

**1 September 2009**

## **EVALUATIVE APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

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#### **PURPOSE AND CURRENT STATUS**

1. This document outlines the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) policy requirements for the quality assurance framework applying to private training establishments, institutes of technology and polytechnics, wānanga, government training establishments and industry training organisations. The policies reflect government policy and have been approved by the Board of NZQA.
2. Over time, all the current policies for each component of the quality assurance framework will be included to provide a single point of reference.
3. The policies on course approval and accreditation and National Qualifications Framework accreditation are being reviewed and are likely to be revised and updated to reflect the principle of high trust, high accountability and to reduce the costs of compliance.
4. At this stage, the policies for self-assessment and external evaluation and review do not apply to industry training organisations. Relevant policies to include industry training organisations in the overall quality assurance framework are being developed in consultation with the industry training organisations for implementation in 2010.
5. NZQA is responsible for ensuring tertiary education organisations continue to comply with the policies and criteria after initial approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration as a private training establishment is granted.
6. However, the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee has statutory responsibility for university compliance, and the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnic Quality is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance of the polytechnic sector.

#### **COMPONENTS OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK**

7. The policies and criteria, gazetted under the Education Act 1989, provide for a quality assurance framework established by NZQA which comprises four components:

- initial entry processes of course approval, accreditation to deliver a course, registration of private training establishments, and accreditation to assess standards on the National Qualifications Framework
  - self-assessment by tertiary education organisations
  - external evaluation and review by a quality assurance body
  - responses to determine where a tertiary education organisation may be non-compliant with the Education Act 1989 and the consequential appropriate actions.
8. The policies on course approvals and accreditation, National Qualifications Framework accreditation, registration of private training establishments and maintaining registration as a private training establishment are published separately on the NZQA web-site.
  9. This document specifies the policy requirements for the components of self-assessment, external evaluation and review and the response where the results from external evaluation and review and other indicators may indicate non-compliance with the Education Act 1989.

#### **Regulatory basis**

10. Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 & 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all tertiary education organisations that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) & (e) of the Act.
11. In addition to the individual courses private training establishments own or provide, the criteria and policies for private training establishment registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

#### **Self-Assessment**

12. The specific processes of self-assessment are not prescribed. The principle is that quality is best achieved when each tertiary education organisation has responsibility and ownership for improving its own outcomes, and quality assurance and improvement processes.
13. To ensure that the system as a whole works in a consistent and comparable way, tertiary education organisations are required to apply the following high level policy requirements:
  - implement self-assessment utilising the key features of effective self-assessment
  - answer the key evaluation questions to provide a common basis for both the self-assessment and external evaluation and review processes

- use minimum quantitative data on such matters as learner enrolments, retentions and completions.

#### 14. Key Features of Effective Self-Assessment

Self-assessment includes the ongoing processes a tertiary education organisation uses to gain evidence of its own effectiveness in providing quality education.

Processes used for self-assessment should be comprehensive, authentic, transparent, robust, and focused on the following areas.

- **Needs assessment** - the extent to which tertiary education organisations systematically determine and address the needs of learners, employers and the wider community
- **Processes and practices** - the processes and practices that help to achieve outcomes e.g. the primary importance of good teaching or the role of effective learner support services.
- **Learner achievement** - the impact of educational provision on learner progress and achievement.
- **Outcomes** - what is being achieved and the value of that for learners, employers and the wider community.
- **Using what is learned** - self-assessment should result in evidence-based conclusions and decision-making that will feed into strategic and business planning, leading to positive change
- **Actual improvement** - the extent to which improvements are relevant and worthwhile.

#### 15. The key evaluation questions are:

- How well do learners achieve?
- What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders<sup>1</sup>, including learners?
- How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?
- How effective is the teaching?
- How well are learners guided and supported?
- How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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<sup>1</sup> 'Stakeholders' can be different groups of people in different tertiary education organisations, but are likely to include some or all of: students, communities, employers, professional bodies and other relevant regional and national groups.

16. At this stage, a specific minimum quantitative data set has not been prescribed. However, data should be available to enable the key evaluation questions to be answered consistently.
17. The data should generate comprehensive evidence that a tertiary education organisation needs to answer key evaluation questions, to provide the basis for making valid comparisons, and to reach consistent conclusions about performance and quality.

### **External Evaluation and Review**

18. External evaluation and review uses evaluation tools, methods and processes to reach reliable and valid judgements about educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
19. An external evaluation and review is a periodic evaluation of a tertiary education organisation initiated through the scheduling process based on:
  - a maximum period of four years having elapsed since the previous external evaluation and review or quality audit
  - tertiary education organisation request e.g. following change of ownership
  - a Quality Assurance Body or other agency request e.g. thematic review, concerns over compliance or performance matters.
20. Evaluation tools used in external evaluation and review are the:
  - key evaluation questions
  - tertiary evaluation indicators
  - performance criteria descriptors.
21. Organisational level statements of confidence for each of educational performance and capability in self-assessment are described using the designated performance criteria descriptors as *Highly Confident*, *Confident*, *Not Yet Confident* and *Not Confident*.
22. Judgements of *Excellent*, *Good*, *Adequate*, *Poor* for performance and capability in self-assessment are made in relation to the key evaluation questions across the tertiary education organisation and within the focus areas.
23. Evaluation methods and processes inform the conduct of each stage of an external evaluation and review and describe how to:
  - determine the scope of the external evaluation and review through selection of focus areas
  - use the tertiary evaluation indicators to inform judgements
  - use the performance criteria descriptors to reach valid, reliable judgements of performance and capability in self-assessment in relation to the key evaluation questions across the tertiary education organisation and within the focus areas

- use the performance criteria to reach statements of confidence (judgements) about an organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment where:
  - i. **Educational performance** is the extent to which the educational outcomes achieved by a tertiary education organisation represent quality and value for learners and other stakeholders. An evaluation of educational performance involves answering questions focused primarily on the quality of learning and teaching, and the achievements of learners.
  - ii. **Capability in self-assessment** is the extent to which an organisation uses self-assessment information to understand performance and bring about improvement. It reflects the extent to which an organisation effectively manages its accountability and improvement responsibilities.
- prepare a report of the external evaluation and review which will be published with comments on performance including:
  - i. clear statements of confidence for both educational performance and capability in self-assessment at tertiary education organisation level supported by narrative that outlines the level of confidence (*Highly confident, Confident, Not yet confident and Not confident*), the reasons for the statements and their relative significance
  - ii. clear judgements about performance and capability in self-assessment in relation to all six key evaluation questions across the tertiary education organisation supported by narrative that outlines the judgements (*Excellent, Good, Adequate, Poor*), the reasons for the judgements and their relative significance
  - iii. clear judgements about educational performance and capability in self-assessment for each focus area supported by a narrative that outlines the judgements (*Excellent, Good, Adequate, Poor*), the reasons for the judgements and their relative significance
  - iv. any requirements and/or recommendations
  - v. any future actions or implications for the tertiary education organisation.

24. External evaluation and review focuses most directly on the:

- extent to which the tertiary education organisation systematically determines and addresses learner and wider community needs
- key processes contributing to the achievement of outcomes for learners
- quality of educational provision and its impact on learner progress and achievement
- achievement of outcomes for learners and the wider community (employers, regions, local or national interests)

- effectiveness of the tertiary education organisation's self-assessment in understanding its own performance and using this understanding for improvement.

### **Responses where the tertiary education organisation may be non-compliant with the Education Act 1989**

25. NZQA uses a range of indicators to determine when a tertiary education organisation may be non-compliant with the Education Act. These include:

- results of external evaluation and review, in particular statements of confidence of *Not Yet Confident* or *Not Confident* on either or both educational performance and capability in self-assessment
- private training establishments not complying with the requirements for maintaining registration as a private training establishment
- outcome of complaints
- information from other sources e.g. the Tertiary Education Commission, Immigration New Zealand, trustees.

26. Depending on the extent and seriousness of the non-compliance with the Education Act and the type of tertiary education organisation concerned, the Quality Assurance Body will respond using the following approaches:

- ***Remedial actions*** are identified and documented in a plan with an agreed timeline for completion and clear likely consequences if the agreed actions are not completed in accordance with the plan.
- ***Conditions*** placed on private training establishment registration, course approval and accreditation
- ***Compliance notices*** to require specific actions to remedy an identified and specific non-compliance.
- ***Other legislative actions***<sup>2</sup> taken where failure to comply with the Education Act has been ongoing despite the interventions or is of a serious, stand-alone nature.

### **NZQA PUBLICATIONS**

27. NZQA has published a series of documents which contain both the policy requirements and guidelines on their interpretation and implementation. These documents include:

- Using Evaluation to Strengthen Organisational Self-assessment
- Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review
- Tertiary Evaluation Indicators

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<sup>2</sup> s237 Cancelling of registration, s258(9) Withdrawal of course approval, s259(6) Withdrawal of accreditation

- Guidelines for the Registration of Private Training Establishments
- Policies and Criteria for the Ongoing Registration of Private Training Establishments
- How to Maintain Registration as a Private Training Establishment

All relevant policies and guidelines are available on the NZQA web-site ([www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)).