

SUPPORTING LEARNING PATHWAYS

Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy

DECEMBER 2002



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

SUPPORTING LEARNING PATHWAYS

Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy

The New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the Register) was announced in 2001. During 2003, a new Register website will enable the public to view and compare all qualifications that have been quality assured in New Zealand.

The Register introduced a common credit currency for New Zealand qualifications. This credit currency provided the basis for the next step: agreement on a policy that will underpin consistent credit transfer systems within New Zealand education providers.

Credit recognition and credit transfer are the litmus test of confidence in quality assurance arrangements for education. Credit transfer is critical to support learners along appropriate learning pathways. This policy is designed to provide for credit transfer decisions to support the mobile learner of the twenty-first century.

Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy

The Credit Transfer Working Party developed this credit recognition and transfer policy and implementation plan in consultation with the tertiary education sector.

The Working Party was established by the Qualifications Authority and comprised nominees from across the education sector, including universities, polytechnics, wānanga, colleges of education and private training establishments. It also included representatives from the Industry Training Federation, students' associations, the Ministry of Education and the transition Tertiary Education Commission.

While work was initiated on the credit recognition and transfer policy in early 2001, the completion of the policy relates directly to the Tertiary Education Strategy and the Interim Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities released in July 2002. The policy relates specifically to objective 7: A coherent and reliable system of qualifications, learning recognition and credit transfer. It will also help support objectives 5, 14, 17, 20, and 23.

The credit recognition and transfer policy is predicated on quality assurance requirements under the Education Act 1989 and applies within the New Zealand domestic context. The implementation of the principles, objectives, outcomes and operational strategies is the responsibility of the relevant quality assurance bodies and will be undertaken as part of their official approval, accreditation and quality assurance roles.

Credit recognition and transfer are the litmus test of confidence in the quality assurance arrangements for education in New Zealand. Appropriate credit recognition and transfer are critical to support learners along the most appropriate learning pathway and consequently are a core part of education and training provision. Credit recognition and transfer decisions should support the mobile learner of the twenty-first century through quality assurance, information provision, and management and use of technology.

The credit transfer and recognition policy is one of the sector-wide initiatives the Qualifications Authority has led as part of its overarching quality assurance role. It will fit within the high-level gazetted criteria for course approval and accreditation that guide the procedures of all quality assurance bodies. The implementation of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the Register), also developed in close collaboration with the education sector, will provide a firm foundation for the policy.

Credit Transfer

Credit transfer is a process whereby credit already achieved is recognised towards a new qualification. This may occur on a case-by-case basis between providers/qualifications developers and individuals or as a structured agreement between two or more organisations or providers.

Principles

The Register and quality assurance requirements under the Education Act 1989 provide the foundation and mechanism for credit recognition and transfer.

The Register provides a common credit¹ currency, a levels system, learning outcomes and subject classification system for all qualifications quality assured in New Zealand. The Register therefore provides a basis for credit recognition and transfer.

The quality assurance processes underpinning the Register provide confidence in the quality of the delivery and assessment leading to the award of credit.

The following principles (both overarching and operational) are intended to apply across sectors and cultures, and complement government obligations to Māori under the Treaty of Waitangi.

- *Qualification, course and programme development and design should promote and facilitate credit recognition and transfer.*
- *The key focus of credit transfer decisions should be on the benefit for learners and supporting effective learning pathways.*
- *Transparency in credit recognition and transfer decision-making across the education system is a critical factor in supporting and encouraging the ongoing involvement of learners in education and training.*
- *Credit transfer and recognition should be able to operate across different cultures and national borders, and robust policies and procedures need to be in place to support this.*
- *Credit awarded as a result of either recognition of prior learning or recognition of current competency is of equal standing to credit awarded through other forms of assessment and should be able to be carried with the learner once awarded.*

¹ Credit is the agreed measure of the amount of learning (estimated by a provider or developer) typically required in gaining a qualification. This estimate of learning time includes direct time spent with teachers, time spent preparing for and doing assignments and time spent in assessment. Credit is awarded when achievement is assessed and meets specified standards. Evidence of achievement can be collected from a variety of sources.

Objectives

The following high-level objectives underpin an effective and productive credit transfer system. They are considered essential to ensuring that the interests of learners are paramount.

- *Credit transfer decisions should be fair and recognise learning in an appropriate way.*
- *Credit transfer decisions should be defensible, consistent and open to scrutiny.*
- *Credit transfer decisions should be timely so that a learner's ability to access programmes is not unnecessarily inhibited.*
- *Credit transfer processes should facilitate access and promote new learning opportunities without compromising the quality or standards of qualifications.*
- *Clear and coherent information should be readily available on the types of pathways that a learner may expect to progress following the awarding of certain types of qualifications (ie through the Register, credit transfer and formal articulation arrangements).*
- *Learners, providers and assessors should have a clear understanding of what may be expected in relation to the application for credit transfer.*
- *Learners must have recourse to review and appeal of credit transfer processes and decisions.*

Outcomes

The following outcomes should result from applying the above principles and objectives.

- *Credit will be granted for recorded² success, whether or not it forms part or all of a complete qualification.*
- *Credit will be granted at the highest level consistent with the learner's demonstrated level of competence.*
- *Credit transfer arrangements will recognise the distinctive characteristics of qualifications.*
- *Where credit is not granted, providers will provide clear reasons for the decision.*
- *Each institution will have procedures in place to enable learners to seek a review of initial decisions on credit transfer matters.*
- *Information about credit transfer arrangements will be readily available to all learners.*

² Recorded success refers to the record maintained by an accredited organisation relating to the result of the assessment that has occurred.

Strategies

Quality assurance

Quality assurance is a key tool for achieving the credit recognition and transfer outcomes outlined in this policy.

The following quality assurance strategies aim to build on and strengthen current arrangements. They include ensuring that providers have credit recognition and transfer processes in place that meet the principles, objectives and outcomes outlined in this policy. This will be achieved through initial course approval and accreditation requirements and ongoing external audits undertaken by quality assurance agencies or audit bodies.

Formal agreements between qualification developers and providers regarding credit recognition and transfer also need to be readily available and accessible for other providers, learners and the public.

- *Existing course approval and accreditation requirements will be enhanced to ensure that all providers have credit recognition and transfer processes in place that support the principles, objectives and outcomes outlined in this policy.*
- *Compliance with course approval and accreditation requirements is monitored through initial course approval and accreditation processes.*
- *Ongoing compliance and effectiveness will be monitored through quality audit.*
- *Providers and qualification developers are required to publicise and promulgate information regarding formal articulation³ and credit transfer arrangements with other providers and qualification developers.*

³ Articulation involves linking two or more whole qualifications together to create an integrated qualification structure in which one qualification builds on another. Articulation arrangements involve linkages between whole qualifications. Credit transfer arrangements recognise credit from components of qualifications.

Information and communications strategies

The provision of clear and readily available information to learners and others contemplating further learning is central to effective credit recognition and transfer processes.

The information also needs to be easy to understand and recognise the diversity of learners. Information about recourse to appeal processes should detail how and to whom any issues, complaints or appeals should be made both internally and externally, including the Office of the Ombudsmen as a last resort appeal mechanism.

- *Comprehensive information on credit recognition and transfer, including any appeal procedures, is readily available for learners.*
- *Providers/developers and assessors of qualifications on the Register are required to have information about credit transfer processes and arrangements readily accessible to all learners who enrol with them.*

Information sharing including certification and recording of credit

Currently New Zealand does not have an overall national comprehensive record of learner results. It is, therefore, very important that tertiary institutions and private training establishments effectively manage their own academic transcripts and records and make this information readily available to their learners.

In the future, modern information technology may provide an opportunity for the development of a centralised database of records of learning and qualifications. Under this scenario, the National Student Index (NSI) could potentially provide an important role.

In the meantime, it is important that further work is done on how best to utilise modern technology and the NSI. The sector will need to work collectively when developing and designing data collections systems to ensure harmonisation and comparability. Standardising data collection requirements and technology systems may provide the first steps towards achieving a comprehensive record of learner results.

- *Tertiary education sector works collectively on standardisation of data collection systems.*

Implementation – Next Steps

Introduction

The credit recognition and transfer policy builds on and strengthens existing arrangements. The success of the policy is based upon providers having systems and information available to support the principles, objectives and outcomes, and quality assurance bodies ensuring this is the case through ongoing quality assurance processes.

The successful implementation of this policy does not require the development of new and expensive systems, a national 'formulaic' approach or any major rework. It does however require commitment to the principles and in particular to the needs of the learner.

Responsibility for effective credit recognition and transfer relies upon:

- *Providers having appropriate credit recognition and transfer and appeal processes in place*
- *Learners having access to information and recourse to appeal*
- *Quality assurance bodies ensuring credit recognition and transfer and appeal requirements are met through quality assurance processes ie course approval, accreditation and ongoing audit.*

Next steps

February 2003

- *Policy announced*
- *Policy promulgated to providers, qualification developers and quality assurance bodies*

March 2003 – December 2003

- *Promulgation and promotion continues with students and more broadly within the education and business sectors*
- *Providers review credit recognition and transfer procedures against policy and revise if necessary*
- *Quality assurance bodies review quality assurance processes and revise if necessary*
- *Quality assurance bodies ensure auditors are aware of requirements and trained where necessary*
- *Tertiary sector considers the standardisation of data collection systems*

From January 2004

- *Providers have credit recognition and transfer processes in place*
- *Providers have appropriate appeal processes in place*
- *Quality assurance bodies start checking processes*

January 2004 – July 2004

- *The Qualifications Authority works with quality assurance bodies to develop a good practice booklet.*

Credit Transfer in the International Context

The credit recognition and transfer policy outlined in this document applies to the New Zealand context.

The Working Party involved in the development of this policy acknowledges the growth in international education initiatives and the importance of cross border and international credit transfer arrangements. The Working Party considers that where practicable the same policy principles, objectives and outcomes should apply.

Further work is required on how to synchronise and recognise credit recognition and transfer principles and procedures internationally. It is therefore important that the education sector and the quality assurance bodies acknowledge the emerging issues relating to international equivalency and comparability, and take steps to develop relationships and mechanisms to establish international arrangements.



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

P0 Box 160, Wellington
Phone 04 802 3000
Fax 04 802 3112
www.nzqa.govt.nz