

# **QUALITY ASSURANCE EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP**

## **A report to the Education Sector Leadership Group and Minister for Tertiary Education**

**November 2007**

### **1 Introduction**

Governments require assurance of the quality of educational delivery and outcomes in tertiary organisations and institutions, to be confident in the investment decisions made on their behalf, and the reputation of tertiary education in New Zealand. The development of a reformed model for quality assurance is therefore a central element of the government's tertiary education reforms.

The Quality Assurance Expert Advisory Group (EAG) was established by Ministers in December 2006 to provide input and guidance on the design and development of new quality assurance as part of the reforms, and to support the sector.

The EAG membership includes a range of sector and industry interests and expertise in quality assurance and evaluation. It has met on seven occasions.

New Zealand's tertiary sector is diverse. An effort to rationalise quality assurance processes presents significant challenges. The new quality assurance framework must be underpinned by strong principles that operate irrespective of sub-sector and size, and flexible enough to recognise the range of educational delivery by the sector. The tertiary reforms represent an important opportunity to embed quality assurance within a single framework and establish a common approach to quality across the whole sector.

This report outlines the substantive discussion and deliberations of the EAG during 2007. Our Terms of Reference ask us to describe the development and implementation of a robust quality assurance system that supports the tertiary education reforms. This report also outlines the EAG's recommendations for strengthening the regulatory context for quality assurance in the tertiary sector.

2007 has been predominantly a year for initial development of a new quality assurance system, and with transition and implementation planned across 2009-2012, this report concerns a 'work in progress'. Therefore, we propose an ongoing role for the EAG, or a similar group, beyond the pure design phase of the system, and through transition to full implementation.

Our deliberations and discussions have been productive and robust. We have enjoyed a good working relationship with NZQA and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) officials.

## 2 A new model for quality assurance

The new model establishes a common approach to quality assurance activity in the tertiary sector. It represents a shift away from an audit and input-focussed approach to *an evaluative and outcomes-focussed approach to quality*.

Every provider, regardless of sub-sector, will undertake ongoing self-assessment, be subject to rigorous periodic external evaluation and review, and deliver relevant and comparable information to the TEC. The model also needs to be underpinned by a sound regulatory context.

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Key Processes Influencing Outcomes</b>
TEO contribution to: learner outcomes (achievement and progress) TEO level outcomes system level outcomes	TEO internal systems and processes for: needs identification at learner, employer, regional and national levels quality improvement (considering evidence of both process and outcome)
<b>Compliance with Regulatory Arrangements</b> TEOs meeting legislative and regulatory requirements	

The EAG has advised on several developments designed to support providers to move to and maintain this evaluative approach. This has largely focussed on ensuring that the intent of the tertiary reforms will be manifested through the new quality assurance processes and effectively communicated as the new model is implemented. It has also involved providing feedback and comment on developing tools, training/capacity building, and guidance to support providers with quality assurance processes through trial and implementation phases.

We share the agencies' goal of developing a system for quality assurance that is world-leading, robust, and responsive to the needs of New Zealand stakeholders. The EAG possesses expertise on international practices in quality assurance in education settings. This has been supplemented by international research presented to the EAG as part of the development of the new system by NZQA<sup>1</sup>.

The model shares some characteristics with that used in New Zealand's schooling sector, in that an evaluative approach supported by a set of evaluation indicators is

<sup>1</sup> NZQA is responsible for the process of providing external quality assurance for the tertiary sector with the exception of the university sub-sector, where the responsibility lies with the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC). In terms of the Gazetted Criteria for Course Approval and Accreditation, NZQA is required to consult with the NZVCC.

central to its design. Clearly, however there are differences between the tertiary and schooling systems in terms of appropriate accountability and the responsibility for quality, that mean that differences will be required in the final design of the system. In tertiary education a wider range of models of governance and management exist than in schools, and there are also differences between a system accountable to the public for delivering compulsory education, and delivering on the expected outcomes of individual tertiary students, employers and other stakeholders.

**The EAG has provided advice on the development of the following specific elements of the model:**

- 1. Principles – the fundamental drivers for self-assessment and external evaluation and review**
- 2. Key Features – the principles exemplified in practice**
- 3. Evaluation questions – open ended , evaluative questions that will assist providers to focus their self-assessment, and which are applicable at multiple levels, e.g. whole-of-organisation, discipline, department, programme, lecture / classroom**
- 4. Evaluation indicators – that describe the possible evidence for valued outcomes and key contributing processes**
- 5. Evaluation specific methodology – which uses the evaluation questions and by means of investigation, analysis and synthesis to reach evaluative conclusions, that is judgements on quality, value and importance.**

The EAG is satisfied that the direction of the development to date is in line with good international practice, and acknowledges the importance of ensuring that the new system is compliant with important international conventions.

The EAG has been concerned to ensure that the model:

- maintains the independence between the processes used for quality assurance and funding;
- ensures that information from quality assurance processes is used as part of a deliberative process of funding, rather than directly generating rewards or sanction;
- uses the best of international experience, while reflecting the needs of New Zealand stakeholders;
- focuses quality assurance activities on outcomes of learning, and teaching, and the key processes that contribute to those outcomes;
- is well researched, capturing the best of what is known about good practice in quality assurance and evaluation; and
- is flexible enough to recognise the distinctive contributions of providers.

The design of the new quality assurance system has focussed on institutional level performance, while the EAG's discussions have largely focussed on programme level performance. While a holistic judgement about the performance of the institution is appropriate, in larger institutions, issues are more commonly specific to the programme or individual subject level. In particular, engagement of teachers will usually be secured directly through the learning and teaching with which they are concerned rather

than via institutional structures. The system, particularly through the self-assessment process, must be sophisticated enough to recognise and respond to isolated issues.

We are supportive of the agencies' commitment to ensuring the new system is a high-trust model, where the primary responsibility for the quality of educational delivery rests with the provider itself, not a third-party quality assurance body. We also consider that the transition to the new system should be characterised by capability building, for tertiary providers and quality assurance bodies alike.

### **3 Self-Assessment and External Evaluation and Review**

The new quality assurance model is manifested through two processes – ongoing self-assessment and periodic external evaluation and review.

#### **Self-Assessment**

The EAG considers that the development of formalised self-assessment is the key focus of the new system, especially in its inceptive phase.

Provider self-assessment is envisaged as an ongoing process, embedded in the quality assurance and annual planning activities of each organisation. Each provider will formalise a process that examines the quality, value or importance of its educational delivery and outcomes, and how it is meeting the needs of learners and other stakeholders.

A key component of self-assessment will be how providers gather and respond to evidence of student outcomes, and of teacher effectiveness, as the key influence on student outcomes.

The EAG noted from the reports of agency consultation efforts the need for self-assessment to be an ongoing process delivering information to the monitoring agency which is known to be reliable and which is validated by external review the EAG agrees that there is a need for providers to move beyond “student satisfaction surveys” to looking at learning and teaching, and the outcomes being delivered for students and other stakeholders in the short and longer term.

It is therefore imperative in the early phases of the system to provide adequate support to achieve this authenticity, and clear understanding of the expectations of providers in terms of undertaking self-assessment, and responding appropriately to the results of self-assessment.

Self-assessment will contribute to both continual self-improvement and to investment decisions. Where self-assessment reveals divergences from planned outcomes, there should be conversations with the funding authority even before external review takes place. The focus of these conversations should include the reasons for the unexpected outcomes, and the institution's plans for how to respond to them. Eventually, the information will be used, in context, to inform investment decisions which may be to undertake additional investment to improve outcomes or some other response.

The self-assessment result, and indeed the results of combined self-assessment and external review, should not automatically generate financial sanctions. However, failure of an institution to share information about divergences from planned outcomes, or failure to respond positively, may generate financial sanctions.

If poorly performing providers come to believe that they are likely to be ‘punished’ by the system they will be less likely to engage in honest yet robust self-assessment that the system will rely on. However, it is imperative, both during transition and implementation, that sanctions are imposed when TEOs pose risks to their students or to the country’s reputation.

Additionally, while we recognise the need for the system to provide particular kinds of information to the TEC as the investment and monitoring agency, this should not lead to an overly prescriptive approach. In terms of sound self-assessment, there is no one “right way” to undertake self-assessment. The design of the reporting, including any reporting template, must be careful to avoid overly compliance-focussed behaviour.

The “scheme” used by any provider to self-assess is less important than the ability of that scheme to answer evaluative questions and support those answers with evidence.

As noted previously, self-assessment must also be sophisticated and flexible enough to identify isolated issues while looking across the provider as a whole.

**The characteristics of effective provider self-assessment:**

- **a focus on outcomes (learners, employers, communities, national, international)**
- **outcome information is interpreted evaluatively and used to inform decisions and bring about improvement**
- **deliberate assessment of what contributes to those outcomes**
- **effective assessment of learner and stakeholder needs**
- **evidence of ongoing self-assessment activity over a period of years**
- **educational, business and strategic decisions are influenced by the findings of self-assessment**
- **improvement, and new initiatives, are evident in action plans and institutional strategy**
- **verifiable evidence of actual improvements in outcomes for learners and other stakeholders.**

### **External Evaluation and Review**

External evaluation and review will independently validate the results of self-assessment. The scope of any specific external evaluation and review will follow a strategic conversation between institution and reviewer and may be wider than the results of provider self-assessment. We expect that unexpected findings which arise in the course of an external review will be discussed with the provider.

The conversations that occur following the external evaluation and review report with both the monitoring agency and the external evaluators are the key locus for adding value and establishing a clear direction for improvement. Again, we stress the need for the inceptive phase of the new system to be characterised by capability building,

In this regard, the EAG has discussed on several occasions the importance of the design of external evaluation and review reports, both for the purposes of monitoring, and accountability for publicly funded tertiary organisations. These reports will be one of the key artefacts of the new system, and require careful design. The reports will need

to be fit for purpose, communicate clearly, and include agreed actions, ideally developed on the initiative of the individual TEO. They will, however, conceive the individual TEO within a coordinated sector, and there will be sufficient shared structure in reports to permit sector-wide discussion of key elements in the overall framework of quality. To ensure there is credibility in the reporting, they will also need to contain objective measures. Reports should also be future-focussed, concentrating on next steps.

The external evaluation and review system needs to be a supportive process, and involves participatory evaluation methods. This requires establishing a culture of high trust, and ensuring that evaluators have the necessary skill-set, and are steeped in the policy intent which underpins these reforms.

Consultation has revealed an enormous amount of goodwill in the sector for engaging meaningfully with quality assurance processes, but also a level of misgiving about how well-intended policies are sometimes not reflected “on the ground”.

The EAG also is aware of misgivings about the potential use of league tables through the new processes. The EAG notes that the commissioning specifications for quality assurance require that the system will allow comparisons between providers and the relevant sub-sector. The EAG has no inherent objection to comparisons or league tables, as long as they are valid, reliable and well-explained.

**The system overall will be working well if:**

- **there is open disclosure about strengths and weaknesses of TEOs**
- **strengths and weaknesses are confirmed by independent evaluation**
- **an action plan follows that addresses weaknesses and reinforces strengths**
- **there is a shared view across the sector about what really makes a difference**
- **there are published reports on good practice, containing verifiable evidence**
- **there are credible professional evaluators across the sector that drive up performance in their own institutions**
- **institutional decisions are based on evidence**
- **investment decisions are based on transparent judgements about good institutions and capability investment in weaker institutions**
- **there is publicly available information and defensible evidence-based judgements about individual institutions**
- **there is a common view across the sector about the focus on learning and teaching as the way to improve students' outcomes.**

#### **4 The Integration of Quality Assurance and Monitoring**

The results of quality assurance activities are a key input to the monitoring system being developed by the TEC to support the reforms. It is important to integrate the quality assurance component of the reforms into the wider processes of investment. There is also a need for NZQA to work closely with the TEC and the Ministry of Education to ensure that quality assurance, funding and monitoring work together.

The EAG understands the complex nature of the quality assurance and monitoring reforms. Given the iterative nature of the developmental work, it has only recently been possible to develop meaningful draft transition plans that integrate the quality

assurance and monitoring components of the reforms. The transition plans will naturally be further developed during 2008.

From the provider perspective, securing funding for its ongoing activities is a necessary focus. The integration of quality assurance and monitoring is therefore a powerful lever in ensuring there is meaningful engagement with the reformed quality assurance processes. There must, therefore, be a sense from the TEC, as the investment agency, that the results of the quality assurance it commissions from the various quality assurance bodies are considered alongside other performance information obtained by the TEC itself.

For their part, providers will require transparency with respect to how the quality assurance information will be used by the TEC. This will develop trust in the results and value of quality assurance.

With respect to this integration working in practice, the EAG stresses the need for external evaluators and investment managers alike developing a sophisticated understanding of the role of quality assurance in the tertiary reforms. The desired outcomes of authentic quality assurance must also be clearly articulated by the investment managers in the course of investment conversations.

The authenticity of quality assurance will suffer if there is a sense that the monitoring agency does not carry the same policy intent as the quality assurance system.

## **5 Evaluation Indicators**

Another significant component of the quality assurance reforms is the development of draft evaluation indicators of quality. The tertiary evaluation indicators describe the desired outcomes and processes, and therefore provide a focus for both self-assessment and external evaluation and review.

The incorporation of governmental, societal, business and industry expectations into educational planning and delivery is appropriate and necessary. The development of the evaluation indicators therefore needs to be the product of collaboration and discussion between the tertiary sub-sectors, the wider community, and interests from across industry and business.

### **Evaluation indicators:**

- **identify the 'valued outcomes' and the key processes contributing to them**
- **signal the connections between the activities most likely to influence learning such as teaching quality**
- **identify what the evidence for the 'valued outcomes' and the key processes might look like, but stop short of constructing specific, prescriptive measures for evidence gathering**
- **are co-constructed with the sector, supported by research, and sector and agency experience, about what works, and continually tested and refined.**

The development of the draft indicators has been based on a systems modelling exercise, and involved people from across the tertiary sector, including the EAG members. Workshops were held in order to identify the key influencers/drivers of tertiary education. A draft set of preliminary indicators has been developed and will be

the subject of consultation with the sector from December onwards, and, with appropriate initial revisions, will be used in the trial in 2008. The EAG members have been briefed on development at each of the meetings since June and have also had the opportunity to comment on the initial draft indicators by means of the web-based discussion forum *Evaluate*.

The EAG wishes to provide the following specific advice on the evaluation indicators:

- They should be kept ‘as straightforward as possible’ so that they are easily understood by the sector;
- They need to be suitable for use throughout the tertiary sector and focussed on learning and teaching;
- They should be broad in nature and focused on helping TEOs and evaluators understand the nature of the outcomes and the evidence that demonstrates those outcomes;
- The evaluation indicators are for use in the evaluation of tertiary education, that is, they will span the interface between education and its evaluation;
- There must be a clear interface between the role of the evaluation indicators, and the TEC’s key performance indicators;
- They should not be seen as prescriptive; i.e. they should inform the evaluation conversations during self-assessment and external evaluation, contribute to and inform judgements, and must avoid becoming a checklist of ‘things that a TEO must do’;
- They should be used to facilitate the spread of knowledge about good practice and assist in demonstrating that sectoral objectives are being achieved;
- The evaluation indicators should encourage rather than constrain innovation;
- They will need to be refined in light of the trial in 2008 and should be formally reviewed in the light of experience, and with strong and effective consultation with the sector;
- The use of the evaluation indicators may identify some gaps in research pertaining to tertiary education in New Zealand; and
- The evaluation indicators provide a significant opportunity for a close relationship between the quality assurance bodies and Ako Aotearoa as that organisation establishes its role in improving learning and teaching.

## **6 Communication and Consultation**

The EAG acknowledges the significant efforts made by agencies to engage the sector and individual sub-sectors, and the willingness of the sector to engage in the development process.

The EAG has expressed on several occasions the need for an effective and sustained communications effort, reaching all levels of the tertiary sector, to promote the benefits of new quality assurance as a manifestation of the tertiary reforms in practice.

Authentic self-assessment will require the engagement of staff at all levels of tertiary organisations, including and especially teaching staff.

To date, there is significant goodwill towards the reforms from sector representative organisations, but the extent to which the messages about changes are reaching individual staff members, or are seen as relevant to them, is limited.

We note that the TEC and NZQA report a common response to consultation and communication efforts to date is the refrain “we’re already doing it”. While this may be true to a certain extent in a significant number of cases, the EAG is concerned that this may indicate a lack of understanding of the nature and therefore an underestimation of the magnitude of the change being sought. By definition, “We’re already doing it” also misunderstands the continuous improvement approach to quality that is envisaged.

We note that the TEC and NZQA have developed a communications strategy running through the transitional period through to full implementation of the new system, and we encourage the agencies to maintain this as a key focus. We consider that clear sector-wide understanding of the drivers behind the new system is the key to its successful implementation, and equally that failure to adequately explain is its greatest risk.

We reiterate that in order to trust the results and value of the processes “on the ground”, evaluators will need the required skills to deliver evaluation services consistent with the intent of the policy. We see a primary role therefore for evaluators to communicate this intention through their interactions with providers.

The EAG recommends that NZQA, along with the TEC, place greater priority on achieving the goals of their communications strategy during 2008.

## 7 Regulatory Arrangements

The EAG noted the recommendation from NZQA officials that legislative change is not required to implement the new, evaluative approach. This view is in step with the recommendations of the joint Officials Working Group (which was informed by legal advice). In particular, the EAG considered whether the government should amend the Education Act to strengthen the legislative basis of the reformed quality assurance process to protect against legal challenge.

The EAG considers that providers are more motivated by reputation and funding than by regulation: therefore, an over-emphasis on regulatory levers to achieve the new focus of quality assurance may not sufficiently motivate providers to change and improve.

It should also be remembered that sub-sectors have considerable investment and ownership over their currently used self-regulatory instruments, such as the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics standards.

The EAG noted the view of NZQA officials that changes to the regulatory instruments that sit beneath the legislation are certainly required to enable self-assessment and external evaluation and review, but that regulatory change could not be used to “bludgeon” TEOs into compliance, and nor was this desirable. However, there is a fundamental tension between the new outcomes focus and the belief in many TEOs that they already practice self-assessment and external evaluation and review.

While the EAG considers New Zealand’s international obligations are met by the Register and gazetted criteria concepts, we consider that some of the current regulatory vehicles used for quality audits have become overly cumbersome through a process of accretion over time. The new system should look to replace or rationalise these, to maintain a high trust, high accountability approach to the regulatory framework that supports the new quality assurance.

The EAG agreed that New Zealand needs to maintain international confidence in the quality of tertiary education delivery, and we support the concept of self-managing institutions in an international environment.

The EAG also agrees with the recommendation of the review team that the currently gazetted criteria for course approval and accreditation are sufficiently broad to allow for the move to self-assessment and external evaluation and review. However, the EAG recommends that the 2006 NZQA-led review of gazetted criteria, which predated the announcement of the tertiary reforms, be revived. The development of new quality assurance has reached a point where concepts developed as part of the new system can be appropriately introduced. For example, ‘learning and teaching’ should be more explicit in the preamble to the criteria, to enable self-assessment and external evaluation and review.

The EAG recommends that NZQA also revise, and if necessary, replace *Quality Assurance Standard One for Private and Government Training Establishments and Wānanga*, to ensure consistency with the tertiary reforms.

A delicate balancing act is required: on the one hand, it is highly desirable that all parts of the sector are operating within a single regulatory framework, but it is clear that different sub-sectors will require differing approaches. Effective communication will

be key to managing the tension between compliance and outcomes-focused continuous improvement.

## **8 2008 Trial**

We view the trial, scheduled to commence in March 2008, as one of the key components in the transition process, and it will provide important information to NZQA about the sector's comfort and readiness to undertake self-assessment.

The EAG has endorsed the trial design proposed by NZQA, in that 8 to 10 providers will be involved, representing a range of different kinds of tertiary providers and provider sizes, that the trial of the external evaluation and review process naturally follows from the trial self-assessment, and that at least two evaluators will be involved in each trial evaluation.

The trial is concerned with developing evaluation capability of both providers and external evaluators, and testing the tools and guidance developed to date to assist providers to move to an evaluative approach to quality assurance. The trial is more limited, however, in the extent to which it can validly test provider self-assessment, given that providers may not have been formally undertaking it prior to the trial. The extent to which its existing internal quality assurance processes are a "fit" with the new system will vary, as will the robustness of any data that can be delivered to agencies.

To this end, training and guidance for trial participants and, equally importantly, evaluators need to be of high quality, and as close as possible to the "final product", while at the same time the developers need to be able to adjust their support and guidance as appropriate based on findings from the trial, and through the transitional period.

We note that the trial is limited to a small number of providers due to resource constraints. The EAG has recommended to agencies that within these constraints, and to be most effective, the most diverse range of providers should be selected, both in terms of size, community of interest, and what is known about their present level of performance.

The EAG's discussions with respect to the trial have focussed on the fact that the scope of the trial, and indeed, the initial implementation, is limited by the "starting point" of the provider, in terms of the robustness of its current self-assessment processes. We acknowledge that participating TEOs may not be able to answer all aspects of the evaluation questions nor will the full impact of their actions be tested in the time available. However, the trial will help to identify the most effective ways that the questions can be used and answered; gaps in information availability; and/or issues with data quality.

To the greatest extent possible, the evaluation indicators used in the trial should be the same as those expected to be used in the full rollout, while clearly there must be an opportunity to revise and refine based on the learnings from the trial.

The design of the trial also needs to capture accurately the costs of quality assurance to both quality assurance bodies and providers, so that the financial implications of the system can be accurately ascertained, and ways found to adequately resource the transitional and ongoing costs of the new system. Such resourcing will be vital to its success.

Finally, we strongly recommend that the trial is subject to an independent evaluation.

## **9 Transition to Implementation**

The EAG members have frequently referred to the importance of effective transition from the current quality assurance arrangements to those required under the tertiary reforms. Key factors in the transition include the effective integration of the quality assurance and monitoring requirements from TEOs, the smooth introduction of an evaluative approach to self-assessment, the development of sector evaluation capability, and the identification / recruitment of a group of evaluators to conduct external evaluations.

The EAG has appreciated the opportunity to discuss papers provided by NZQA and the TEC. Members note that following the trial in 2008, a progressive transition is planned from 2009 to 2012. The EAG supports the plan to introduce self-assessment from 2009, and the progressive introduction of external evaluation and review over four years. The information from the quality assurance work, along with TEC monitoring information, will contribute to the TEC's investment decisions.

A four-year transition plan from 2009-2012 does pose a risk if the new and current systems are operating concurrently: The EAG suggests that the current quality audit system should cease as soon as practicable in the transition period.

In addition to the trial in 2008, a stocktake of TEOs' current quality assurance systems is proposed. The EAG strongly recommends this exercise be undertaken. However, members also advise that the stocktake should capture information on current good practices and incorporate these into the developing new system. The EAG notes that the stocktake needs to be undertaken carefully: 'cold' surveys are unlikely to produce the evaluative information desired. Sector organisations could also provide important advice on developing the approach to the stocktake.

The EAG also supports the proposed plan to develop sector evaluation capability over 2008 and 2009. The co-ordinated provision of information and case studies of good practice along with sector workshops and other meetings will be needed to ensure understanding and effective implementation of the reforms, and particularly self-assessment.

Related to the development of sector evaluation capability, the EAG also recommends that a plan for the identification and training of external evaluators from 2008 onwards should be developed. Significant numbers of external evaluators are not readily available in New Zealand, but it is essential that the initial external evaluations of TEOs in late 2009 are effective and positively received.

## 10 Risks and contingencies

Through the course of the EAG's discussions, the most frequently cited risk to the successful implementation of new quality assurance is the potential for communications failure. It is essential that at every step of the development, the sector, at every level, is thoroughly and meaningfully engaged on the necessity and nature of the change, the relationship of quality assurance to the funding environment, and the practical expectations, in terms of provider self-assessment and a provider's interactions with quality assurance bodies under the new model.

We believe that agencies must place more emphasis on developing understanding in the sector of "the big picture"; why changes are necessary to improve quality assurance, as well as the practical realities of the system. In other words, what the new system will "feel like". In the design stage, this is not necessarily something that can easily be answered, but the work is now advanced enough so that the philosophical underpinnings and principles of the system can be explained and disseminated, and providers can anticipate the impact of the changes on them.

As noted previously, a common response from providers to the consultation to date is "We are already doing this". The proposed stocktake of provider readiness, to occur concurrently with the trial, is therefore an important exercise. Agencies may need to more adequately communicate the magnitude of the expected change, or TEOs may underestimate it.

In this respect, we look forward to the rolling out of the *Evaluate* system to promote online sector and sub-sector discussion on quality assurance issues.

Another risk that we recommend be further explored by the agencies is contingency planning, particularly for poorly performing providers, and providers that struggle to make the transition, i.e. that *aren't* "already doing it". We are conscious that providers will be at a range of starting points, and this therefore requires quality assurance bodies to have a range of support available, appropriate to the needs of individual providers. During transition, these providers need to be identified, and worked with intensively.

The diversity of the sector and the current range of quality assurance practices expose an inherent tension in the development work: NZQA must avoid developing a model that is overly prescriptive, but TEOs will also need support and guidance relevant to their circumstances. Given that there is a diverse range of providers at differing stages of readiness; NZQA has developed support materials that are largely generic. This again points to the need for effective communication of high level messages, and the philosophy behind the evaluative approach, to give fair warning, and for providers themselves to reflect on what the changes will mean for them in an informed way.

## **11 The ongoing role of the EAG**

The EAG considers that significant risks to the success of the implementation exist during the trial and transition phases. A prudent risk management strategy might include retaining similar independent expertise and advice to agencies during the trial and transition phases of the new system.

The EAG therefore recommends to SLG that its Terms of Reference be extended and that the EAG be retained until the new system is fully implemented. The membership of the group and frequency of meetings will need to be adjusted appropriately according to the development needs.

Agencies will need to be able to make appropriate adjustments and refinements during the initial stages of the system, particularly where regulatory arrangements are involved.

The EAG also considers that the communications effort needs to be ongoing and particularly strong during the early stages of the transition, when the focus of the new system is on capability building.

Professor Gary Hawke  
Chair  
Quality Assurance Expert Advisory Group

## Summary of Recommendations

- That the new model for quality assurance in the tertiary sector reflect an evaluation approach manifested through the two processes of ongoing TEO self-assessment and external evaluation and review;
- That the initial phases of implementation be characterised by capability building both for TEOs and Quality Assurance Bodies;
- That to ensure authenticity, financial disincentives should not result directly from poor self-assessment results. Rather, sanctions should relate to failure to report and respond to divergences from planned outcomes while investment decisions follow deliberation and discussion on the optimal response to evaluation information and other information;
- That NZQA resume the review of Gazetted Criteria and Quality Assurance Standard One to ensure consistency of these regulatory instruments with the Tertiary Reforms and the developing quality assurance system;
- That the 2008 trial be subject to an independent evaluation;
- That a plan for the identification and training of external evaluators from 2008 onwards be developed;
- That the communications effort needs to be ongoing and particularly strong during the early stages of the transition, when the focus of the new system is on capability building;
- That, as new quality processes are introduced, there is a stocktake of existing practices to ensure that accumulated knowledge about good practice is not lost, and can contribute to the developing new system; and
- That the EAG be retained, under revised Terms of Reference, to provide similar input and guidance to the design team during the transitional phase of new quality assurance.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Membership of the External Advisory Group

- Professor Gary Hawke (Chair) – Head of the School of Government at Victoria University of Wellington and Chair of New Zealand Pacific Economic Cooperation Council. Professor Hawke has had significant involvement in secondary and tertiary education reforms and developments for many years.
- Dr Jane Davidson – Director, Davidson Consulting Ltd, Auckland. DCL provides expertise in evaluation and organisational consulting for a wide range of organisations, government departments and community groups. Formerly Associate Director of the internationally recognised Evaluation Centre at Western Michigan University where she launched and directed the world’s first fully Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation.
- Shane Edwards – Kaihautū Marautanga at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. Tertiary Education Commission Peer Review Panelist for Performance-Based Research Fund in Māori knowledge and development.
- Professor Roger Field – Vice Chancellor of Lincoln University and Chair of the New Zealand Vice Chancellors’ Committee on University Academic Programmes.
- Tony Gray – Chief Executive of Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology. Previously Chief Executive of the Pacific International Hotel Management School in New Plymouth.
- Jan Hausman – Academic Manager of Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQ) Quality Academic Auditor.
- Professor Tamati Reedy – Pro-Vice Chancellor (Māori) of Waikato University.
- Dr Mike Roberts – Academic Director of AIS St Helens (Auckland degree awarding private training establishment). Vice President of the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers.
- Bruce Robertson – Deputy Chair of the Hospitality Standards Institute and Chief Executive of the Hospitality Association of New Zealand.
- Frances Salt – National Manager Reporting Services, Education Review Office.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Quality Assurance Expert Advisory Group Terms of Reference**

#### **Background**

The Government has decided on a substantial set of policy changes to the tertiary education system. Collectively, these reforms create a new investment system for tertiary education in which planning, funding, quality assurance and monitoring are aligned in a way that will help ensure the system delivers the desired outcomes - including high quality, relevant and responsive provision, access, and good student outcomes.

As part of these reforms, Cabinet has agreed to a system that integrates quality assurance and monitoring information to inform investment decisions. This system is expected to provide transparent and robust assurance that public money is well invested and spent, ensure good outcomes for students and other stakeholders, and foster quality enhancement. It aims to support a culture throughout the sector in which TEOs focus on improving their own performance, responding to strategic change and continuing to build their capacity for self-improvement.

A review is also being undertaken to ensure that the legislative and regulatory requirements - such as the current quality assurance standards and criteria for provider registration and accreditation, and course approval - are coherent and clear and support TEOs to achieve the intentions of the tertiary education reforms.

#### **Objective**

The objective of the Expert Advisory Group is to provide advice on the development and implementation of a robust quality assurance system that supports the tertiary education reforms. The Group will advise on current best practice, and provide independent advice, ideas, input, direction, suggestions, commentary, critique, and leadership to the development of the new quality assurance system.

#### **Membership**

The Expert Advisory Group comprises individuals with experience in evaluation, quality assurance and / or the tertiary education sector.

#### **Operation**

The Group will itself determine its working processes at the first meeting.

#### **Tasks**

Oversee development of a report describing a systematic quality assurance system that includes a preferred model for self-assessment for providers and an external evaluation and review model for quality assurance bodies. The models would include the criteria against which self-assessment and external evaluation and review will occur.

Advise on a process for consultation and sector input on the development and implementation of processes for self-assessment and external evaluation and review.

Provide input into advice on the current regulatory arrangements and on any changes that should be made, following consultation, including the nature and role of the existing quality assurance standards.

Advise on any implementation issues following consultation and on the pilot for self-assessment and external evaluation and review. Advise on a suitable implementation plan.

### **Reporting**

The Expert Advisory Group will report to the Sector Leadership Group, which consists of chief executives of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The Sector Leadership Group will consider the report of the Expert Advisory Group and will brief the Government on the matters raised.

### **Expectations**

The Expert Advisory Group is not expected to undertake formal consultation with the sector itself, although it may wish to be involved in the consultation that will occur.

The work of the Expert Advisory Group should be consistent with the Government's desired outcomes including:

- A shift from auditing compliance within a regulatory framework to an evaluative approach with a focus on the key processes contributing to desired outcomes.
- Self-assessment by Tertiary Education Organisations with an independent external evaluation and review process to validate the TEOs' plans to build on strengths and correct weaknesses.

### **Deliverables**

The Expert Advisory Group is expected to provide a written report to the Sector Leadership group on the tasks above by mid-November 2007.

### **Secretariat**

Officials working with the Expert Advisory Group will work to deliver on the direction established by the Group for quality assurance. Officials will also bring ideas and input to the Expert Advisory Group process. It is expected that the Group will provide its advice and input at a high level rather than "directing" detailed approaches. The process of engagement between the Expert Advisory Group and officials will be iterative, both parties contributing to the direction of the work. It is intended that the Group and officials will work in a collaborative fashion to achieve the desired outcomes.

### **Meetings**

The Group will probably meet five – six times during 2007. The first meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 27 February 2007.

Mike Willing  
Deputy Chief Executive, Quality Assurance  
NZQA  
February 2007