

1 December 2010

NZQF operational requirements reflect sector feedback

Operating requirements for the NZQF have been finalised following extensive consultation with the tertiary education sector and industry representatives.

Analysis of submissions to NZQA’s mid-year consultation showed strong support for the objectives of the changes but strongly divergent views on some issues, NZQA worked with the sector to find pragmatic solutions to resolve the opposing views.

The changes now being introduced have been fully supported by the Targeted Review Project Leaders Group, which includes Business New Zealand, the Industry Training Federation (ITF), the Council of Trade Unions, the Department of Labour, the Tertiary Education Commission, the Ministry of Education, and all the key provider representative bodies (wānanga, private training establishments and polytechnics).

The new requirements and processes for listing a qualification at level 1-6 on the NZQF aim to strengthen and streamline the qualifications system and to bring about a reduction in the number of qualification by reducing the possibility for duplication or proliferation.

The final requirements differ from proposals outlined in the [July 2010 consultation documents](#). Key features include the following.

A single set of flexible rules

The proposal for a single set of more flexible qualification design rules to replace the separate rules for “National”, “New Zealand”, and provider qualifications was supported by the sector, as was having more than one way to achieve the same qualification, for example through work, study or prior learning.

Some respondents, mainly ITOs, wanted to continue to prescribe only assessment standards and workplace requirements. Education providers, however, saw specifying assessment standards or workplace requirements as reducing their flexibility and potentially excluding them from a section of the market.

The new requirements preserve the single set of rules that is critical to achieving a unified framework with fewer qualifications. However, the new rules will also allow qualification developers to specify critical mandatory standards, or workplace requirements where these are clearly justifiable. This feature supports the standard-setting role of ITOs.

Balancing the influence of different tertiary education organisations on qualification development

To ensure qualifications meet the needs of industry, NZQA had proposed that ITOs, as standard-setters for their industries, would become formal stakeholders in the development of all NZQF qualifications.

Some education providers argued that ITOs have a conflict of interest in their dual roles of qualification developers and arrangers of training. They expressed concern that ITOs might not support provider-developed qualifications or might insert workplace requirements that prevent providers from delivering the qualifications.

To address these concerns, NZQA resolved to require education providers and ITOs to consult when developing qualifications,

NZQA also plans to foster the formation of clusters of ITOs, significant education providers and employer/employee representatives to develop industry-specific qualifications strategies.

Simplified and consistent qualification titles

The proposed single set of design rules aimed to simplify the three types of qualification titles by removing the terms “National”, “New Zealand”, and provider names. All qualifications would have to meet requirements for national recognition (rather than just National ones as at present).

The proposal to remove the term National proved to be controversial, as some ITOs considered it had brand value to employers. In addition, some respondents considered that National meant the qualification is achieved only in a workplace (although it may be on-job, off-job, or a mixture).

The solution was to use the term New Zealand in new level 1-6 qualifications and to phase out over time the use of National and provider names in qualification titles. This means that qualifications with New Zealand in the title can be distinguished from others not subject to quality assurance.

Separating qualifications from programmes

The proposed approach to separate the qualification from the programme leading to it and to allow more than one programme to lead to an individual qualification was generally supported as a key means of managing qualification proliferation.

Concern was expressed about the need for new mechanisms to ensure consistency between outcomes where different programmes lead to one qualification. These mechanisms will be developed over time.

Availability of qualifications for use by other TEOs

To encourage the use of existing qualifications and discourage duplication, the requirements allow any suitably accredited provider or ITO to use any level 1-6 qualification listed on the NZQF.

Some providers were concerned about losing the intellectual property associated with their qualifications. However, others commented that there is little intellectual property within the qualification. Rather, the intellectual property consisted of the programmes leading to the qualification.

Wānanga were concerned about how to protect mātauranga Māori if the qualification was available for others to use. NZQA will address this concern through its mātauranga Māori quality assurance framework and the accreditation of providers.

Key features of level 1-6 qualifications on the NZQF:

- Consistent, simple titles
- Outcome statements
- Demonstrable relevance
- Unique – do not duplicate other qualifications
- Flexible and achievable in different contexts.

By the end of 2011, NZQA expects to see:

- a significant reduction in the number of qualifications
- a simplified system which allows learners and employers to see clearly what a graduate can do with the learning gained, as well as where the qualification leads in terms of further education and employment
- evidence of increased collaboration among education providers and ITOs, through joint applications for new and reviewed qualifications to meet the needs of students and industry.

The NZQF will continue to evolve over the next few years as qualifications are reviewed and better aligned with the new requirements.

More information

Detailed information on listing a qualification on the NZQF can be found in the policy document [Requirements for listing and maintaining qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework](#).