

## Guidelines for approving and maintaining degrees and related qualifications

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These guidelines outline quality assurance processes for tertiary education providers and universities that provide programmes of study leading to degrees and related qualifications in the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF):

- bachelor's degrees
- graduate certificates and diplomas
- bachelor honours degrees
- postgraduate certificates and diplomas
- master's degrees
- doctoral degrees.

Degrees and related programmes are defined in the [New Zealand Qualifications Framework](#)

### The guidelines

The [Guidelines for approving and maintaining degrees and related qualifications](#) apply to tertiary education organisations (other than universities):

- **apply for approval** of programmes of study leading to degrees and related qualifications of the NZQF
- **list qualifications** on the NZQF
- **apply for accreditation** to deliver an approved programme of study on the NZQF

- **maintain approval and accreditation** to provide a programme on the NZQF.

The regulatory authority for NZQA Rules is under [section 253 of the Act](#). Accreditation is required under sections [249](#) and [250](#) of the Act.

## The role of research in degrees and related qualifications

Section 253(B) part (3) of the Act requires that the award of a degree must be for a qualification of advanced learning that is “taught mainly by people engaged in research”.

The type of research people engage in will be relevant to the nature of the degree. A practice-based degree may have a greater focus on applied research, while a theory-based degree may focus on the scholarship type of research.

## Quality assurance

NZQA’s quality assurance integrates ‘front-end’ quality assurance with the quality assurance that an education organisation undertakes to assure itself of the quality of graduate outcomes. NZQA’s approach to reach judgements on a transparent, robust and credible basis, is based on:

- strategic and needs-based
- focused on outcomes
- quality as a dynamic concept – including ongoing improvement
- flexibility
- accountability.

Each TEO has the responsibility for demonstrating how its graduates will meet the requirements of a qualification through a programme of study. A TEO can show this through its self-assessment process.

## Te Hono o Te Kahurangi Evaluative Quality Assurance

TEOs can choose to have a degree or related qualification evaluated through the Te Hono o Te Kahurangi process. If a TEO chooses this, the application (s) will be evaluated by the Quality Assurance Unit.

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi is the quality assurance approach used for qualifications that are distinctively based on kaupapa Māori principles. This approach is specific to qualifications specific to wānanga.

The following kaupapa underpin Māori programmes quality assured using Te Hono o Te Kahurangi.

- Rangatiratanga
- Manaakitanga
- Whanaungatanga
- Kaitiakitanga
- Pūkengatanga
- Te reo Māori.

Each education organisation has the responsibility for demonstrating how graduates achieve their learning and outcomes through a programme of study, through the organisation's Wānanga.

For more information see [Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance](#).

## 1. Using the evaluative approach

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The decision to approve a programme of study leading to a degree or diploma is based on the quality and sufficiency of evidence provided in an application.

The application should meet criteria set out in [part 4](#) of the [NZQF 2016](#), and parts [1](#) and [2](#) of the [NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation](#).

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

- be explicit about the information and evidence on which judgement is based, and interpretation, and
- write the outcome in a clear, concise report which explains the key findings.

## 1.1 Decision to list a qualification and approve

The decision to approve a degree or related qualification for listing on the NZQA Register of Qualifications is made by meeting the criteria and by answering the evaluation question:

### **How well does the qualification and programme meet the stated purpose?**

NZQA reviews the information and the evidence provided in the application to answer the evaluation question.

Rubric one (below) sets out the expected levels of performance in relation to the evaluation question.

“Good evidence”:

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

Rubric one: Criteria for rating answers to the evaluation question

	<b>Criteria</b>
Qualification approved	<b>ALL</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good evidence that there is a distinct need for</li></ul>

- the qualification and programme.
- Good evidence that the qualification and programme purpose and outcomes meet the evidenced need.
- No significant gaps or weaknesses in the

qualification  
and  
programme.

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Qualification  
not  
approved

**ANY** of the  
following:

- The  
nature,  
quality  
and  
integrity  
of  
the  
information  
and  
evidence  
does  
not  
convincingly  
demonstrate  
a  
distinct  
need  
for  
the

- qualification and programme.
  - Insufficient evidence that the qualification and programme purpose and outcomes meet the evidenced need.
  - Significant gaps or weaknesses in the qualification.
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## 1.2 Decision to accredit an education provider

A decision to accredit a TEO is reached by meeting the criteria and by answering the evaluation question.

### **To what extent does the education provider have the ongoing capability to deliver the approved programme?**

NZQA reviews information and evidence using rubric two. Rubric two (below) is used in relation to the evaluation question to decide whether to accredit the TEO.

### Rubric two: Criteria for rating the answers to the evaluation question: Does the education provider have the ongoing capability to provide an approved programme?

	<b>Criteria</b>
Education organisation accredited	<b>ALL</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good evidence that the education provider has the ongoing capability to provide the approved programme.</li><li>• Good evidence that the education provider can manage the ongoing impacts of the specific requirements of the approved programme.</li><li>• Good evidence that the education provider has the ongoing capability to provide the approved programme.</li></ul>

programme  
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Education organisation not accredited

**ANY** of the following:

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programme
- Insufficient  
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- Formal with the owner who required a to manage of the prog
- Insufficient of satisf appropriate is adequate
- Significant weaknesses self-assess and/or th capability of the orga

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## 2. Programme approval of degrees and r

NZQA uses the criteria in [Rule 4.1](#) of the NZQF Programme Approval and evaluative question to determine whether an application will be approved.

*How well does the qualification and programme meet the stated purpose?*

## 2.1 Understanding the criteria

### Criterion 1: Qualification to which the programme leads

**The programme meets the definition published on the NZQA website listed in the second column of the Table in the Appendix to the NZQA website.**

The TEO must demonstrate that the level and credit value of the qualification meets the requirements in the qualification type definitions published in the [New Zealand Qualifications Framework](#).

The graduate profile of the qualification must clearly describe what the graduate must be able to do to complete the qualification.

### Criterion 2: Title, aims, learning outcomes and coherence

**The title, aims, stated learning outcomes, and coherence of the programme must be appropriate and clearly meet the graduate profile and specifications of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.**

TEOs must demonstrate the purpose of the qualification through the graduate profile. The programme's aims and outcomes will be fulfilled through the subjects, delivery mode, and other factors (what gives the degree programme its unique focus).

The stated programme aims must be clearly defined, and be appropriate to the programme leads to.

The aims of the programme must clearly match the qualification's purpose and the qualification's use and relevance to learners, industry and communities and the programme. The learner group is identified and the programme clearly articulates the qualification to which it leads.

#### **Coherence**

The programme structure must integrate the aims and learning outcomes in the graduate profile. The programme must demonstrate that:

- the progression and integration of learning through the programme is consistent with the graduate profile, graduate statement, graduate profile, level and credit value of the qualification

- the combination of components is consistent with and supports the programme.

### Criterion 3: Delivery modes and methods

**The delivery modes and methods are adequate and appropriate, given the programme. Where specific resources are necessary for the programme, these are clearly outlined.**

The applicant TEO must:

- demonstrate the appropriateness of the programme delivery modes (including online) and methods
- ensure that academic integrity will be maintained through the delivery of the programme
- demonstrate consideration of cultural safety and ethical practice.

It is important that the delivery methods do not place learners or the public at risk, and demonstrate how they will be addressed.

#### **Practical or work-based components**

The TEO must identify and describe any practical, field-based or work-based components (including research and the supervision of research) that are based away from the standard campus environment.

#### **Research components**

In the case of degree programmes with research components, the TEO must provide details of the research involved in the programme.

### Criterion 4: Acceptability of the programme and consultation

**There is a written summary of the consultation undertaken, the views of the communities (including whānau, hapū, iwi, or hapori Māori) and other relevant academic, employer, industry, professional and other bodies are taken into account.**

The TEO needs to provide evidence of consultation that considers the needs of the communities and demonstrate that the TEO has appointed a designated advisory group with the necessary expertise to provide advice on the programme.

during development of the programme, and that this group has contributed to the development of the programme.

The advisory group should be composed primarily of external representatives from relevant disciplines and tangata whenua. Evidence of this should be included in the application.

The application should provide evidence of the depth and breadth of consultation and evidence of how feedback was used in decision making processes.

## Criterion 5: Regulations

**There are clear, relevant, and appropriate regulations that specify**

- **admission**
- **credit recognition and transfer**
- **recognition of prior learning**
- **programme length and structure**
- **integration of practical and work-based components**
- **assessment procedures, including authenticity of student work**
- **normal progression within the programme.**

**Recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit recognition and transfer**

The TEO's application must demonstrate how the provisions and procedures for recognition of prior learning, and credit recognition and transfer, will be applied to the programme. Refer to the TEO's Handbook for guidance on CRT and RPL.

## Criterion 6: Assessment and moderation

**Assessment methodology is fair, valid, consistent, and appropriate**

**There is an effective system for moderation of assessment materials**

The TEO must detail the assessment rationale and methodologies to explain

- how a learner will demonstrate the meeting of learning outcomes
- modes of assessment (e.g. online; classroom-based, work-based, project-based) and methodologies

- where appropriate, assessment policies and practices which allow learners to

### **Assessment of research**

The TEO must ensure:

- research components exceeding 60 credits will be assessed by at least one assessor who is qualified in research and the discipline. Normally the assessors will be academic staff in the discipline, and employed by a university, polytechnic, wānanga or private training organisation in the discipline. The assessment of research components is paired with an assessment of the quality of the assessment materials, processes and decisions for fairness, equity, validity and reliability.
- it provides evidence of any systems for implementing improvements as a result of the assessment.

### Criterion 7: Self-assessment and review

**The TEO:**

- **assesses the currency and content of the programme**
- **has adequate and effective processes for the ongoing review of the programme and the results of any review of the qualification**
- **has adequate and effective processes for monitoring the quality of the programme, for consulting stakeholders, and for reviewing programme regulation and control**
- **updates the programme accordingly.**

TEOs must demonstrate the procedures used to ensure that the programme continues to be delivered to learners and stakeholders.

### Criterion 8: Research required for degrees and post-graduate study

**The links between research and the curriculum are clear, adequate and effective**

The TEO needs to demonstrate that teaching staff conduct research within the discipline that advances knowledge and/or supports the continued development of the programme.

TEOs should be able to demonstrate the link between staff research and the curriculum.

## 3. Accreditation to provide a degree program

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NZQA uses the criteria in [Rule 6](#) of the NZQF Programme Approval applications for programme accreditation.

### 3.1 Understanding the criteria

#### Criterion 1: Assessment and Moderation

**The TEO has the capability and capacity to ensure assessment methods are consistent and appropriate, given the stated learning outcomes.**

The TEO must demonstrate:

- that assessment requirements are clearly specified for each component for each level of the programme, reflecting different assessment methods
- that staff are experienced in teaching, assessment and moderation
- that there are effective and documented systems for both internal and external assessment. This must include identifying external arrangements for practical

#### Criterion 2: Resources

**The TEO has the capability and capacity to support sustained and appropriate academic staffing, teaching facilities, educational and support services.**

The TEO must demonstrate that:

- it has the financial infrastructure and administrative systems in place to support the delivery of the programme
- the programme will be taught mainly by teaching staff engaged in research
- appropriately qualified and experienced teaching staff (normally qualified at a level higher than the component they deliver, assess, and/or supervise) or staff with professional experience
- teaching staff hold a tertiary teaching qualification; where teaching staff do not hold a qualification, the TEO must commit to teaching staff enrolling in such a

- the programme is staffed sufficiently to ensure effective delivery across
- evaluation of any additional staffing has taken place, and that the applicant has a staff development plan, and research plans appropriate to the programme
- the programme will be taught by teaching staff who are engaged in research of the programme, and underpins its theoretical framework
- teaching staff supervising learner's research are experienced, and have an appropriate level. Where teaching staff are developing such experience, they have the guidance of a lead academic, and that the TEO will employ a sufficient number of staff of delivering and assessing learners research
- a range of resources necessary for the implementation and sustained delivery of the modes of delivery
- there is a commitment to provide any additional resources and facilities for the programme.

For programmes with practical, field or work-based components, TEO must provide for learner, supervisory staff from the TEO and the host and, where relevant, a range of resources necessary for the implementation and sustained delivery of the modes of delivery

In some situations, TEOs will need to demonstrate experience in Māori language skills and tikanga Māori.

### **Support staff**

The TEO must demonstrate that:

- there is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and/or experienced staff to meet the needs of the programme to be met. These include support systems and staff for learning support, and support for Māori, Pasifika and international learners
- learners have access to adequate and appropriate degree programme facilities

### **Financial and administrative infrastructure**

The TEO must demonstrate that they can support the implementation and sustained delivery of the programme

This includes adequate:

- financial infrastructure
- administrative systems
- resource management practices.

## Quality management system

The TEO must demonstrate that their quality management system (QMS) in

- ensure the recruitment of appropriately qualified and experienced staff
- support staff to develop professionally as teachers and/or supervisors
- support staff engagement with research and the development of supervision of staff developing their research and supervision of research
- ensure academic supervision, examination of thesis and the management of research
- evidence of structured processes associated with an academic board or programme committees as appropriate).

## Criterion 3: Support for delivery

**If the applicant TEO is not the holder of the programme approval, the TEO must demonstrate the support for the programme approval.**

Where a TEO does not hold degree programme approval, it must demonstrate the support for the programme approval itself and the TEO that holds the degree programme approval.

An agreement between the parties is required, and must include provision for the support of the programme and arrangements if the programme ceases to be delivered.

## Criterion 4: Assessment and review

**There must be adequate and effective review of programme performance and support the programme.**

**There must be monitoring of improvement following review, and the programme should continue to be delivered.**

The TEO must demonstrate that there is an effective system for:

- the regular monitoring, evaluation and review of the programme, including the involvement of an academic board (or equivalent), and mechanisms for ensuring the views of relevant industries, professions, academic and research communities are taken into account
- monitoring the efficacy of any improvements made to the programme

- making changes to the approved programme, and that those changes meet the requirements, such as those mandated by professional registration boards.
- determining whether the programme should continue to be delivered.

## Criterion 5: Research activity required to deliver degrees

**Research facilities and the support of staff involved in research are appropriate, the research activities of staff involved in the programme are satisfactory, and the ways by which research is made in the curriculum are appropriate.**

The TEO must demonstrate that the quantity and quality of research outputs are monitored. The collective output must be consistent with the development of a research culture.

### **NZQA's expectations of research**

It is expected that there will be an appropriate balance between pedagogic and research activities. The collective research outputs will be appropriate to the nature of the degree.

If the TEO is already engaged in the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) application. If the TEO is not engaged in PBRF, an alternative way of measuring research activity should be included with the application.

### **Systems and facilities**

The TEO must demonstrate that organisational systems and facilities provide the support for research, including access to an appropriate ethics committee.

## 4. The process for application and evaluation

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The process has four steps:

- 1 TEO notifies NZQA of intent to submit application (three months before submission).
- 2 TEO submits application to NZQA.
- 3 NZQA evaluates application - pre-assessment, evaluation, and decision (approved or declined).
- 4 If application is approved, the qualification is listed on the NZQA Register.

For further details, see this [diagram of the high level process for evaluation](#)

## 4.1 Panel membership

NZQA panels generally comprise of either five or six individuals. Where possible, a panel is combined with either the academic or industry representative. Panels generally comprise of five individuals in total. Where it is impossible to combine Māori or Pasifika representatives, a representative representing Māori or Pasifika interests will be appointed.

Applications for Level 10 programmes involve a larger panel. Where TEOs are involved, they should approach NZQA to discuss panel requirements prior to making an application.

Applications for programmes that involve registration body approval (e.g. Nursing Registration Board, Education Council New Zealand) will involve panellists from the registration body. Applicants planning to apply for a programme that requires registration body approval should discuss panel requirements prior to making an application.

### Panel members

**(Note: panel members may have combined roles, i.e. Māori and Industry or Māori and Academic)**

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Independent chairperson

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NZQA representative; usually a senior evaluator with overall responsibility for the evaluation process

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University, ITP, Wānanga, or PTE academic from the area of specialisation appertaining to the application

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Senior academic from the applicant TEO, but from a different discipline

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Industry representative relevant to the subject area to which the discipline programme relates or relevant professions, endorsed by relevant stakeholder groups

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Māori and, where appropriate, a representative of Pasifika or other relevant communities, who has knowledge of the discipline to which the application relates.

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## 5. Post-approval

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### 5.1 Maintaining degree programme approval

Ongoing approval of a programme is conditional on the TEO demonstrating that the programme meets the relevant criteria. The most effective ways to ensure that the programme does so is to:

- ensure there is ongoing monitoring of the quality of the programme and its delivery. This includes reviewing data on graduate outcomes, e.g. employment, further study
- undertake regular and comprehensive reviews of the programme to ensure it remains relevant and current.

Accredited TEOs are required to undertake a comprehensive review of a degree programme every 5 years. This evaluation should include input from the relevant professional associations.

The TEO must report the findings of these reviews to NZQA.

### 5.2 Maintaining accreditation to provide a degree

Ongoing accreditation is conditional on a TEO demonstrating that the delivered programme meets relevant criteria.

#### Degree monitoring

NZQA requires all degree programmes to be monitored annually.

Following approval and accreditation of a degree programme, NZQA and the TEO agree on a degree monitor. In many cases the degree monitor will have been involved in the development of the programme.

NZQA contracts an external independent degree monitor. The first monitoring visit occurs at the start of the first year of delivery. On the first visit, an NZQA representative accompanies the monitor.

On a recommendation from the degree monitor, NZQA may approve a request for a change in the degree monitor. The TEO then becomes responsible for ensuring that the programme is monitored by the approved degree monitor.

The TEO will report back to NZQA on the degree programme using the year-end (APER) process. The monitor's report would generally be attached.

For more information see the *Guidelines for monitoring programmes for qualifications at levels 7 to 10*, available at [Diplomas, degrees and related](#)

## 6. Changes to approved degree programme

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Changes to a programme may be a result of ongoing quality management, industry or sector.

### Type 1 change

#### Definition

- Minor changes to programme components.
- Do not have an impact on the total numbers of learning hours, credit points or the programme.
- Do not have an impact on NZQA data requirements (as defined in Rule 10.1).

#### Examples of change

- Content of a programme but not the learning outcomes.
- Title of a component.
- Pre or co-requisite that does not affect programme entry requirements.

#### Process

NZQA will acknowledge the notification of a type 1 change and will make comments. Changes to a programme that are considered to be Type 2 changes.

# Type 2 change

## Definition

Type 2 changes relate to major changes to components that have an impact on the programme approval and accreditation data held by NZQA. A type 2 change that will alter the programme approval and accreditation data held by NZQA.

A type 2 change must be approved prior to implementation.

## Examples of change

- Changes to programme aims, graduate profile outcomes and learning outcomes
- Requirements for practical, workplace and education provider learning
- Structure of the degree programme.
- Regulations, including entry requirements.
- Delivery methods (e.g. a move from face-to-face learning to online learning)
- Changes have an impact on NZQA data requirements (as defined on RTO)

Change to the qualification to which the programme leads such as:

- qualification type (e.g. graduate certificate, graduate diploma, postgraduate)
- title
- level
- credit value

## Process

NZQA will advise applicant if any of the details in the application for a Type 2 change are not acceptable.

NZQA may establish a panel to assess the application. The following changes are likely to require a panel:

- introduction of a new subject major
- changes to the mode of delivery
- delivery at another site (including an offshore site)
- major change to an approved and accredited programme that has not been on the Register of Qualifications for a significant period of time on a small scale basis (e.g. has historically enrolled small numbers of students, has experienced a significant change in the programme is being 'taught out')

- significant changes to the structure of the programme.

If there are a significant number of changes made to the programme NZQA new programme approval application to be submitted.

Where NZQA is not satisfied with the details in the application, NZQA will applicant.

The Tertiary Education Commission is copied into the Type 2 change outcome

NZQA will publish details of the approved changes to the related qualification

## 7. Collaboration

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This section provides guidance on how TEOs can work together to develop the information required from a TEO when a collaborative application

### 7.1 Collaborative arrangements between institutions

Where TEOs collaborate to develop and or provide an approved programme agreement.

#### Establishing a written formal agreement

A written formal agreement that records how the TEOs will work together the programme must be established.

The written formal agreement:

- sets out how the programme will be maintained
- ensures that collaborative arrangements are clear and operate smoothly
- identifies clear lines of authority and areas of accountability.

## Contents of the written formal agreement

The written formal agreement must be signed by the legally recognised signatories. The agreement must specify, as appropriate to the application:

- the names of the parties to the agreement
- who bears ultimate responsibility for the quality of the programme
- the location of delivery
- who is responsible for managing the different parts of the quality system
- procedures for resolving any differences which might arise between the parties
- procedures and responsibilities for securing programme approval and monitoring
- procedures and responsibilities for managing the programme and making any necessary changes to the programme
- assessment and moderation arrangements
- procedures for agreeing on all necessary financial arrangements and the contribution of each party
- human resources
- responsibility for communication of all necessary reports and other information
- an indication of the wording on certificates awarded to learners who complete the programme
- responsibility for all administrative arrangements, in particular assessment and moderation
- a clear process for the review of the agreement and for the termination of the agreement
- procedures for the protection of learners if the arrangement is terminated

## 7.2 Collaboration between a university and a non-university provider

The information below should to be provided with an application for a joint qualification.

The following procedures have been agreed between NZQA and Universities New Zealand.

There are three possibilities with three different requirements:

(a). If the qualification is awarded solely in the name of a university, University Academic Programmes (CUAP) procedures would apply, as set out in the CUAP Handbook.

(b). If it is awarded solely in the name of another TEO, the relevant procedures would apply.

(c). For a degree awarded in the name of two TEOs, one of which is a university, the relevant procedures would apply (e.g. negotiated between the institutions).

## One set of documentation

If the application involves a university and an ITP, wānanga or PTE, the application requires a set of documentation. The documentation needs to go to NZQA first.

After initial evaluation, and only if it addresses all requirements, the application can proceed to the next stage (see below).

### One approval process

- 1 When NZQA receives the application, they will do an initial analysis to determine if the application can meet the relevant criteria.
  - 2 If the documentation is incomplete or not to a suitable standard, NZQA will return the documents for the required improvements or amendments (RFI).
  - 3 When the documentation has been satisfactorily amended, it should be resubmitted within two cycles, i.e. by 1 May or 1 September.
    - NZQA will attach any comments to the documentation so that the applicant is aware of the way that comments from any university will be considered.
    - If there are concerns, CUAP will discuss these with NZQA.
  - 4 When the application meets the relevant criteria, CUAP will recommend approval.
- If CUAP does not approve the application, it will advise NZQA and apply for a further review.

### Visit for site approval

The site where the programme will be delivered must be approved by NZQA. This may or may not require a site visit: this will be decided when the application is approved.

If a site visit is required it may take place while the CUAP process is underway. The results of the visit will be reported to CUAP.

## 7.3 Collaboration between TEOs that are not

TEOs may wish to form partnerships for:

- the development and maintenance of a programme approval; and/or
- the delivery of a programme.

## Applying for a joint degree programme

Before applying, TEOs need to determine that the application meets the relevant requirements.

### **Joint arrangements**

Joint arrangements may include:

- provision for a joint degree programme coordinating committee
- a written formal agreement covering any issues raised by the application, including the development of material, research and intellectual property ownership

## 7.4 Sub-contracting

A TEO can arrange for another TEO to provide approved degree programmes on their behalf.

There are different requirements when a TEO engages a sub-contractor (if the sub-contractor involved has accreditation to provide the approved degree programme (see Accreditation Rules 2018)).