

## **New Zealand Qualifications Authority and Malaysian Qualifications Agency Joint Statement on the Recognition of Bachelor Degrees**

### ***Overall Judgement***

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) Level 7 Bachelor degree and the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) Level 6 Bachelor degree are comparable. The NZQF and MQF, and their quality assurance systems are compatible with regard to Bachelor degree qualifications<sup>1</sup>.

The NZQF and MQF are unified and coherent frameworks. There are clear similarities in the way the NZQF and MQF describe learning outcomes, and the definitions and purpose of the Bachelor degrees are based on similar concepts. Both frameworks operate similar robust and transparent entry and quality assurance systems.

The NZQF and MQF share core design features. Both frameworks:

- are national qualification frameworks that operate under statutory governance for the development and maintenance of qualifications
- are unified single frameworks that are coherent
- maintain a comprehensive list of all quality assured qualifications
- describe learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skill and attributes of graduates/applications of learning
- enable and support the provision of high quality education and employment pathways
- include all forms of learning, whether acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning
- define level descriptors, distinct qualification types, and credit values
- operate quality assurance arrangements that are based on set criteria and procedures.

### ***Project undertaken in context of New Zealand–Malaysia Free Trade Agreement***

The Recognition of Bachelor Degrees project (the project) contributes to New Zealand Qualifications Authority–Malaysian Qualifications Agency (NZQA–MQA) obligations under Article 8.9 (7) of the NZMFTA and Paragraph II 1 (e) of the Memorandum of Co-operation (MoC) that was signed between MQA and NZQA on the 14 April 2011.

This project is the first deliverable in the commitment to the MoC and encourages and promotes technical co-operation that is mutually beneficial to both NZQA and MQA.

NZQA and MQA have joint reporting requirements under the New Zealand–Malaysia Free Trade Agreement and will report on the progress and outcomes of this project to the Joint Commission.

### ***Purpose of project***

The purpose of the project is to recognise Bachelor degrees based on the compatibility of the NZQF and the MQF and the quality assurance practices as well as the equivalency<sup>2</sup> of qualifications.

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<sup>1</sup> Qualifications that are required to meet regulated occupational standards for the purpose of practice are excluded

<sup>2</sup> Equivalency is understood by both participants to mean broad comparability of qualifications

## **Process**

NZQA and MQA worked collaboratively to meet project milestones, deliverables, and outcomes in accordance to the Terms of Reference and Project Plan. NZQA and MQA shared necessary policy and technical information on their systems. This information was provided to the international expert.

The International expert provided comment and advice on the draft documents as they were developed, with a focus on the:

- suitability of the criteria and methodology developed for the project
- the way in which NZQA and MQA addressed the criteria and methodology
- conclusions reached by NZQA and MQA regarding the compatibility of the NZQF and MQF bachelor degrees.

NZQA and MQA were responsible for consulting with their own national sectors on the project. For NZQA this included consultation with the New Zealand Advisory Group made up of peak body representatives. MQA consulted the Council of MQA, which represents the interest of different higher education and training sectors as well as the industry and professional bodies.

## **Methodology**

The project adapted well accepted international criteria: adapting criteria and procedures from those used by Bologna Process member states when verifying the compatibility of their national qualifications frameworks with the European Higher Education Area framework (Bologna Framework).

The responses to each criterion included conclusions and judgements of comparability. Criteria 1, 2, 3 and 5 compare legal requirements, policies and procedures, and the quality assurance arrangements of NZQA and MQA. A rigorous analysis by NZQA and MQA on each other's systems, and the concepts that they are based on, led to judgments of 'similar' for these criteria.

NZQA and MQA's joint response to Criterion 4 included the comparison of the NZQF Level 7 Bachelor degree, and MQF Level 6 Bachelors degree. The Bachelor's degrees were compared through an extensive analysis of the level descriptors, qualification definition and purpose, and learning outcomes. This included consideration of the broad concepts that underpin these. Each was compared by analysing the concepts, purposes and outcomes along a scale of similarity. This 'best fit' approach is consistent with the Bologna Process. The non-outcomes criteria, entry and credit requirements, and progression opportunities were analysed using a judgement of 'Similar' or 'Substantial Difference'. This aligns with the language used for non-outcomes criteria of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (that of similarity or difference).

Differences were noted, for example in credit allocation, but both parties agreed that these differences were not substantial enough to affect the overall comparability.

### **Conclusion**

NZQA and MQA agreed that the Bachelor's degrees were comparable and the NZQF and MQF and their quality assurance systems are compatible with regard to Bachelor degree qualifications.

*Criterion 1:* Both NZQA and MQA are the bodies responsible for the New Zealand Qualifications Framework and Malaysian Qualifications Framework respectively, having a clear mandate to develop and maintain their respective national qualifications framework.

*Criterion 2:* The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the New Zealand Qualifications Framework and the Malaysian Qualifications Register are transparent.

*Criterion 3:* The New Zealand Qualifications Framework and the Malaysian Qualifications Framework are based on learning outcomes and the formulae of credit allocation is comparable.

*Criterion 4:* The New Zealand Qualifications Framework and the Malaysian Qualifications Framework demonstrate links between level descriptors, qualification definitions for Bachelor degrees and non-outcomes features (e.g. the entry and credit requirements and the progression opportunities).

*Criterion 5:* The New Zealand Qualifications Framework and Malaysian Qualifications Framework operate national, and on-going, quality assurance systems that are robustly similar, providing public confidence in the programmes and qualifications in higher education.

### **Publication of Joint Statement**

This joint statement has been agreed by NZQA and MQA as a report on the result of the project. It will be communicated to the higher education sectors and relevant authorities in New Zealand and Malaysia, referenced in relevant publications and disseminated appropriately. The joint statement will also be published in the NZQA and MQA websites.

[[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)]

[[www.mqa.gov.my](http://www.mqa.gov.my)]





**NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY  
AND  
MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS AGENCY**

**JOINT STATEMENT ON THE RECOGNITION OF BACHELOR  
DEGREES**

This Joint Statement is hereby endorsed by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

**Dr. Karen Poutasi**  
Chief Executive  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Date: 8/8/12

**Dato' Dr. Syed Ahmad Hussein**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Malaysian Qualifications Agency

Date: 13/8/12

