

Briefing: Introduction of a fee waiver for reconsideration applications for students who meet financial assistance criteria

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Purpose

1. This briefing note updates you on the introduction of a fee waiver for applications for reconsideration of externally assessed grades by students who meet financial assistance criteria.
2. This fee waiver is being introduced alongside other changes arising from the NCEA Review aimed at reducing barriers for students participating in NCEA.

Background

3. Following NCEA results release and the return of answer booklets to students in January each year, students can apply for a reconsideration of their grade if they think their answer booklet has not been assessed (or 'marked') correctly.
4. A reconsideration involves reassessing all answers in the answer booklet using the original assessment schedule, effectively re-marking it.
5. Students apply directly to NZQA for a reconsideration via our secure learner web portal (their school is not involved). They are then directed to pay the fee (\$20.40 per standard for NCEA, \$30.70 per standard for Scholarship).
6. Where a reconsideration leads to a change in grade, the reconsideration fee is refunded. Grades are only changed if the re-mark results in an improvement to the original grade.
7. Reconsideration fees are likely to be a barrier to applying for a reconsideration for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Introducing a fee waiver process will increase access to reconsiderations for those students who meet financial assistance criteria.
8. In 2018, there were 924,267 externally-assessed results processed. NZQA received 8,435 NCEA reconsideration applications, and 329 Scholarship reconsideration applications.

Discussion

9. NZQA will be introducing a fee waiver for any 2019 reconsideration applications received from students who meet financial assistance criteria. The reconsideration fee will be waived for students whose parent or guardian (or a person with relevant care responsibilities) is receiving a Work and Income or Study Link benefit or where the joint

family income would entitle the family to receive a community services card (as set annually by the Ministry of Social Development). These are the same entitlement criteria used in the prior years for students to qualify for financial assistance towards NCEA fees owed.

10. From January 2020 onwards, when a student qualifying for a fee waiver applies to NZQA for a reconsideration online, they will be advised of the fee waiver process and directed to complete a short form including a declaration if they qualify. The process will be accessible and straightforward for learners.
11. Although it is difficult to model the impact of introducing the fee waiver, NZQA expects that reconsideration applications will increase by no more than 2,500 (30%) as a result of this initiative. This increase is manageable within current resourcing and marker allocations.
12. NZQA is not proposing to remove the fee for reconsideration applications altogether, just for those students for whom the upfront fee is a barrier to accessing a reconsideration. The fee helps to ensure that students seek a reconsideration only when there are reasonable grounds to do so and not as a matter of course. Reconsideration application processing and marker involvement in remarking incur costs, and it is therefore important that the process is used appropriately. Moreover, NZQA is mindful that the markers undertaking the reconsideration process for NZQA are also teachers with in-school responsibilities during the very busy first few weeks of the first school term.
13. The Ministry of Education has been consulted and is supportive of this change.

Next steps

14. NZQA will be advising all senior secondary schools with NCEA candidates of the change at the end of October 2019 using NZQA's communication channels with Principal's Nominees and Principals.
15. NZQA will be updating its website and secure learner portal with advice directly aimed at learners about the change and the fee waiver process.
16. Information will be included in our general media communications prior to and following the release of results.



Karen Poutasi (Dr)
Chief Executive, NZQA

23 October 2019

NOTED/AGREED

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for Education

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