not successful

2. Raising foundation skills

3. Encouraging life-long learning

4. Strengthening communities by meeting identified community learning needs

5. Strengthening social cohesion.

New funding arrangements are being implemented gradually from 2005, and will be underpinned by these priorities. The funding of ACE will move away from a model based on *provider type* to one based on the *type of provision* and the *learning outcomes* being delivered and will draw together current diverse ACE funding arrangements.

ACE quality assurance arrangements will be introduced incrementally over a three-year period from 2005–2007. From 2008, all ACE providers receiving funding from the ACE funding pool and Category 5.1 funding will be subject to quality assurance arrangements as a requirement of funding. This includes ACE providers not currently operating under the jurisdiction of a quality assurance body, for example Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs).

Quality assurance for the sector aims to help ACE providers enhance the quality of the ACE they deliver and to seek continuous improvement. It will also give learners, community and government confidence that the ACE provided is of good quality.

Overview

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (the Qualifications Authority) has worked collaboratively with organisations involved with ACE to develop, consult and trial the ACE quality assurance arrangements.

From 2005, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) will work with ACE providers to help them to prepare for quality assurance.

The quality assurance arrangements take a holistic systems-based approach and apply to ACE providers, and not individual ACE activities. The arrangements cover the provider's policies, procedures, resources and responsibilities that support the delivery of ACE. In some cases, evidence may be sought from individual ACE courses, programmes or activities to confirm providers are meeting the quality assurance arrangements.

The arrangements are designed to be enabling rather than prescriptive. The quality audit process recognises that each provider has scope to demonstrate meeting the requirements in a way that acknowledges the size, nature and complexity of their organisation.

The new quality assurance arrangements can be used in association with, and to complement, existing external audit standards and align with other requirements and reforms within the sector, for example the introduction of charters and profiles and the five national priorities for ACE.

Existing quality assurance bodies and bodies already engaged in evaluating providers will be used to quality assure ACE providers.

ACE in universities will be the responsibility of New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC). Colleges of education will be audited by the Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee (CEAC), the institutes of technology and polytechnics largely by the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality), and the Education Review Office (ERO) will evaluate schools delivering ACE. All other providers will be the responsibility of the Qualifications Authority. Most of the proposed ACE quality assurance arrangements are already included in the quality standards used by these quality assurance bodies.

The learning opportunities provided through the ACE sector are characterised by programme diversity, flexibility and responsiveness to the identified learning needs of communities and individual learners. Quality assurance bodies are aware of the special characteristics of the ACE sector and will be taking a flexible approach to the way providers can demonstrate that they meet the requirements. The notion of 'fit for purpose' will also be applied in auditing or reviewing against the quality assurance arrangements.

Summary of Quality Assurance Arrangements

The quality assurance arrangements cover six areas of provider activity. In each area there is a statement of the required quality practice. This is followed by a list of sub-requirements (each prefaced with: *The provider will demonstrate this by*). These are expressed broadly, to recognise the diverse nature of the ACE sector and the different approaches providers may take to the same issue. Explanatory notes on some statements are carried in the footnotes or glossary.

The six areas to be quality assured are summarised below. Full descriptions of the quality assurance arrangements follow.

1. **Goals and objectives**
   The ACE provider has goals and objectives specifically for ACE and systems for their review.

2. **Systems to achieve goals and objectives**
   The ACE provider has a documented quality management system and uses it to achieve its ACE goals and objectives.

3. **Personnel**
   The ACE provider recruits, manages and develops its paid and unpaid personnel to achieve its ACE goals and objectives.

4. **Physical and learning resources**
   The ACE provider has adequate and appropriate physical and learning resources to achieve its ACE goals and objectives.

5. **Learner information, needs and objectives**
   The ACE provider supplies adequate and appropriate information to ACE learners, identifies learners' needs and reviews learning objectives.

6. **Development, delivery and review of ACE activities**
   The provider adequately and appropriately designs, develops, delivers and reviews its ACE activities consistent with its ACE goals and objectives, and in response to identified community learning needs.

ACE Quality Assurance Arrangements

1. Goals and objectives

The ACE provider has goals and objectives specifically for ACE and systems for their review.

The provider demonstrates this by

a) stating its ACE activities within a written statement of its ACE goals and objectives, approved by its governing body[1]

b) aligning its ACE goals and objectives to the national priorities for ACE[2]

c) consulting with its community, learners and stakeholders in developing and reviewing its ACE goals and objectives

d) having ways to confirm the achievement of its goals and objectives in order to inform future decisions on learning and teaching

e) regularly reviewing its goals and objectives

f) defining how it supports the learning aspirations of Māori

g) defining how it supports the learning aspirations of Pasifika peoples

h) as appropriate, defining how it supports the learning aspirations of ethnic minority groups and other groups with particular ACE educational needs.

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[1] The Government has introduced a system of charters and profiles for most providers within the tertiary education sector. Approved charters and profile documentation is likely to fulfil this requirement.

[2] The five national priorities are:
1. Targeting learners whose initial learning was not successful
2. Raising foundation skills
3. Encouraging life-long learning
4. Strengthening communities by meeting identified community learning needs
5. Strengthening social cohesion.

2. Systems to achieve goals and objectives

The ACE provider has a documented quality management system and uses it to achieve its ACE goals and objectives.

Governance, management and finance

The ACE provider has effective governance, management and financial systems to achieve its ACE goals and objectives. These all comply with relevant legislation and regulations.

The provider demonstrates this by

Governance

a)   defining its governance structures, roles, responsibilities and functions

Management

b)   applying an appropriate quality management system across all sites[3]

c)   defining organisational structures, roles, responsibilities, and lines of reporting and accountability for governance, management, finance, personnel and the delivery of learning

d)   regularly reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of its quality management system in a systematic way, so that the quality of the learning and teaching may be improved

Finance

e)   using acceptable financial management practices and achieving acceptable financial performance according to agreed public accounting standards.

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[3]   Providers may call their quality management systems other names and the policies and procedures may be spread across a number of related documents, as long as they meet the above criteria.

3. Personnel

The ACE provider recruits, manages and develops its paid and unpaid personnel to achieve its ACE goals and objectives.

The provider demonstrates this by

a) using appropriate recruitment and selection practices to ensure it has sufficient personnel with a range of skills including[4]:

- subject knowledge
- knowledge of adult learning and community engagement principles
- assessment and reporting experience
- educational management experience
- quality management expertise
- financial, governance, management and administrative expertise

b) providing fair conditions of employment by complying with current employment legislation

c) using personnel development, appraisal and support systems appropriate to the achievement of a quality teaching and learning environment.

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[4] It is not intended that each staff member should hold all these skills, but that the range of skills be available to the provider from its staff or externally.

4. Physical and learning resources

The ACE provider has adequate and appropriate physical and learning resources to achieve its ACE goals and objectives.

The provider demonstrates this by

a) ensuring premises and learning resources are adequate to cater for the diversity and number of learners and the range of ACE activities offered

b) meeting appropriate levels of health, safety and comfort for learners and staff at permanent and temporary teaching sites.

5. Learner information, needs and objectives

The ACE provider supplies adequate and appropriate information to ACE learners, identifies learners' needs and reviews learning objectives.

The provider demonstrates this by

Learner information

a)   providing information, where applicable, covering:

- ACE activity learning objectives
- enrolment, entry and selection criteria
- culturally appropriate publicity material
- rules and regulations, for example non-smoking policy
- total costs for enrolment, withdrawal and refunds
- complaints procedures
- health and safety information
- opportunities to provide feedback for improvement to ACE activities
- learning opportunities and pathways in the community/region.

Identifying learners' needs

b)   developing and applying adequate and appropriate processes to identify ACE

learners' needs and how to address them

Learning objectives

c)   developing adequate and appropriate systems to review with learners the
extent to which the ACE activity has met learning objectives.

6. Development, delivery and review of ACE activities

The ACE provider adequately and appropriately designs, develops, delivers and reviews its ACE activities consistent with its ACE goals and objectives, and in response to identified community learning needs.

The provider demonstrates this by

Development

a)   designing and developing ACE activities that:

- reflect the identified needs of learners, community and other stakeholders
- specify the learning objectives

b)   regularly consulting the community on learning needs and using the outcomes from community consultation to inform development of ACE activities

c)   taking a systematic and planned approach to collaborate with other providers

Delivery

d)   delivering ACE activities in ways that meet ACE learner needs

e)   specifying the requirements for any ACE delivered on its behalf by another provider[5]

f)   taking all reasonable steps to ensure the quality of ACE delivered on its behalf through subcontracted or other arrangements

g)   monitoring delivery and providing an appropriate level of support to any provider delivering ACE on its behalf to meet the ACE quality assurance arrangements

h)   using appropriate systems for recording, monitoring and reporting course attendance and, if applicable, learner achievement

Review

i)   systematically reviewing all ACE activities, using the results to enhance the quality of ACE provision

j)   regularly evaluating ACE delivered on its behalf by other providers.

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[5] The standard of delivery must be specified in a formal written agreement, which clearly defines roles and responsibilities.

Glossary

ACE
Adult and community education.

ACE activities
This refers to ACE provision including courses, programmes and the full range and diversity of ACE activities.

ACENZ
Association of Colleges of Education in New Zealand. Certain quality assurance functions for colleges of education are delegated by the Qualifications Authority to ACENZ and exercised by the Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee (CEAC).

Adequate and appropriate
'Adequate and appropriate' implies 'sufficient to meet the provider's ACE goals and objectives' and systems are fit for purpose.

Charter
A document stating what a provider or industry training organisation is setting out to do and giving a broad description of their role in the tertiary education system. This is a Tertiary Education Commission requirement that applies to organisations seeking government funding for tertiary education.

Coherent
Complete, consistent, logical, currently implemented and easily followed.

CEAC
Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee – the quality assurance body for colleges of education.

Effective
To bring about the desired effect. In a quality assurance context, this normally means that systems and arrangements work and that the provider meets its ACE goals and objectives.

ERO
Education Review Office

ESOL
English for speakers of other languages

Evidence
Statistics, observer records, records of interviews and discussions, and other supporting documents or information that contribute towards demonstrating that a standard is achieved or a requirement has been met.

Fit for purpose
Systems and processes are achieving what they were designed for, given the nature of the provider and/or the activity.

Goals and objectives
Goals are a provider's significant aims or desired results. They are generally long term in nature.

Objectives are the key actions that a provider will take to achieve its goals. Performance indicators are used to measure achievement of objectives.

Governance
Kaitiaki, directors, a trust board, school board of trustees or similar who direct the policy and affairs of the organisation.

Governing body
The status of an entity that governs the organisation. A body corporate can be a limited liability company, a charitable trust, an incorporated society or a statutory corporation.

Internal audit
A process carried out by the provider (or contracted agent) confirming the provider is implementing its policies and procedures.

ITP New Zealand
Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand.

ITP Quality
Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality – the quality assurance body for Institutes of technology and polytechnics. Certain quality assurance functions for institutes of technology and polytechnics are delegated by the Qualifications Authority to ITP Quality.

Kaupapa
The rationale behind an organisation's existence.

Learners
This refers to both individual learners and groups of learners who participate in ACE activities.

Learning objective
The purpose of the ACE activity in terms of what the learner is intended to learn.

MoE
Ministry of Education

The Qualifications Authority
New Zealand Qualifications Authority
Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa

NZUAAU
New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit

NZVCC
New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee. Quality assurance functions in university programmes are delegated by legislation to NZVCC.

Profile
Strategic direction, activities, policies and performance measures. Also refer to Charter.

Programme
Term used to encompass courses of study and/or research activity.

Quality assurance (QA)
A collective term used to ensure that activities are carried out effectively and efficiently.

Quality audits
An independent examination of a management system to see whether activities are effective in achieving the organisation's ACE goals and objectives.

Quality management
Coherent management activity that ensures quality policies and objectives are set, implemented and evaluated.

Quality management system
In its simplest form, a quality management system is a feedback loop of policies, procedures and evaluation. Policies define the standards to be met, procedures are established to show how these policies are to be put in place, and evaluation confirms the extent to which the policies and procedures are being followed and goals and objectives are being achieved.

Quality assurance body (QAB)
A body that performs quality assurance functions; for example the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality), and the Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee (CEAC). The Approvals, Accreditation and Audit (AAA) group operates as a quality assurance body on behalf of the Qualifications Authority.

With respect to universities, the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU) and the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) perform quality assurance functions on behalf of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC).

Regularly
'Regularly' implies frequently enough to meet the provider's ACE goals and objectives.

Review
An evaluation of the status and adequacy of a process in relation to the provider's policies and procedures in relation to its ACE provision.

Self-review
Analysis by the provider of its own systems to determine extent of compliance and effectiveness.

Stakeholders
Iwi, Māori organisations, learners, staff, standard-setting bodies, professional bodies, employer groups, community groups and funding bodies, that have an identifiable interest in, or potential benefit from, the goals and objectives of the organisation.

TEC
Tertiary Education Commission.

Wānanga
An organisation recognised as a wānanga by the Crown under the Education Act, 1989.