



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Targeted Review of
the Qualifications System
Focussing on certificate and diploma levels

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The targeted review of qualifications has highlighted issues that the Government is seeking to resolve, by making strategic improvements to the system. Results of the targeted review have found that the current qualifications system:

- is generally poorly understood by the people for whom it was designed
- lacks relevance to some employers and industry
- lacks coherence, user-friendliness, clarity and currency
- has allowed the ongoing proliferation of qualifications that are substantially the same
- is confusing because the National Qualifications Framework is a subset of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the Register).

These findings signal the need for a period of active change to ensure that our qualifications system provides learners with clear pathways to their goals, and employers and industry with a skilled workforce.

Proposed changes and their key benefits

A package of seven major changes has been developed to achieve this.

1. Develop a unified New Zealand qualifications framework.
2. Require the use of existing quality assured qualifications and change the design rules for National (standards-based) and New Zealand (course-based) qualifications to allow for more inclusion of local components.
3. Require mandatory periodic reviews of qualifications to determine whether they are still fit-for-purpose.
4. Strengthen and standardise qualification outcome statement requirements.
5. Introduce a mandatory pre-development assessment stage for qualification developers.
6. Strengthen recognised industry involvement in qualification development.
7. Provide the public with clear information about whether a qualification is active, inactive or closed.

Each of these changes contributes to addressing the issues identified with the system, and together they provide coverage of all the major issues. The key benefits for the learner, employer and provider are:

- improved clarity and user-friendliness of the system for learners and employers, both nationally and internationally, giving them more relevant information with which to make decisions
- immediately reducing the number of qualifications by nearly one-third on the current Register and further significant reductions in the number of qualifications in the medium-term, which will improve clarity for learners and employers
- allowing learners and employers to clearly see what a graduate can do with the learning gained, as well as what the qualification leads on to
- improving the relevance of qualifications and creating better employment outcomes for employers and employees
- greater use of National and New Zealand qualifications
- reducing the development costs of new qualifications
- moving the focus from how qualifications are delivered and assessed to the outcomes for the learner.

INTRODUCTION

The qualifications system is a strategically significant component in the ongoing development of New Zealand's economy and society. New Zealand needs a credible and robust qualifications system to support the provision of high quality education for all New Zealanders. Learners, employers and industry require a system that clearly conveys the knowledge and skills gained in achieving a qualification in order to make informed decisions about future study and employment.

The Government and the public expect that tertiary education in New Zealand is flexible and responsive to the needs of learners and employers. The Minister of Education has asked New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to identify ways to resolve the problem of too many similar qualifications (duplication) that increase the number of qualifications in the system (proliferation) but do not increase real choice for learners¹.

The targeted review of qualifications has highlighted issues that the Government is seeking to resolve, by making strategic improvements to the system. The Government is therefore signalling a period of active change management in this area to simplify the tertiary education system for the learner, industry and providers, as soon as possible.

As a package, the proposed changes in the consultation paper seek to simplify the qualifications system, thereby reducing confusion and clutter and improving qualification pathways. The number of qualifications will significantly reduce and the structure of qualifications will change to provide for maximum flexibility and portability. Areas where there is the most obvious proliferation and duplication of qualifications will be priority targets of the new mandatory reviews. This would start in 2010.

The way in which qualifications are designed, developed and reviewed will change. How NZQA and the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality) carry out quality assurance of qualifications will also change. As a result, the qualifications system will be simplified, strengthened and made more transparent.

The proposed changes are informed by a number of background and research reports, which were developed with the active participation of a number of government agencies and sector groups. The reports, which are listed below, can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/troq>.

- *The number of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*
- *The clarity of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*
- *The currency of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*
- *Employers' opinions of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*
- *Certificates and diplomas in New Zealand: A description of approval, accreditation and registration processes*

Goals

The New Zealand qualifications system should be simple and straightforward so that it is useful and more easily understood by learners, employers and providers.

A qualifications framework should link all qualifications so that their relationships are clear for the learner, employers, industry and the public. A national qualifications framework should also maximise access, flexibility and portability between education/training and employment.

Each qualification should have a standardised, clear description of the outcome(s) gained by completing the qualification. These outcomes should be presented in a consistent format to enable greater transparency, mobility and credit transfer for the learner. Clearly stated learning outcomes also enhance portability, and better meet the demands of an internationally mobile workforce.

Underlying principles

The targeted review has revealed that the Register is not generally seen as the comprehensive qualifications framework for New Zealand. Depending on the structure of a qualification, there are different but overlapping objectives and principles guiding qualification design. The following underlying principles developed for the targeted review build on New Zealand's existing tertiary education system and propose that New Zealand's qualifications framework should:

- clearly convey the skills/knowledge achieved through the completion of a qualification
- ensure relevance by:
 - involving industry and other end-users in the development of the qualification
 - enabling qualifications to evolve and develop quickly in response to new knowledge and the changing requirements of users
- be a single system that links all qualifications so that:
 - the similarities and differences between similar qualifications are clear
 - the relationships between qualifications are clear
 - there are clear paths for progression and credit transfer, ensuring qualification portability
- provide for diversity, distinctiveness and flexibility of delivery while minimising unnecessary duplication and overlap
- be robust, reliable, credible and internationally comparable.

These principles promote a strong focus on quality and the relevance of education in meeting the needs of learners, employers, industry, Māori, Pasifika, other communities, and other users.

New Zealand's tertiary education system should reflect the wide range of learning needs of all New Zealanders, and this should be further reflected in its national qualifications framework. A credible and robust New Zealand qualifications framework is a key mechanism to support Māori to achieve educational success as Māori. An effective qualifications system should also contribute to Pasifika and other learners achieving their highest qualifications aspirations.

ISSUES

Research conducted as part of the targeted review has indicated that the current New Zealand qualifications system:

- is generally poorly understood by the people for whom it was designed
- lacks relevance to some learners, employers and industry
- lacks coherence, user-friendliness, clarity and currency
- has allowed the ongoing addition of qualifications (proliferation) that are substantially the same (duplication)
- is confusing because the National Qualifications Framework is a subset of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the Register).

As a result, learners face real challenges when navigating the New Zealand qualifications system and employers cannot always be confident that the person they wish to hire has the skills and knowledge they require.

Understanding of the New Zealand qualifications system

Very few learners or employers are aware that a comprehensive list of quality assured qualifications exists². The Register is mostly used by those who work in education and does not distinguish which qualifications are currently available, frustrating those who do use it³. Anyone using the Register needs to be knowledgeable about the system to make sense of the information.

The large number of very similar qualifications on the Register further confuses and frustrates some industry groups, learners and providers. Employers tend to look only at qualification titles, and it is difficult to know how to compare and identify similarities and differences between qualifications when looking at titles alone⁴.

The lack of links between education agency databases means that the Register information requires cross-checking for accuracy. Qualification data is often different depending on its source, making it difficult to know if Register information is current.

National Qualifications Framework is a subset of the Register

The National Qualifications Framework is often mistaken for the New Zealand qualifications framework but it is in fact a subset of the Register. Learners and employers do not know that the Register is the overarching qualifications framework for New Zealand, which contains both standards- and non-standards-based qualifications.

Most learners and employers also do not know that there are three different types of qualifications on the Register: National (standards-based), New Zealand (course-based) and provider or local (course-based but can have standards-based qualifications embedded).

The Register provides the policy direction for the New Zealand qualifications system as a whole, but there are varying and overlapping principles, purposes and characteristics. What the Register is and what underpins it are difficult to determine for those who do not work in the sector. Few learners and employers have heard of the Register or are aware of its public-face website, KiwiQuals⁵.

NZQA and ITP Quality (through NZQA-delegated authority) are responsible for the quality assurance of the majority of the qualifications at levels 1 to 6 on the Register⁶.

The quality assurance bodies have their own similar, but different, guidelines and processes. These can be confusing and overwhelming, even for the most experienced qualification developers⁷. Those outside the sector have limited understanding of these differences or the need for them.

Relevance of the qualifications system to learners, employers and industry

To be relevant to employers and industry, a qualifications system must provide learners with clear pathways towards career outcomes, while producing graduates who meet the needs of the employment market. It must also balance the discrepancies that can develop between what learners learn and what employers require. For the most part the current system achieves this. However, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed.

Some learners have difficulty determining if the qualifications on the Register are nationally recognised, if they are portable and if they meet industry standards. There are also conflicting views about whether industry-related qualifications respond to national industry priorities or only the needs of a few local employers. Also, qualifications that are designed primarily to focus on the needs of industry and employers may not necessarily meet all learners' educational needs and aspirations.

Coherence, user-friendliness, clarity and currency of qualifications

All qualifications are required to contain outcome statements that outline the skills and knowledge, educational opportunities, and employment opportunities a learner gains from studying a particular qualification. The targeted review research indicated that some outcome statements are weak and not consistently described. Only 13 percent of the sampled statements gave clear guidance on all three components and so do not give learners and employers a clear sense of what a qualification delivers⁸.

Learners find it difficult to see the extent to which any learning they have already completed (measured by credits) can be transferred if they move to another provider, and providers have expressed difficulty assessing against the available assessment standards. As a result, recognition of prior learning and credit transfer processes are often drawn out and lack transparency, and opportunities for the learner (and potentially for future employers) are lost.

The differences and similarities between National (standards-based), New Zealand (non-standards-based) and provider qualifications (non-standards-based but often with standards-based qualifications embedded in them and known as 'courses') are unclear to learners and employers⁹.

Qualification developers (both standard-setting bodies and providers) have expressed concerns with the unit standards-based National certificate or diploma model. They have suggested that the model is too rigid in its specification of standards and requirements for assessment, and that the fragmentation of units of learning can detract from a meaningful understanding of overall learning outcomes¹⁰.

Proliferation and duplication of qualifications

A number of incentives drive the generation of large numbers of similar qualifications in the current system. These include dissatisfaction with the unit standards system required for National qualifications, funding-based incentives, the value to providers of branding their qualifications, and policies on the type and level of qualifications required of

prospective migrants. In combination, these drivers have resulted in a system that contains both too many qualifications and too many similar qualifications.

The funding rule for significant changes to qualifications, which requires re-approval if the qualification changes more than five percent, results in the development of ‘new’ qualifications by polytechnics, wānanga and private training establishments. This in turn drives the NZQA qualification titles requirement whereby, if the credits of a provider qualification exceed the credit requirements for a National qualification by more than five percent, the title of the qualification must be different to that of the National qualification and the National qualification is embedded. Detailed findings on this driver, and other drivers for proliferation and duplication of qualifications, are presented in an **Appendix**.

Table 1 presents numbers of qualifications on the Register, by provider type. A detailed examination of qualifications data has revealed that 25 percent of the certificates were in only 10 of the 305 New Zealand Standard Classification of Education (NZSCED) fields, and 25 percent of the diplomas were in only 9 of the 208 NZSCED fields¹¹.

The total number of qualifications presented in Table 2 is 5,937. However, given that the Register does not currently accommodate the closing of qualifications or the showing of qualifications that are not active, counting the number of qualifications that sit on it is not very useful in terms of demonstrating proliferation.

Table 1: Number of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications, by qualification type, as at 18 December 2008

	Number of certificates and diplomas	Percent of total number of certificates and diplomas	Qualification type	Percent of qualification type
Certificates	3,455	58 percent	Provider	69 percent
			National	31 percent
Diplomas	1,059	18 percent	Provider	86 percent
			National	14 percent
Sub-total	4,514	76 percent		
Total number of qualifications	5,937			

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SYSTEM

Overview

The following changes were developed in collaboration with the Industry Training Federation, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics New Zealand, Business New Zealand, and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions. Te Taihū o Ngā Wānanga, the private training establishment sector and ITP Quality have also made contributions.

The changes should be read as a package of strategic-level recommendations that, taken together, will address the issues highlighted in the findings to reduce proliferation and prevent unnecessary duplication. The Government is signalling a period of active change management in this area because it wants a simplified tertiary education system for the learner, industry and providers as soon as possible. Some proposals will have an immediate impact, while others will take effect over time. The changes represent a shift to a truly outcomes-based qualifications system.

These are the proposed changes.

1. Develop a unified New Zealand qualifications framework.
2. Require the use of existing quality assured qualifications and change the design rules for National (standards-based) and New Zealand (course-based) qualifications to allow for more inclusion of local components.
3. Require mandatory periodic reviews of qualifications to determine whether they are still fit-for-purpose.
4. Strengthen and standardise qualification outcome statement requirements.
5. Introduce a mandatory pre-development assessment stage for qualification developers.
6. Strengthen recognised industry involvement in qualification development.
7. Provide the public with clear information about whether a qualification is active or inactive, or closed.

Implementation of the changes would start in early 2010 and would be completed in the 2010-11 financial year. The first four changes would have the most immediate impact, resulting in reduced numbers of qualifications. In those fields with the largest number of certificates and diplomas, NZQA and ITP Quality could prioritise reviewing them, strengthening their outcome statements and providing clear information on whether the qualifications are active (for example, tourism, business administration, religious studies and cookery).

A unified New Zealand qualifications framework (change 1) is the integrating strategic device for the package, which also aligns New Zealand's system more directly and simply with international frameworks. Requiring the use of existing quality assured qualifications and giving the qualifications more flexibility (change 2), mandatory periodic reviews (change 3), and strengthening outcome statements (change 4), will increase the uptake of National and New Zealand qualifications, and significantly curtail the growth of new provider qualifications.

The package of changes will require NZQA to redesign and redevelop the policies and criteria for the unified New Zealand Qualifications Framework, and NZQA and ITP Quality will need to revisit their guidelines and processes. Qualification developers will also have to change their design and development processes. There will be changes in

what NZQA and ITP Quality will require of qualification developers in terms of design, development and review. The change for learners and employers will be a simple and straightforward qualifications system with improved qualifications pathways.

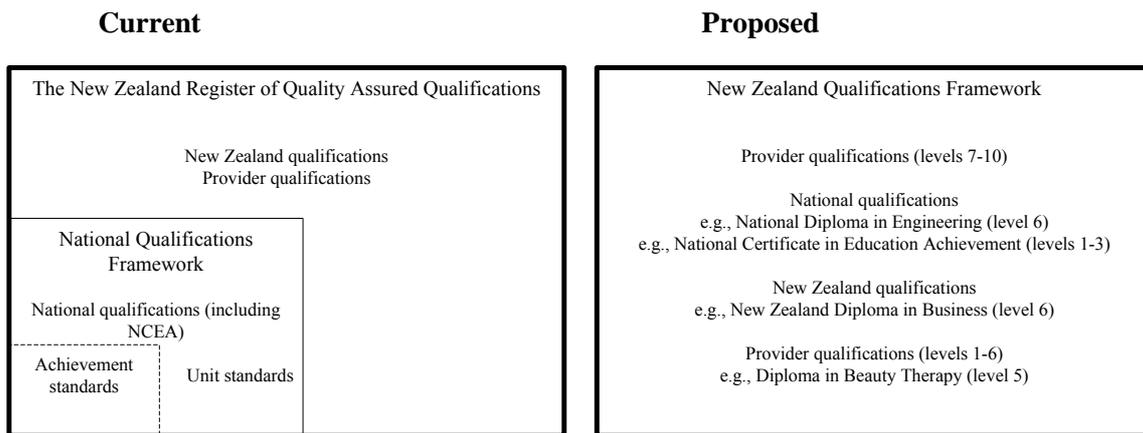
Below we look at each of the seven proposed changes in more detail.

Change 1: Develop a unified New Zealand qualifications framework

The current system is to some extent driven by the structure of the qualifications within it rather than being a unified, outcomes-focused framework. The current Register would be renamed the “New Zealand Qualifications Framework”. The New Zealand Qualifications Framework would align New Zealand with current international qualifications framework developments and naming conventions¹². The National Qualifications Framework would no longer exist in its own right and would be replaced by a New Zealand standards database of unit and achievement standards.

As a result, all quality assured qualifications would exist within one simple overarching structure. This is not currently the case. Part of the rationale for this change is to allow providers to achieve outcomes in the best possible way for the learner, moving away from the need to prescribe how the outcomes are delivered and assessed.

Figure 1: A comparison between the current system and a unified New Zealand Qualifications Framework



NZQA would redevelop the system infrastructure to support the unified framework, including the information systems, and re-brand the current Register. Education and other government agencies (Ministry of Social Development, Immigration New Zealand, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission and Career Services) would be engaged in the information systems change. This would be supported by current work by agencies to facilitate a single education information architecture. The New Zealand Qualifications Framework would be the single source of information for New Zealand qualifications, and this information would be transparently available to the public as well as consistently shared among government agencies.

The costs associated with this change would include:

- NZQA redeveloping the infrastructure and databases to support a redeveloped unified New Zealand Qualifications Framework
- re-branding and new publications for NZQA
- incorporating new branding in other agencies’ and organisations’ publications.

Questions

- 1-1 *To what extent do you support a unified outcomes-based qualifications framework for New Zealand? Please provide reasons for your answer.*
- 1-2 *How easy would it be for learners, employers and people from overseas to understand the proposed New Zealand Qualifications Framework, compared with the present Register and National Qualifications Framework?*
- 1-3 *To what extent would the proposed New Zealand Qualifications Framework make the relationships between qualifications clearer, compared with the current framework?*
- 1-4 *What other alternatives or improvements to the proposed New Zealand Qualifications Framework do you think could improve the clarity and user-friendliness of the system?*

Change 2: Require the use of existing quality assured qualifications and change the design rules for National (standards-based) and New Zealand (course-based) qualifications to allow for more inclusion of local components

This change is designed to prevent the proliferation of existing and new provider (local) qualifications where they unnecessarily duplicate existing qualifications, and to encourage the development, revision and use of National and New Zealand qualifications.

NZQA rules on qualification development would change to require developers to utilise existing qualifications that are already quality assured, unless a developer can show there is a legitimate and strong need for a new qualification. Compelling evidence of demand and recognised industry or professional body endorsement would be required by NZQA and ITP Quality. This information would be assessed at the pre-development assessment stage with the aim of avoiding costly development and then rejection later.

Current National certificates and diplomas and New Zealand diplomas better support standardised learner staircasing to further education and training¹³. Government preference is for qualifications that are of national standing. Only National qualifications are required to have industry-wide endorsement built into their development and review. However, industry training organisations and other standard-setting bodies have said they want more flexibility in how National qualifications are designed. Change 1 proposes developing a unified New Zealand qualifications framework. A unified outcomes-based qualifications framework would work best if the current requirements that National qualifications must be standards-based and have no local components were removed.

To encourage the use of National (standards-based) and New Zealand (course-based) qualifications by providers, NZQA requirements for the design of National and New Zealand qualifications would also need to change to enable more flexibility in how the learning takes place. One possibility is that National and New Zealand qualifications could contain up to 30 percent of local components to allow for distinctive or local contributions. An alternative would be to develop principles to judge the appropriateness

of local components, including the match between the local components and the qualification outcome statements. For National qualifications, in particular, this would allow local components to be embedded within the qualifications, whereas at present the system encourages the opposite; that is, National qualifications are often embedded within provider (local) qualifications.

This would give National qualifications the same degree of flexibility that provider qualifications currently enjoy, and the Government's expectation that National qualifications are preferred for industry training would still be satisfied. Increased collaborative arrangements between qualification developers would be expected.

The costs associated with this change would include NZQA introducing new qualifications design requirements and new qualification design processes for all developers (especially standard-setting bodies). There would be intellectual property and possible licensing considerations with this change, and NZQA will look at how the United Kingdom and Australia deal with this matter.

The key impacts would be a reduction in the proliferation of new qualifications, an uptake in the use of existing New Zealand and National qualifications and reduced numbers of provider qualifications that duplicate National and New Zealand qualifications. A positive spin-off is the likely increase in collaboration and use of consortia to develop new New Zealand or provider (local) qualifications that would meet the new requirements.

Questions

2-1 *To what extent do you support NZQA requiring the use of existing quality assured qualifications? Please provide reasons for your answer.*

2-2 *What impacts would this change have on qualification developers?*

2-3 *One option to increase the flexibility of National and New Zealand qualifications is to allow local components, by either:*

- *setting a percentage range within which local components could most usefully be added (e.g. 30 percent); or*
- *establishing principles for developers and standard setting bodies to determine the appropriateness of local components*

Which option do you prefer and why?

2-4 *What else should be taken into account when applying the requirement to use existing qualifications?*

Change 3: Require mandatory periodic reviews of qualifications to determine whether they are still fit-for-purpose

NZQA and ITP Quality would undertake an initial review of areas where the research indicates there are a relatively large number of qualifications (tourism, business administration, religious studies and sport) and areas of key economic importance, including trades qualifications. Providers would give NZQA information on the level of demand for and evidence of sector endorsement for the qualifications. NZQA and ITP

Quality would then assess whether the qualification represents unnecessary duplication (whether another qualification exists with similar outcomes).

If there is no demand or sector (industry, community, Māori) endorsement, NZQA would direct the owner to close the qualification. Providers would need to change their investment plans with the Tertiary Education Commission and the Tertiary Education Commission would stop any funding for the qualification.

The status of the qualification would change on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Unused (inactive) qualifications that were closed could immediately move to the closed section on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Those qualifications with learners still enrolled would require some time for the learners to exit from the qualification.

The costs associated with this change would include:

- NZQA developing new policy and requirements
- new processes for NZQA and ITP Quality
- an exit strategy for already enrolled learners.

Development costs for qualifications are high and there is little incentive to withdraw unused qualifications. The introduction of inactive and closed categories would help to mitigate this disincentive. NZQA and ITP Quality would carry out periodic reviews of qualifications to ensure qualifications are fit-for-purpose. 'Active' would mean those qualifications currently offered by providers; 'inactive' would mean those qualifications that are currently not offered but may be in the future; 'closed' would mean those qualifications that will never be offered again.

The fit-for-purpose test would require reliable, accurate and timely information on the demand for and relevance of the qualification. The new evaluative approach to quality assurance could also inform these reviews. Introducing an accreditation review process may also be considered.

Mandatory reviews fit well with the quality assurance of tertiary education organisations, where individual qualifications will be sampled as part of the external evaluation and review process. External evaluation and review findings could be used to inform a review, or even constitute a review, of a specific qualification. The last reviewed date could appear on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework as a public indication.

As noted above, the mandatory reviews of qualifications could target the areas where the largest number of certificates and diplomas exist and those of key economic importance, including trades qualifications. This would mean targeting:

- tourism studies (96 certificates, 27 diplomas)
- business management (73 certificates, 53 diplomas)
- religious studies (57 certificates, 40 diplomas)
- sports, coaching, playing, officiating and instructing (58 certificates, 21 diplomas)
- trades qualifications.

The key impact would be to reduce unnecessary duplication and have only relevant qualifications on the New Zealand Qualification Framework over time.

Questions

- 3-1 *To what extent do you support the introduction of mandatory periodic reviews of qualifications to determine whether they are still fit-for-purpose? Please provide reasons for your answer.*
- 3-2 *What impacts do you think this change will have on qualification developers?*
- 3-3 *How should timeframes for reviews be determined (e.g., annual, or every three to five years)?*
- 3-4 *Do you have any other suggestions for how a qualification remains fit-for-purpose and how this could be shown?*
- 3-5 *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that provider accreditation should be subject to mandatory periodic review?*

Change 4: Strengthen and standardise qualification outcome statement requirements

All qualifications contain outcome statements, which help potential learners and employers to make decisions. Current outcome statements at levels 1 to 6 are not as clear or consistent as they could be and as a result are less useful.

Outcome statements should describe the three key areas of learning outcomes:

- a clear profile of the skills, knowledge and overall capabilities of the qualification holder
- employment pathways
- education pathways.

Although skills and knowledge and employment pathways are generally clear within the outcome statements of individual qualifications, the education pathways component is either unclear or evidence is lacking¹⁴. This has contributed to situations where learners have difficulty selecting qualifications that will allow them to pursue their educational or employment goals, and makes the transition between qualifications or providers difficult. Strengthened outcome statements would address both these concerns and would align with international developments focussing on outcomes¹⁵.

NZQA would require qualification owners to rewrite outcome statements so that they have a comprehensive and consistent profile of the qualification holder, by clearly describing their specific skills, knowledge and overall capabilities that will endure as a person moves from one area of speciality to another.

A stronger statement of both generic and specific skills would facilitate the embedding of local/provider components within National and New Zealand qualifications as highlighted in Change 2. The extent to which local components match the profile of skills, knowledge and capabilities could determine their suitability for integration in National qualifications. Components of National qualifications could be substituted by local ones, if they clearly contributed towards the profile.

Outcome statements would also include strengthened descriptions of the employment and education opportunities gained from completing a qualification. Particular attention will be paid to improving the clarity of education pathways within these statements, which is a current and significant weakness.

NZQA and ITP Quality would require qualification owners to prioritise redrafting the outcome statements of active qualifications, and they would have one year to comply. This process could be further targeted by initially focussing on those qualifications with the most enrolments and areas that are key to economic development, including trades qualifications. The work would be supported by the mandatory fit-for-purpose reviews of qualifications that would be conducted by NZQA and ITP Quality.

For qualifications to maintain an inactive status on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, they would be required to have comprehensive outcome statements within one year. This time-bound requirement would not be expected of owners of already closed qualifications, but in order for a qualification to be on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework it must have an appropriate outcome statement.

One option would be for standard setting bodies to work with providers to manage the incorporation of local components into the framework, once the strengthened outcome statements were developed.

The costs associated with strengthening outcome statements would include:

- NZQA (and ITP Quality) needing to update qualification databases to include the revised information and make this information available to learners and employers
- time required for rewriting qualifications that currently have inadequate descriptions, which may be time consuming for some qualification owners.

The impact would be that all qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework would provide the learner with clear and comprehensive information on the specific skills and knowledge and generic capabilities of the qualification holder and the education and employment opportunities gained from a qualification.

Questions

- 4-1 *To what extent do you support the change to strengthen and standardise qualification outcome statement requirements? Please provide reasons for your answer.*
- 4-2 *How could the system determine the suitability of local components in a National qualification? One option is by reference to strengthened outcomes statements and the qualification holder (graduate) profile.*
- 4-3 *Is there any other content (additional to skills, knowledge and capabilities, and education and employment pathways) that you would like to see included in outcome statements? Please give details.*

Change 5: Introduce a mandatory pre-development assessment stage for qualification developers

Similar to the model used by the state of Victoria in Australia, NZQA would develop a process for qualification developers to meet. The qualification developer would need to

complete an application form that requires information on the learning outcomes, title, level, and endorsement from the relevant recognised sector group(s).

There would be costs associated with the new requirement and process for quality assurance bodies and the new, additional, step for qualification developers, along with any potential lost ‘time to market’ resulting from NZQA or ITP Quality undertaking the pre-development assessment.

A pre-development assessment would introduce a new approvals step for developers to ensure the proposed qualification does not unnecessarily duplicate existing qualifications. Qualification development processes can be expensive and time consuming¹⁶, and so NZQA and ITP Quality would confirm to a developer that no qualification already exists with the same outcomes. Recognised endorsement could be required at the pre-development assessment stage of the qualifications development process.

Some duplication will always be desirable to ensure flexibility and portability of education and training, and so exactly what would be considered valid duplication would need to be agreed. The cost of NZQA or ITP Quality considering a proposal would be met by the qualification developer, but this cost would be offset by the savings associated with not developing a qualification unnecessarily. Eventually the process could be largely automated¹⁷.

Industry training organisations or the Tertiary Education Commission could have a role facilitating and encouraging industry training organisations, polytechnics, wānanga and private training establishments to use existing National, New Zealand and provider qualifications.

Questions

5-1 *To what extent do you support the introduction of a mandatory pre-development assessment stage for qualification developers before development commences? Please provide reasons for your answer.*

5-2 *Do you have any other suggestions to reduce qualification duplication besides a pre-assessment stage?*

5-3 *Please provide any additional comments about change five.*

Change 6: Strengthen recognised industry involvement in qualification development

Providers are currently required to seek and provide evidence of relevant sector involvement and endorsement. NZQA and ITP Quality would ask to see this evidence of sector endorsement as part of the pre-development assessment, qualifications approval process and mandatory reviews. It will be important to clarify who the recognised sector or professional groups are for each industry or other area of interest.

The burden of this requirement rests largely with the provider. Industry training organisations are the bodies established by the industry and recognised by government under the Industry Training Act 1992, with statutory responsibility for setting standards and developing National qualifications for industry and vocational education and training in New Zealand. Where there is no relevant industry training organisation, NZQA would

describe the characteristics of the appropriate academic, professional or community group(s) to fulfil this role.

Although there is an existing requirement for industry endorsement, a higher hurdle would likely see a higher cost to the developer in obtaining and maintaining that endorsement. NZQA and ITP Quality costs would be confined to the development of new policies and procedures to deliver the requirement appropriately. This change would mean that any qualification being developed must meet a fit-for-purpose test through effective industry or professional body input into its design and content. It would also build in the involvement of iwi/Māori and relevant community groups, as appropriate.

Qualifications would have better portability because they would be developed with involvement from recognised industry and/or other key sector groups in New Zealand. The relationships between qualifications would consequently be clearer to the learner and employer, both nationally and internationally.

This change, when combined with the rest of the package, would further constrain the proliferation of new qualifications and ensure that existing qualifications maintain their relevance. It indirectly supports the move to use existing National and New Zealand qualifications.

Questions

- 6-1 *To what extent do you support the change to strengthen recognised industry involvement in qualification development? Please provide reasons for your answer.*
- 6-2 *How much involvement would you consider adequate and what evidence would you expect for this involvement?*
- 6-3 *Do you have any suggested alternatives to improve the relevance of qualifications?*

Change 7: Provide the public with clear information about whether a qualification is active, inactive or closed

Around 70 percent of the qualifications currently on the Register are active. This change is designed to allow the public to see which qualifications are currently accepting enrolments.

NZQA would redesign the KiwiQuals website and the underpinning information systems to show the three new views of the New Zealand Qualification Framework based on the three different statuses of qualifications. It is suggested that providers would inform NZQA of the status of the qualifications annually when they provide enrolment data.

It is suggested that qualifications would be assigned to three groups:

- active – those qualifications currently offered by providers
- inactive – those qualifications that are currently not being offered but may be in the future¹⁸
- closed – those qualifications that will never be offered again.

Having inactive and closed qualification categories placed in their own dedicated areas would mean that unused qualifications, or those that are temporarily not accepting enrolments, do not clutter the active view but are not lost to the system. This is important given the costs of qualification development and approval. Having a dedicated area where closed qualifications can be seen would give graduates and employers reassurance that a qualification that is no longer offered is nevertheless an approved and quality assured qualification.

The information could be linked to provider accreditation information providing integrated and dynamic information to the public about qualifications and the providers that can offer them.

The costs associated with this change would include NZQA redesigning its website and the associated information systems, and a new requirement for providers to provide information annually. Development costs for the linked Ministry of Education and Tertiary Education Commission databases would also need to be considered.

The main impact would be that the New Zealand Qualifications Framework could be relied upon as the single source of qualifications information.

Questions

- 7-1 *To what extent do you support the change to provide the public with clear information about whether a qualification is 'active' or 'inactive' or 'closed'? Please provide reasons for your answer.*
- 7-2 *Are there other categories for the status of qualifications that should be available for the public?*

Further practical implications of all the changes, including costs and mechanisms for change are summarised in **Table 2**.

Table 2: The impact of the proposed changes on learners, employers and providers

	Proposed change	Purpose	Mechanisms for change	Costs	Impact
1	Develop a unified New Zealand qualifications framework	To remove confusion because the National Qualifications Framework is a subset of the Register.	This change is the integrating strategic mechanism for the proposed package of change and links to all the other changes.	NZQA would need to redevelop the infrastructure and databases to support a redeveloped, unified New Zealand qualifications framework. It would also require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-branding and new publications for NZQA • incorporating new branding in other agencies and organisations' publications. 	New Zealand would have a more simple and straightforward qualifications system that better meets our international obligations.
2	Require the use of existing quality assured qualifications and change the design rules for National (standards-based) and New Zealand (course-based) qualifications to allow for more inclusion of local components	To prevent the proliferation of new provider (local) qualifications where they unnecessarily duplicate existing quality assured qualifications, and to encourage the development and revision of National and New Zealand qualifications.	The change will allow improved flexibility and more comprehensive outcome information. One option is to change rules for National qualifications to allow up to 30 percent local components.	NZQA will need to introduce new qualification design requirements. New qualification design processes for all developers (especially standard-setting bodies) will be required. Learners still enrolled in the qualifications that will shift to inactive would need an exit strategy, which would be the responsibility of the provider.	A New Zealand qualifications framework with relevant, easily understood qualifications with clear outcomes and opportunities to progress. Only necessary qualifications that meet a recognised need will exist on the unified New Zealand qualifications framework (refer to changes 1, 3, 5 and 6).

	Proposed change	Purpose	Mechanisms for change	Costs	Impact
3	Require mandatory periodic reviews of qualifications to determine whether they are still fit-for-purpose	To improve relevance and reduce proliferation and unnecessary duplication	Unused, no-longer-relevant qualifications will be withdrawn and existing quality assured, industry-endorsed qualifications on the unified New Zealand qualifications framework will be used, which clearly convey the skills and knowledge and the education and employment opportunities to be gained (refer to changes 1, 2, 4 and 6).	NZQA would develop new policy and requirements. There would need to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new process for NZQA and ITP Quality • new qualification design processes for all developers. <p>Already enrolled learners would need an exit strategy.</p>	Reduced unnecessary duplication in the short term and only relevant qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework over time.
4	Strengthen and standardise qualification outcome statement requirements	Current outcome statements at levels 1 to 6 are not as clear or consistent as they could be and as a result have lower utility.	All active qualifications on the unified New Zealand qualifications framework would clearly communicate the skills and knowledge and overall capabilities of the qualification holder (graduate), education and employment opportunities to be gained (refer to changes 1, 2 and 3).	NZQA will need to update qualification databases to include the revised information and consider how this information is made available to learners and employers. Qualifications that currently have inadequate descriptions will need rewriting. Providers will be required to more clearly and publicly outline the outcomes expected from a qualification.	All qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework will provide the learner and employer with clear and comprehensive information on the skills and knowledge and education and employment opportunities. Links to the inclusion of local components in National qualifications by providing a clear description of the specific and generic skills and knowledge of the qualification holder (graduate).

	Proposed change	Purpose	Mechanisms for change	Costs	Impact
5	Introduce a mandatory pre-development assessment stage for qualification developers	To reduce the number of new qualifications (proliferation and unnecessary duplication)	Only qualifications for which there is ongoing evidence for demand, and with comprehensive information on the benefits to be gained from study or training, will be allowed to be developed to go on the unified New Zealand Qualifications Framework (refer to changes 1, 2, 4 and 6).	This would involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new process for quality assurance bodies • a new step for qualification developers. 	A New Zealand qualifications framework with only relevant qualifications
6	Strengthen recognised industry involvement in qualification development	To ensure relevance, by allowing for discussion between developers, employers and industry	Only existing qualifications with industry endorsement will continue to be active on the unified New Zealand Qualifications Framework (refer to changes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).	This would involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new process for NZQA and ITP Quality • a new requirement that developers must provide evidence to NZQA and ITP Quality. 	Combined with the rest of the package, strengthened industry involvement will further constrain the proliferation of new qualifications and will ensure existing qualifications maintain their relevance.
7	Provide the public with clear information about whether a qualification is active, inactive or closed	Around 70 percent of the qualifications currently on the Register are active. This change is designed to allow the public to see which qualifications are currently accepting enrolments.	Review of all qualifications on the Register to determine current level of activity. Only qualifications that clearly indicate current usage will be designated as 'active'.	NZQA will need to redesign its website and the associated information systems. There will be a new requirement for providers to provide information annually.	The New Zealand Qualifications Framework, which would clearly show available qualifications, could be relied upon as the single source of qualifications information. Links to other changes by providing accurate information on the status of qualifications to inform reviews and pre-development assessment decisions.

Appendix: Drivers of proliferation and duplication

Identifying significant changes to qualifications¹⁹

All significant changes to qualifications require funding approval from the Tertiary Education Commission if continued funding is sought. Significant changes to a qualification include changes to the equivalent full-time student (EFTS) value of a qualification, which may result from a change in the credit value, or a change in the number of teaching weeks or learning hours. However, if the change in EFTS value is the result of a revision to a unit standard, then the tertiary education organisation does not require re-approval from an external quality assurance body.

In relation to total credits in the qualification, when a tertiary education organisation adds additional credits to a National qualification, a variance of less than 5 percent over the credit value (the maximum number of credits in the case of a variable credit qualification) is acceptable. Additional credits will not raise the EFTS value of a National qualification. A variance of more than 5 percent over the maximum number of credits to a National qualification changes it to a provider (local) qualification.

Any reduction in the number of credits in a National qualification changes it to a local qualification. If this occurs, tertiary education organisations require full approval and accreditation.

Course title²⁰

NZQA requires that “Where a course [qualification] contains National Qualifications Framework unit standards and the credits exceed the credit requirements for a National qualification by more than 5 percent, the title of the course and the resulting qualification must be different to that of the National qualification. In this case, the National qualification is embedded in the course”.

Overlapping provision of industry training²¹

For industry training, overlapping provision occurs when polytechnics and private training establishments provide industry training that is comparable to the arrangements managed by industry training organisations. There are currently major differences in the government subsidy rates and regulations for industry training organisations, polytechnics and private training establishments when providing or arranging industry training for people in employment. The Minister for Tertiary Education has authorised the Tertiary Education Commission to develop a consistent regulatory framework and new subsidy rates.

Glossary²²

Course (of study)	A course (of study) as an approved course that is a coherent learning or training programme that is based on clear and consistent aims, content, outcomes and assessment practices.
Credit recognition	A process through which credits from one qualification are recognised for another qualification but where the credits are not included within the whole system of the second qualification (i.e., the credits count for a specified qualification only, not all qualifications in a system). Also known as credit exemption or credit inclusion.
Credit transfer	The granting of credit towards a qualification on the basis of credit already earned in another qualification. Credits have to be recognised before they are transferred. See also <i>credit recognition</i> .
National qualification	A combination of credits from assessment against National standards, as determined by a national standard setting body (e.g., National Diploma in Engineering, level 6). They are established by a recognised national standard setting body (such as industry training organisations, NZQA and the Ministry of Education) and are available to all organisations accredited by the relevant quality assurance body.
New Zealand qualification	Qualifications of national standing that are not based on credits from standards on the current National Qualifications Framework (e.g., New Zealand Diploma in Engineering, level 6).
New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications	Commonly known as “the Register”, this is a list of all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand. The Register has 10 levels and comprises qualifications that are registered in accordance with an agreed set of title definitions.
Provider	An individual or organisation supplying education and/or training and/or assessment services. Providers include schools, polytechnics, colleges of education, private training establishments, government training establishments, wānanga and workplaces.
Provider qualification	Any qualification developed by a local provider(s), which could be based on standards determined by a standard-setting body or by courses that correspond to level descriptors on the current Register, or a combination of the two (e.g., Diploma in Beauty Therapy, level 5).
Qualification	A qualification has requirements for certification established by a recognised standard setting body or an education provider.

Qualification developer	An organisation that develops qualifications that are submitted for approval to a quality assurance body. The development process must involve and have the support of the appropriately recognised expert bodies related to the subject title and major content of the qualification.
Quality assurance body	A quality assurance body has legislated or delegated authority for quality assurance functions. Such organisations include the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality of the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics New Zealand.
Standard setting bodies	A collective term that covers industry training organisations, NZQA (National Qualifications Service and Māori Qualifications Service) and Ministry of Education. These organisations are recognised by NZQA as nationally representative of experts in a particular field for the purposes of establishing standards for National qualifications.
Unit standard	A nationally registered, coherent set of learning outcomes and associated performance criteria, together with technical and management information, that supports delivery and assessment. All unit standards are registered on the National Qualifications Framework, assigned a level and a credit value, and may contribute to the award of a National certificate or diploma.

Further reading

- Bourke, N. (2009) *Certificates and diplomas in New Zealand: A description of approval, accreditation and registration processes*, Wellington: NZQA
- NZQA (June, 2009) *Statement of Intent 2009 – 2012*, Wellington: Author
- NZQA (August, 2007), Glossary [online], retrieved 8 June 2009 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about/glossary/e/index.html>
- Vermillion Peirce, P. (2009) *The number of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA
- Vermillion Peirce, P., Baldwin, K., Parker, S. and Long, A. (2009) *Qualification Developers' Experiences of Certificates and Diplomas in the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications [Draft]*, Wellington: NZQA
- Vermillion Peirce, P. & Grice, J. (2009) *The clarity of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA
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- Vermillion Peirce, P. & Parker, S. (2009) *Employers' opinions of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA

Endnotes

¹ NZQA (June, 2009) *Statement of Intent 2009 – 2012*, Wellington: Author

² Vermillion Peirce, P. & Parker, S. (2009) *The Currency of Certificates and Diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA, p. 8-9, and Vermillion Peirce, P. & Parker, S. (2009) *Employers Opinions of Certificates and Diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA, p. 17.

³ Vermillion Peirce, P., Baldwin, K., Parker, S. & Long, A. (2009) *Qualification Developers' Experiences of Certificates and Diplomas in the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications [Draft]*, Wellington: NZQA, p. 17.

⁴ Vermillion Peirce, P. & Parker, S. (2009) *Employers Opinions of Certificates and Diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA, p. 15.

⁵ Vermillion Peirce, P. & Parker, S. (2009) *Employers Opinions of Certificates and Diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, p16, and initial impressions from two learners focus groups (in forthcoming Parker, S. & Long, A. (2009) *Learners' experiences of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA).

⁶ NZVCC's Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) has the responsibility of quality assuring new or changed qualifications developed by universities.

⁷ Vermillion Peirce, P., Baldwin, K., Parker, S. & Long, A. (2009) *Qualification Developers' Experiences of Certificates and Diplomas in the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications [Draft]*, Wellington: NZQA, p. 38.

⁸ Vermillion Peirce, P. & Grice, S. (2009) *The Clarity of Certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, p. 14.

⁹ Vermillion Peirce, P. & Parker, S. (2009) *Employers Opinions of Certificates and Diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA, p. 16, and forthcoming Parker, S. & Long, A. (2009) *Learners' experiences of certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, Wellington: NZQA.

¹⁰ Vermillion Peirce, P., Baldwin, K., Parker, S. & Long, A. (2009) *Qualification Developers' Experiences of Certificates and Diplomas in the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications [Draft]*, Wellington: NZQA, p. 21-24 and p. 38-39.

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- ¹¹ Vermillion Peirce, P., Baldwin, K., Parker, S. & Long, A. (2009) *Qualification Developers' Experiences of Certificates and Diplomas in the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications* [Draft], Wellington: NZQA, p. 38.
- ¹² Vermillion Peirce, P. & Grice, S. (2009) *The Clarity of Certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, p. 12 and p. 14., and European Qualifications Framework
- ¹³ Kingsbury, N. (2006) *Report of Tertiary Education Commission Strategic Review of Pathways and Staircasing*, Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission, p. 132.
- ¹⁴ Vermillion Peirce, P. & Grice, S. (2009) *The Clarity of Certificates and diplomas on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*, p. 12 and p. 14.
- ¹⁵ European Qualifications Framework
- ¹⁶ Vermillion Peirce, P., Baldwin, K., Parker, S. & Long, A. (2009) *Qualification Developers' Experiences of Certificates and Diplomas in the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications* [Draft], Wellington: NZQA, p. 37-39.
- ¹⁷ TEC QualCheck was developed on the premise that it was desirable for tertiary education organisations (TEOs) to know whether the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) would fund a qualification, on a strategic relevance basis, before the TEO had expended resources developing it and getting it approved by the relevant quality assurance body. In order to reduce compliance costs and to ensure greater accountability at a TEO level, TEOs are now responsible for ensuring market relevance of qualifications. Consequently, NZQA and the TEC require TEOs to have robust systems of stakeholder engagement to determine relevance. To assist TEOs in self-assessing relevance, the TEC has made available a user-equivalent of a previously internal assessment tool that incorporates appropriate questions from TEC QualCheck and other appropriate questions.
- ¹⁸ Inactive needs to include qualifications that are in phase-out mode. That is qualifications that have students finishing off and will not be offered again after the last student completes. This is a significant number.
- ¹⁹ Tertiary Education Commission (n.d.) Approving applications for funding, retrieved 12 September 2009 from <http://www.tec.govt.nz/templates/standard.aspx?id=2952>.
- ²⁰ NZQA (2003, 2008) Criteria, requirements and guidelines for course approval and accreditation, retrieved 12 September 2009 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/applications/docs/caa-guidelines.doc>, p. 14.
- ²¹ Tertiary Education Commission (2009) Overlapping provision consultation, retrieved 12 September 2009 from <http://www.tec.govt.nz/templates/NewsItem.aspx?id=5956>.
- ²² NZQA (August, 2007), Glossary [online], retrieved 8 June 2009 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about/glossary/e/index.html>.