



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

QUALIFY FOR THE FUTURE WORLD
KIA NOHO TAKATŪ KI TŌ ĀMUA AO!

Guidelines for programme approval and accreditation of Level 7 diploma programmes for tertiary education organisations other than universities

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Introduction

This document describes the quality assurance processes for tertiary education organisations who seek to provide Level 7 Diploma programmes that allow learners to achieve qualifications listed on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF).

Level 7 diplomas may be listed as New Zealand qualifications. If the intent is to do so, please refer to the *Guidelines for approval of New Zealand qualifications at levels 1–6 for listing on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework*.

These guidelines explain the requirements and information that tertiary education organisations (other than universities) need to apply for:

- **Approval** of programmes of study or industry training leading to a Level 7 Diploma qualification listed on the NZQF
- **Accreditation** of a tertiary education provider to deliver the level 7 programme.

An industry training organisation needs consent to assess against the standards contained in the industry training programme.

Similar to degree and related qualifications, Level 7 diplomas integrate the qualification and the programme. An application for approval needs to include details of the qualification to be listed on the NZQF and the programme of study or industry training.

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi is the name of the Mātauranga Māori quality assurance (MM EQA) criteria that assesses how well, and to what extent, organisations are contributing to education outcomes of ākonga, whānau, hapū, iwi and, where relevant, hāpori Māori and industry stakeholders.

At the heart of Te Hono o Te Kahurangi are six dynamic kaupapa and two MM EQA tools that provide the sector and NZQA with an approach to assess how kaupapa look, act and are fit-for-purpose in an educational context.

The six dynamic kaupapa are:

- Rangatiratanga
- Manaakitanga
- Whanaungatanga
- Kaitiakitanga
- Pukengatanga
- Te Reo Māori.

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) lists qualifications that:

- convey the skills, knowledge and attributes a graduate has gained through the completion of a qualification
- are integrated and coherent
- enable and support high-quality education pathways
- enhance confidence in the quality and international comparability of New Zealand qualifications
- contribute to Māori success in education by recognising and advancing Mātauranga Māori
- represent value for money, are sustainable and robust.

NZQA is responsible for protecting the integrity of New Zealand qualifications listed on the NZQF and is responsible for quality assurance of programmes and the education organisations that provide them.

Quality assurance

NZQA's quality assurance integrates 'front-end' quality assurance with the ongoing self-assessment an education organisation undertakes to assure itself of the quality of the graduate outcomes for its learners and stakeholders.

NZQA uses an evaluative approach to reach judgements on a transparent, robust and credible basis, underpinned by the following principles:

- Strategic and needs-based
- Focused on outcomes
- Quality as a dynamic concept – including ongoing improvement
- Flexibility
- High trust and accountability.

Each education organisation is responsible for demonstrating how graduates will meet qualification requirements and outcomes through a programme of study through its self-assessment processes.

Using the evaluative approach

The decision to approve a programme of study or industry training, or to accredit an education provider, is based on the quality and evidence provided in an application. The application should meet criteria set out in parts 1 and 2 of the *NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018* as well as the *NZQF Qualification Listing and Operational Rules 2012*.

The evaluative methodology enables decisions about quality, value and importance to be reached on a consistent and reliable basis, and requires NZQA to:

- be explicit about the information and evidence on which judgements are made as well as the logic of its interpretation, and
- explain the outcome, including key factors and reasons for the final decision, in a clear, concise manner.

Decision to approve a programme

The decision to approve a programme is made by answering the evaluation question:

How well does the programme design match the needs of learners and relevant stakeholders?

Rubric one (below) sets out the expected levels of performance in relation to the evaluation question for the programme. The definition of ‘good evidence’ is evidence that is:

- relevant to answering the evaluation question
- obtained from more than one source (i.e. is corroborated or triangulated)
- of more than one type (e.g. quantitative and qualitative data)
- making sense in the context of the question.

Rubric one: Criteria for rating answers to the evaluation question to approve a programme of study or industry training leading to a Level 7 diploma

	Criteria
Programme approved	<p>ALL of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good evidence the programme is designed to achieve the strategic purpose and outcomes of the qualification • Good evidence the programme is made up of learning outcomes structured in a coherent way to achieve the qualification outcomes and addresses the relevant needs of learners • Good evidence the programme matches the needs of key stakeholders • No significant gaps or weaknesses in the programme
Programme not approved	<p>ANY of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature, quality and integrity of the information and evidence does not convincingly demonstrate that the programme is designed to achieve the strategic purpose and/or outcomes of the qualification

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient evidence the programme is structured in a coherent way to achieve the qualification outcomes and match the relevant needs of learners • Insufficient evidence the programme matches the needs of key stakeholders • Significant gaps or weaknesses in the programme
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Decision to accredit an education provider

The decision to accredit an education organisation is reached by answering the evaluation question:

To what extent does the education provider have the ongoing capability and resources to support sustained delivery of the approved programme?

Rubric two: Criteria for rating the answers to the evaluation question to accredit an education provider to provide an approved programme of study leading to a Level 7 Diploma

	Criteria
Education organisation accredited	<p>ALL of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good evidence the education organisation has the capability, capacity and resources to provide the programme • Good evidence that the education organisation can manage the impacts of any specific programme requirements • Good evidence of formal arrangements with the programme owner where this is required • No significant gaps or weaknesses in the self-assessment report, and/or the underlying capability and resources of the organisation
Education organisation not accredited	<p>ANY of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient evidence the education organisation has the capability and resources to provide the programme • Insufficient evidence that the education organisation can manage the impacts of any specific programme requirements • Formal arrangements with the programme owner where these are required are insufficient to manage the provision of the programme • Significant gaps or weaknesses in the self-assessment report, and/or the underlying capability and resources of the organisation

Approving a Level 7 diploma

NZQA will accept applications for approval of a Level 7 diploma from NZQA-recognised education organisations.

Programmes leading to diploma qualifications at Level 7 must include information on the qualification as well as the programme.

Applications for approval of a Level 7 diploma must be made using the [online process](#).

NZQA uses the criteria in Rule 4.1 of the [NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018](#) to determine whether or not to approve an application.

Demonstrating acceptability and need for the Level 7 diploma

Education organisations must provide relevant information from a wide range of sources, including industry or community stakeholders, demonstrating the need for the qualification. A focussed analysis must be submitted that:

- considers the supply and demand of graduates in the field
- identifies current skill gaps
- takes into account social and cultural considerations of both Māori and Pasifika people, if appropriate.

Engaging with stakeholders

The involvement and engagement of a wide range of relevant stakeholders is necessary to ensure the qualification will be fit-for-purpose.

Stakeholders must be appropriate, credible, representative, and recognised by their industry or community as able to speak with authority on behalf of the sector they represent.

The application should include:

- a description of the extent and method(s) of consultation at various stages of development
- how feedback and key findings have been considered and incorporated into the design of the diploma
- notes of meetings with external advisors and/or stakeholders
- any letters of support received from stakeholders.

Requirements for Level 7 diploma applications

Two sets of information are required. These are a self-assessment report and the programme document.

Self-assessment report

This report illustrates how the education organisation is confident it has included sufficient information to meet the criteria and to answer the evaluation question:

How well does the programme design match the needs of learners and relevant stakeholders?

The report should describe why the education organisation meets the requirements based on its own comprehensive, authentic, robust and transparent self-assessment processes.

Evidence of programme approval within the education organisation is required, for example, through the Academic Board, Board of Trustees or similar group.

Programme document

The programme document must demonstrate, with relevant evidence, how the programme is acceptable to end users (including relevant communities and other key stakeholders) and has been designed to meet the needs of the target learner group.

The document must:

- reflect the Level 7 diploma qualification definition, including all requirements for listing the qualification on the NZQF
- include the learning outcomes of the components that make up the programme
- show how the components are structured in a coherent way to achieve the purpose statement, graduate profile, level and credit value of the qualification and give the diploma programme its unique focus
- describe the delivery approaches intended to be used, including any practical or work-based learning
- include the programme regulations
- outline the approach to assessment and moderation of learning
- how the organisation intends to review the qualification and programme and maintain its relevance.

The following sections provide guidance and further information on how to meet the requirements for a Level 7 diploma.

Qualification definition

The [details of qualification types](#) can be found on the NZQA website.

Title

The title of the programme must provide an accurate indication of the subject area of the Level 7 diploma and meet NZQF nomenclature requirements.

Strategic purpose statement

A statement of Strategic Purpose identifies the purpose of the qualification and justifies why it should be listed on the NZQF.

The strategic purpose statement should clearly identify:

- the target group of learners and describe how the programme has been developed to match the needs of the target learners
- how the qualification is useful and relevant to learners, industry and relevant communities, including the cultural and social aspirations of Māori, Pasifika and other communities
- the standard the graduate will operate at or a definition of the scope of practice where this is relevant. This would refer to any industry or professional standards, licensing or professional registration requirements.

Outcome statement

The Level 7 diploma must specify an outcome statement for the qualification which includes a graduate profile, and education and employment pathways.

The qualification outcome statement should:

- use plain English to present a complete and easily understood picture for learners, whānau, employers and other educational organisations of what the graduate is expected to *do, be and know*, as a result of the learning
- describe the range of functions and/or scope of practice the graduate of the qualification is able to perform
- explain the education and employment pathways, or contribution to the community, resulting from achievement of the qualification.

Aims

The stated aims of the programme must:

- be clearly defined
- be appropriate to the nature and level of the programme.

The aims must include identification of any specifically targeted learner body, and the relationship between the programme and any industrial, professional or community need.

Learning outcomes of components

A programme is made up of components (units of learning). These components may include papers, projects, courses, modules, practicums and the outcomes of assessment standards.

The programme document should include a brief description of each component:

- an overview of the purpose or aim of the component
- learning outcomes or outcomes of assessment standards
- level
- credits
- delivery modes
- approach to assessment of each outcome that is valid for the target learner group and the learning context.

Programme coherence

Within the programme components must:

- be arranged and presented in a logical, progressive and coherent way
- demonstrate learners' development of knowledge, skills and attitudes
- show how learners achieve programme aims and the graduate profile.

Programme delivery modes

The document must include:

- an explanation and justification for the intended programme's delivery modes (e.g. face-to-face, online/distance, blended) and methods

- specification of any specialist resources that may be required to deliver the programme
- identifying risks and risk mitigation arising from the intended delivery modes, in particular where there is practical, field-based or work-based learning
- the management, monitoring and resourcing of practice-based learning.

Programme regulations

The regulations must include:

- admission criteria (including English language entry requirements, police checks and any additional criteria for international learners)
- any provisions and procedures for the awarding of recognition of prior learning and credit recognition transfer
- any articulation agreements
- progression through the programme
- how award of qualification is made, including the award of any strands or qualifiers.

Assessment and moderation

The document describes how the education organisation's quality assurance system includes the assessment process, the internal and external moderation of the programme, assessment materials and decisions.

Assessment methods should be appropriate for the:

- programme
- mode(s) of delivery
- level of learning
- qualification outcome.

Programme review

The education organisation must describe:

- Processes for the ongoing review and updating of the diploma qualification and programme
- monitoring the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders.

Accreditation to provide Level 7 diplomas

NZQA will accept applications for accreditation to provide an approved programme from NZQA-recognised education organisations.

The following types of education organisations can be accredited to provide programmes of study:

- private training establishments
- institutes of technology and polytechnics
- government training establishments
- wānanga
- schools.

Industry training organisations **are not** granted accreditation, but need to maintain consent to assess for the assessment standards included in the Level 7 diploma they will assess. For more information refer to [Consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011](#).

Where the programme of industry training includes components other than assessment standards, the tertiary education organisations delivering the programme of industry training will need to be accredited.

Applications for programme approval and accreditation can be made concurrently. Programmes of study approved by NZQA may only be provided by tertiary education organisations accredited to do so by NZQA.

Applications for accreditation must be made online through the [secure extranet](#).

Applications for accreditation

Applications from category 1 tertiary education providers

This applies to category 1 providers:

If... there is a history of success in providing training in the same area at the same level	Then... Supply a statement from the Chief Executive that confirms the provider can continue to provide and properly resource the programme for the long term
If... The provider wants to offer programmes in a new area or at a higher level than their current approvals	Then... That provider must make a full application for accreditation as required for category 2 (see below for details)

Applications from category 2 and 3 tertiary education providers, and category 4 tertiary education providers (where permitted)

Category 2, 3 and 4 tertiary education providers should present evidence for the following criteria.

A self-assessment report that describes:

- the capability, capacity and resources required to effectively and sustainably provide the programme (human, physical, and teaching and learning)
- the overall structure of a programme as it will be delivered, including the assessment schedule
- any specific programme requirements, including practical and workplace requirements
- where relevant, evidence of the formal arrangements to provide the programme agreed with the programme owner (when this is not the applicant).

Capability, capacity and resources

Tertiary education providers need to prove they have the capability, capacity and resources to provide the programme to learners. Applicants must submit the following required evidence, as relevant to the proposed programme.

Financial and administrative infrastructure

Evidence that the organisation's financial infrastructure, administrative systems and resource management practices will be adequate to support implementation and sustained delivery of the Level 7 diploma programme.

Teaching and learning resources

The physical, teaching and learning resources are comprehensive and sufficient for the proposed programme and appropriate to the methods of delivery (including the experience of the teaching staff, teaching and learning facilities, and learner support services).

Teaching staff will normally be qualified at a minimum of one level higher than the component of the programme they will deliver, assess, and/or supervise or have relevant professional experience¹.

If practical, field or workplace training is a component of the programme include:

- the arrangements for practical, field or workplace training needed to meet the requirements of the programme
- the roles and responsibilities of the supervisory staff and the organisation
- if relevant, the roles and responsibilities of the registration body
- risk mitigation strategies in relation to practical, field or workplace training.

Evidence that learner support services are adequate and cover learner enrolment, pastoral care, learning support, Māori, Pasifika and international learner support as appropriate.

¹ When a member of the teaching staff does not hold a 'plus one' qualification, industry experience in the discipline and/or higher education teaching experience and/or standing within their indigenous community must be demonstrated as professional equivalency, and/or a timeframe for the completion of the qualification be included.

Quality management system

Include in the application any changes to the tertiary education organisation's quality management system to support the delivery of the programme.

Structure of the programme

Teaching and learning approach

Include a brief description of the teaching and learning approaches used to meet learning outcomes.

Practical and workplace requirements

A description of how the education organisation intends to:

- meet any practical and workplace requirements
- provide support to learners during a work placement
- formalise arrangements with employers and other organisations to meet requirements
- mitigate any risk.

Assessment, moderation and review

The organisation needs to demonstrate it has the capacity and capability to ensure assessment materials and decisions are fair, valid, consistent and appropriate given the stated learning outcomes. This includes mechanisms to detect academic misconduct and instances of academic fraud.

The application must include evidence that:

- assessment schedules are appropriate for the programme
- learners are provided with clear information of what is required to pass each component part of the diploma programme
- learners are provided with timely and appropriate feedback on their progress through the programme
- internal and external moderation processes are appropriate to the programme and its delivery
- an external moderation plan is in place with named moderation partners and an ongoing moderation schedule
- an external NZQA monitor is to be agreed upon and appointed (see the [Monitoring of programmes leading to degrees and related qualifications](#))
- an effective system for reviewing and monitoring of any improvements made to the Level 7 diploma is in place.

Other programme-specific requirements

The application may also include specific requirements that relate to the provision of the programme by the applicant (e.g. entry criteria, management of a particular strand or strands).

Formal arrangements

Where the applicant does not hold approval to offer the Level 7 diploma, and is seeking accreditation for a programme owned by another party, evidence of the signed formal arrangements must be included in the application.

These arrangements cover:

- programme changes and reviews
- dispute resolution
- moderation and monitoring of outcomes
- managing complaints about quality of delivery
- arrangements if the diploma programme ceases.

Making changes to approved Level 7 diplomas

Changes to a Level 7 Diploma may be a result of:

- ongoing quality management and improvement
- changes in the industry or sector
- changes to the qualification as a result of a review
- improvements to the programme.

Types of programme changes

There are two types of programme change.

Type 1 change

Type 1 changes are minor changes to components. Type 1 changes do not have an impact on the total number of learning hours, credit value, learning outcomes or graduate profile of the overall diploma.

Education organisations seeking accreditation to an already approved programme may make Type 1 changes to meet the needs of their learners.

Details of Type 1 changes should be notified to NZQA via email to the QAD Approvals and Accreditation team. Education organisations need to retain evidence of the internal quality assurance processes that approved the changes, for example approval by an Academic Board, Board of Trustees or similar group.

Examples of Type 1 changes:

- title of a component
- content of a component but not learning outcomes
- specific assessment methodologies within a component.

Type 2 change

Type 2 changes are those made to components that have an impact on the diploma as a whole. Type 2 changes may occur as a result of a review of the qualification.

Type 2 changes must be approved by NZQA before they can be implemented.

The following information is required when submitting an application for a Type 2 change:

- a summary that details the change(s) to the programme
- evidence to demonstrate that the programme continues to meet the qualification definition
- specified data requirements
- evidence of the programme review, external consultation and internal approval.

Examples of Type 2 changes:

- title of programme
- credit value of the programme
- total learning hours of the programme
- programme duration
- removing, adding or replacing components
- level of components that cumulatively change the level of the programme
- requirements for practical, workplace and education provider learning
- changes to programme regulations.

Applications for Type 2 changes must be made online through the [secure extranet](#).

Agreements between organisations

Sub-contracting

It is not expected that sub-contracting arrangements as described in this section will apply to industry training organisations.

An education organisation can arrange for another organisation or individual to provide all or part of an approved programme on their behalf. This is deemed to be a sub-contracting arrangement under section 17.4(b) of the *NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018*.

There are different requirements when an education organisation engages a sub-contractor depending on whether the sub-contractor involved has accreditation to provide the approved programme.

Both the education organisation and the sub-contractor have accreditation

If the education organisation proposes to use a sub-contractor, and both have accreditation, then the education organisation must notify NZQA of the arrangement prior to the delivery of the programme.

The education organisation has accreditation, but the sub-contractor does not

If the education organisation has accreditation for the programme, but the sub-contractor does not, the education organisation must apply to NZQA for approval to engage the sub-contractor and provide NZQA with the following information:

- the name of the sub-contractor
- identification of the programme(s) (or part(s)) to be provided under the arrangement
- the reason for the proposed sub-contracting arrangement
- a signed copy of the sub-contracting arrangement between the education organisation and the sub-contractor
- evidence of internal quality assurance approval by the education organisation, through an Academic Board or similar group.

The sub-contracting arrangement must specify:

- the names of the parties to the arrangement
- the term of the arrangement
- procedures for resolving any differences about the agreement that might arise between the parties
- compliance with the arrangement and NZQA rules
- the ongoing monitoring of the arrangement and delivery
- assessment, moderation and monitoring arrangements
- how physical and human resources will be provided
- how student academic records will be maintained and reported
- clear processes for the review of the arrangement and for the termination of the arrangement
- procedures for the protection of learners if the arrangement is terminated.

Criteria for approving sub-contracting arrangements

NZQA will grant approval of an application if the applicant meets the requirements of the relevant rules in all sub-contracting arrangements:

- The education organisation remains responsible for the sub-contractor meeting all of the obligations for the accreditation. This includes all relevant obligations in the Education Act 1989 and rules made under section 253 of the Act.
- There is a formal documented arrangement between the education organisation and the sub-contractor. This should include provisions to ensure that NZQA can fulfil its quality assurance role and exercise its powers and functions in relation to the sub-contractor's provision of the programme.
- All information and advertising about the programme of study or training programme must clearly state that it is provided through a sub-contracting arrangement.
- All student enrolments are through the education organisation. The education organisation must also maintain the academic information for the learners in the programme.

Collaborative or commercial relationships

For any collaborative or commercial relationships there must be a written formal agreement between the parties. The agreement should clearly and accurately record how the education organisations will work together to develop and/or maintain the programme. The agreement must be signed by the legally recognised signatories of all parties.

Partner education organisations need to identify who is responsible for all relevant aspects of the programme and its management. This includes maintaining the quality of the programme.

What is in the collaborative or commercial agreement?

The agreement must specify:

- the names of the parties to the agreement
- who is responsible for the quality of the programme and the management of quality systems
- procedures for resolving any differences that might arise between the parties to the agreement
- who is responsible for seeking programme approval
- procedures and responsibilities for managing the programme, its ongoing monitoring, and implementing changes to the programme
- assessment, moderation and monitoring arrangements
- who is responsible for communication of all necessary reports and other information to NZQA
- who is responsible for all administrative arrangements, such as decisions relating to progress through the programme, assessment, appeals, and remuneration of monitors and moderators (if applicable)
- a clear process for reviewing and terminating the agreement.

Rules and legislation for approval and accreditation

NZQA rules are made under section 253 of the Education Act 1989, which gives NZQA the authority to make rules for the quality assurance processes for which it is responsible. Approval and accreditation is required under sections 249 and 250 of the Act.

Information on the [requirements for listing a qualification on the NZQF](#) is on the NZQA website.

[NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018](#) are the NZQA rules covering the approval of programmes of study and accreditation for these programmes.

[NZQF Industry Training Programme Approval Rules 2012](#) are the NZQA rules covering the approval of programmes of industry training.

Education organisations planning offshore delivery of a programme leading to an NZQF qualification must meet the [NZQF Offshore Programme Delivery Rules 2012](#).

Glossary

Term	Description
<i>Achievement standard</i>	A coherent set of learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria, together with technical and management information that supports delivery and assessment; achievement standards specify three different standards of performance and the method of assessment, which may include national external assessment.
<i>Assessment standard</i>	The collective term for unit standards and achievement standards listed on the NZQA Directory of Assessment Standards.
<i>Components</i>	Parts of a programme (or training scheme), which together make up a coherent arrangement of learning or training. Components include projects, papers, courses, modules, practicum and skill and assessment standards
<i>Industry training organisation</i>	A body recognised by the Tertiary Education Commission under the Industry Training Act 1992 as having responsibility for setting standards and arranging the delivery of industry training for a specific industry or area of industry identified in a Tertiary Education Commission gazette notice.
<i>New Zealand certificate or diploma</i>	A qualification that meets the requirements for listing on the NZQF at Levels 1-6.
<i>Programme (approved)</i>	An approved programme is a coherent arrangement of learning or training that is based on clear and consistent aims, content, outcomes and assessment practices, which leads to a qualification listed on the NZQF.
<i>Qualification</i>	Formal certification for a given purpose of the achievement of specified learning outcomes to a given standard.
<i>Qualification strand</i>	A specialisation within a qualification that represents a major component of the qualification, and is at the level of the qualification. Strands are documented through strand-specific outcomes in the graduate profile.
<i>Quality assurance body</i>	NZQA or New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (also known as Universities New Zealand).
<i>Stakeholders</i>	Individuals, groups, or organisations with an interest (or 'stake') in the outcome of a qualification.