

Reform of New Zealand qualifications (sub-degree vocational qualifications) and other credentials

The Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) is creating a strong foundation for a vocational education system which is more responsive to the needs of learners and employers, with improved consistency of graduate outcomes and greater learner mobility.

NZQA engaged with key stakeholders from early 2020 and heard strong support for simplifying the qualifications system. Following formal consultation and submissions from over 400 stakeholders, decisions were made to adjust the qualification system to enable industry, employers and iwi to have greater influence through the newly established Workforce Development Councils (WDCs). To enact the decisions, the Minister of Education will introduce legislative proposals to amend the Education and Training Act 2020 later in 2021.

WDCs will be able to decide between using a single 'national curriculum' or endorsing programmes developed by providers.

Using a 'national curriculum' will lead to greater consistency of graduate skills, knowledge and attributes. Alternatively, a WDC may enable providers to develop unique programmes against a New Zealand qualification where industry sees the value in a diversity of graduate outcomes. In this situation, the WDC will endorse provider programmes prior to NZQA approval.

The building blocks of New Zealand qualifications will be newly developed skill standards. These will specify the learning outcomes and standard of performance required. Consistent use of skill standards will be important for both industry and learners who move between providers. Over time, skill standards will replace both unit standards and the wide range of courses, papers and modules developed by providers.

The new qualifications system will be introduced gradually as WDCs, Te Pūkenga, Regional Skills Leadership Groups and other actors increasingly fulfil their roles in the reformed vocational education system.

Other decisions to be enacted include allowing WDCs (as well as providers and others) to develop micro-credentials, replace training schemes with micro-credentials and formally include micro-credentials in the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

With high level qualification arrangements clear, NZQA will work very closely with WDCs, education providers, iwi/Māori and other stakeholders over the detailed arrangements and rules related to new skill standards, qualification and programme approval processes and quality assurance arrangements in the new system.

Components of the proposed qualifications system include:

- **Qualifications** (and the associated skill standards) will continue to set out a clear pathway to the level of knowledge, skills and attributes that learners will have achieved upon graduation. A qualification includes information about what further education and employment opportunities the qualification could lead to.
- **Skill standards** will be developed by WDCs in collaboration with industry and training providers. Skill standards will form the building blocks of provider programmes or of any 'national curriculum'.
- **Programmes** will be developed by providers, endorsed by WDCs and approved by NZQA.
- **'National curriculum' (working title)**. Drawing on the skill standards for a New Zealand qualification, a 'national curriculum' will provide further context, structure and information to guide a provider's approach to teaching, and assessment. The WDC will facilitate a collaborative process so that a 'national curriculum' reflects the practical needs of industry and the critical perspectives of educators.
- **Micro-credentials** can be developed by WDCs or developed by education providers. Micro-credentials will replace training schemes.
- **Training schemes** will no longer be available. NZQA will work with providers to grandparent training schemes out of the system over time.
- **Training packages** will be removed from the legislation.

Coverage: The use of skill standards and other arrangements for vocational education qualifications will apply to all sub-sectors. As per the existing legislation however, wānanga may choose whether to use skill standards, except where they are offering work integrated learning. Wānanga may wish to be guided by WDC skill standards for campus-based programmes but would maintain āhuatanga Māori and tikanga Māori in their approach.

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Te Pūnaha Mātauranga Ahumahi

