



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Describing tertiary education provider quality under iQAF

August 2026



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Introduction from the Deputy Chief Executive, Quality Assurance

Tena koutou katoa | Ni sa bula Vinaka | Fakaalofa lahi atu | Fakatalofa atu | Kia orana | Omo yoran | Mauri | Talofa lava | Malo e lelei | Halo | Halo olketa... and warm Pacific greetings to you all.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is responsible for maintaining the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF), registering Private Training Establishments (PTEs), and quality assuring education and training delivered by tertiary education providers excluding universities (TEPs).

For learners, iwi/hapu/whānau, communities, employers and industry, all qualifications listed on the NZQCF need to come with an assurance of quality that is recognised and trusted worldwide. The New Zealand education system is effective because it's supported by:

- a robust qualifications framework
- quality, relevant qualifications and credentials
- strong education programme design, delivery and assessment
- education providers who continually innovate and improve
- pastoral care for all learners in our system.

In early 2026, we began implementing a new, integrated quality assurance framework (the iQAF). The [framework](#) reflects NZQA's regulatory principles of being impact-led, anticipatory, and adaptable. It aims to provide a more up-to-date view of TEP quality than the Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework (EQAF) it replaced.

Previously, under the EQAF, TEPs participated in an external evaluation and review, typically once every four years. The review resulted in category ratings intended to summarise NZQA's confidence in each TEP's future overall education performance and its capability in self-assessment.

Over time, the addition of new types of NZQA monitoring showed that four-yearly organisational-level category ratings are not always a reliable predictor of quality. As a result, we proposed a more up-to-date, 'compliant/non-compliant' view of TEP quality via the iQAF.

In consultation submissions, many providers expressed their desire for a more graduated mechanism than 'compliant/non-compliant', to better inform the public. Our partner government agencies also preferred a more nuanced way to summarise TEP quality to inform their respective monitoring activities.

In response to this feedback, I am pleased to share with you NZQA's proposals for how organisational-level TEP quality could be defined, summarised and communicated, while retaining a more reliable, up-to-date view of quality across our tertiary education system.

We propose basing the overall quality descriptor on four quality criteria that collectively provide evidence of the extent to which a TEP has the ongoing capability to deliver high-quality education and training. These criteria are:

- Programme and micro-credential design
- Delivery of education and training
- Assessment practice
- Quality management system implementation.

Each of the four criteria would be weighted and assigned a score. The cumulative quality criteria score corresponds to one of **three overall descriptors of a TEP's effectiveness** in providing credible and robust qualifications and credentials that meet learner, iwi/hāpu/whanau, community, industry and employer needs:

- **Highly effective**
- **Effective**
- **Not effective.**

We are seeking your feedback on this approach. You will find questions later in this document. During the consultation period, we will also be offering information sessions where you can ask questions and share your views with us directly. Guidance on how to have your say is on page 24.

I look forward to hearing your views on this final aspect of the iQAF design and appreciate your shared commitment to quality education and training.

E rari noa te uwhi, ka kitea tōna kounga i te wehenga.

Yam plants look identical while growing, but their true quality is only revealed at harvest time / True quality reveals itself in the final results.

Ngā mihi nui,

Emily Fabling

Pou Whakahaere Tuarua Whakaū Kounga
Deputy Chief Executive Quality Assurance
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Tertiary education provider¹ quality assurance

The purpose of the iQAF is to provide assurance that learners are achieving robust, credible and relevant qualifications and credentials that meet employer, iwi/hapū/whānau, and community needs.

The extent to which this purpose is achieved reflects the quality of education and training delivered in New Zealand and the effectiveness of the framework itself.

Four [cornerstones of iQAF](#) are intended to assure quality:

- **Strong quality assurance foundations** based on NZQA Rules, quality indicators, and other guidance to help TEOs get it right, first time;
- **TEO ownership of quality and quality improvement** and regular information sharing with NZQA means we understand each TEO's context and how we can tailor our quality assurance approach;
- **Effective verification of TEO quality** by NZQA's independent monitoring of the teaching/training, learning, assessment, and learner support provided by each TEO, means we can act assertively where there is poor performance, and give high performers the space to innovate; and
- **System assurance** ensures we work with TEOs, agencies and others to step back, measure our impact, share what we have learnt, and anticipate future opportunities and risks.

New and updated [Rules](#) have been introduced to support the implementation of iQAF and provide a solid foundation for quality education and training:

- **The qualification, micro-credential, and skill standard listing Rules**, ensure that qualifications, micro-credentials, and standards are robust, credible and meet societal needs;
- **The quality assurance of tertiary education providers Rules** ensure every provider has an effective and up-to-date quality management system (QMS), and the capability and capacity to review and improve its systems, processes and practices;
- **Education product Rules** (such as the Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules; the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules; and the Consent to Assess Rules) support quality

¹ We use the term 'tertiary education provider' (TEP) as defined in section 10 of the Education and Training Act 2020. From this point forward, the consultation document focuses on tertiary education providers (TEPs) *excluding universities* – i.e. Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs), Wānanga, registered Private Training Establishments (PTEs), and Government Training Establishments (GTEs).

teaching, learning and assessment; and, require providers to monitor the outcomes learners achieve; and, regularly review their offerings.

In addition, the [Education Code of Practice 2021 \(the Code\)](#) sets the standards for all providers to support the wellbeing and safety of their learners.

The overall descriptor of TEP quality is intended to summarise the effectiveness of the provider's systems and practices in meeting the quality criteria specified in NZQA Rules and the Code.

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi

[Te Hono o Te Kahurangi](#), a quality assurance framework grounded in Te Ao Māori, provides an opportunity for TEPs to engage with NZQA in building authentic partnerships and relationships through the application of mātauranga Māori and kaupapa Māori approaches. We have commenced a review of Te Hono o Te Kahurangi. The details of the review are not included in this consultation, and more information is available at [The Te Hono o Te Kahurangi Aromātai - NZQA](#).

Industry Skills Board quality assurance

Early in 2026, NZQA introduced new Rules for quality assurance requirements for Industry Skills Boards (ISBs). ISBs play a pivotal role in providing assurance that vocational qualifications, micro-credentials and programmes produce work-ready graduates in New Zealand.

We are working with ISBs on performance measures for 2026/27 in relation to their standard setting and quality assurance functions. NZQA does not intend to introduce an overall quality descriptor for ISBs at this time.

Describing tertiary education provider quality

To understand how New Zealand's approach to describing provider quality compares globally, we researched how quality assurance agencies² for the tertiary and school sectors in Australia, the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand assess and communicate quality and found differing practices.

Most agencies overseas have a specifically designed activity to assess provider quality or compliance. These activities may be at education product (e.g. programme/qualification/micro-credential) or organisation-level.

Most agencies publish a summary or full report about providers. Some agencies assign an overall, organisation-level quality rating. Below are some examples of different practices internationally:

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAAHE) uses a set of outcomes statements to indicate provider quality, for example '*meets / requires action*' to meet / *does not meet* the Home Office's quality assurance requirements for Educational oversight' or '*fully aligned / requires action*' to be fully aligned/ *not aligned* with the sector-agreed principles of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education'.

Australia

The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) does not publish reports or quality statements about providers. In contrast, it publishes the qualification integrity actions taken against providers.

Ireland

Ireland's qualifications are regulated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). QQI monitors and reviews providers to ensure they are implementing agreed quality assurance systems and to establish the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance procedures. Quality review reports and summary quality profiles are published on the QQI website and include **recommendations** and **commendations** from a QQI external review team. QQI also administers TrustEd, a statutory 'quality mark' awarded by QQI to higher education and English language education providers, designed for the international education market. It indicates that an institution has passed rigorous national standards to provide international students with secure, high-quality education and support services.

Scotland

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland recently transitioned to a new external peer review method for colleges and universities – the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER). TQER reviews an institution's effectiveness in meeting the principles of the Tertiary Quality Assurance Enhancement Framework. The review team makes a judgement on whether the institution is **effective, partially effective, or not effective** in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience it provides and enabling student success.

² The agencies include the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA); the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAAHE) UK; Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI); the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) UK; the Education Review Office (ERO) NZ; and the Academic Quality Agency NZ (disestablished).

Across New Zealand's education system, there are also different approaches:

- NZQA's own Managing National Assessment (MNA) Reviews for secondary schools are summarised with an overall organisational descriptor of how effectively the school ensures the credibility of assessment for national qualifications. NZQA rates school/kura assessment systems and practices as **highly effective, effective, or not yet effective**;
- The Education Review Office (ERO) completes a review of each school every three to four years and publishes a report, with 14 judgements about student success and wellbeing. There is no overall quality statement, but judgements are colour coded, providing a visual snapshot of where the school is '*excelling, doing well, working towards*, or there is *improvement required*';
- Matatāhuna-Universities Quality Assurance agency (UQAA) recently replaced the Academic Quality Assurance Agency (AQA) as the agency responsible for quality assurance of New Zealand universities. UQAA Quality assurance activities are currently in development. Previously, AQA carried out periodic audits of universities according to cycles, which examined the whole institution or specific themes, for example teaching and learning. The audit panel's findings included commendations, affirmations or recommendations, but no overall quality descriptor.

Some advantages of summarising quality assurance outcomes at an organisational/TEP-level are that it:

- provides an at-a-glance view of quality, including for non-technical experts
- facilitates general decision making for learners, regulators, and others
- encourages an organisation-wide approach to delivering quality education.

Disadvantages include:

- generalised descriptors may mask specific quality assurance concerns within specific programmes or dilute examples of high performance
- the descriptor can become overly high stakes, particularly if it is used beyond its intended purpose.

In developing a more nuanced approach to summarising a TEP's overall quality beyond compliant or non-compliant, it is important to acknowledge these

advantages and disadvantages, and that an overall quality descriptor requires updating regularly to be valid.

NZQA also recognises that TEPs already have their own measures and practices to drive quality outcomes. We are aiming to describe quality in a way that builds on and complements these.

A tailored, risk-informed approach

Quality in tertiary education and training is a dynamic concept. When determining a descriptor to summarise a TEP's overall quality, we will take into account TEP context and the materiality of quality assurance outcomes. This means we will consider:

- the size and type of TEP, and the qualifications (programmes) and/or micro-credentials it delivers
- what the quality assurance outcomes mean for learners and the integrity of their qualifications and credentials
- whether the quality issues are isolated or systemic, one-off or repeated.

We want a risk-informed approach to regulation that supports innovation and system improvement as well as quality. Our approach acknowledges that:

- NZQA's rigorous PTE registration processes and front-end approval activities provide assurance that TEPs are likely to have the ongoing capability to deliver quality education and training
- the primary, day-to-day responsibility for delivering quality education and training rests with the TEP, not the regulator (i.e. TEPs own their own quality)
- TEPs want to 'get it right'
- there may be some gaps in TEP processes and practices from time-to-time
- monitoring 100% of a TEP's delivery to confirm quality is not desirable or sustainable.

The quality criteria

NZQA Rules and the Code set out a range of criteria intended to support quality education and training.

Quality begins with NZQA's responsibility to provide assurance that any qualifications and micro-credentials listed on the NZQCF have a clear purpose and are likely to meet needs. For vocational qualifications and micro-

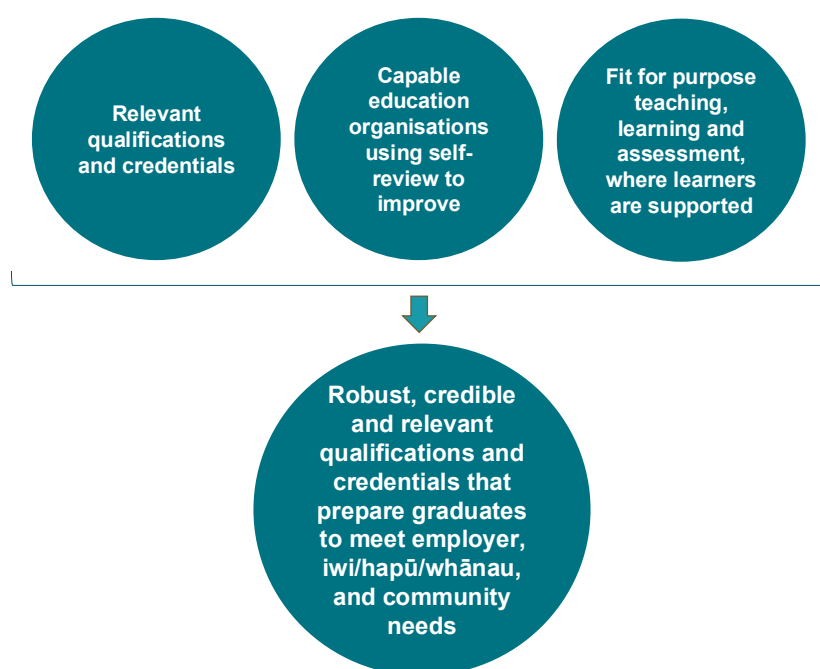
credentials, ISBs have a key role in ensuring this is the case. For other qualifications and micro-credentials, the TEP must demonstrate this purpose and need.

The next step in the quality pathway is ensuring that only capable providers are permitted to deliver qualifications and micro-credentials listed on the NZQCF. The new Quality Assurance of Tertiary Education Providers Rules 2026 (applicable to all providers) and the PTE Registration Rules provide this assurance.

Quality criteria in Programme and Micro-credential Approval Rules ensure TEPs have the capability to offer coherent pathways to qualifications and micro-credentials listed on the NZQCF. Accreditation Rules require TEPs to demonstrate the validity of the qualifications and micro-credentials they award, and the quality of outcomes learners achieve.

The Code makes sure that tertiary and international learners enrolled with TEPs are safe and supported, and that TEPs review their practice to support continuous improvement.

In summary:



Below are specific examples of criteria in Rules and the Code that support quality education and training.

Qualification and Micro-credential Listing and Operational rules 2026

- A suitable qualification type and level that aligns with the NZQCF qualification-type description
- The purpose of the qualification including its relevance to students, industry, employers, professions, whānau, hapū, iwi, hapori Māori or community groups
- A comprehensive needs analysis, stakeholder profile and attestations
- A description of the knowledge, skills, and attributes that the graduate will be able to demonstrate upon achieving the qualification
- Requirements for awarding and reporting the award of qualification or micro-credential
- The intended period for ongoing review.

Quality Assurance of Tertiary Education Providers Rules 2026

- Implement a Quality Management System (QMS) that applies across all aspects of a TEP's education or training business including:
 - organisational self-review of the quality of education or training provided and outcomes achieved by students (including any work-based learning)
 - financial, personnel, information, and risk management
 - programme and micro-credential management, including development, review, resources, assessment and moderation, academic integrity
 - fair and equitable management of student complaints
- Engage in NZQA monitoring of qualifications, programmes, micro-credentials, or management of its education or training business, which may include site visits
- Meeting NZQA requirements in relation to subcontracting, and assessment records retention.

Pastoral Care Code

- Regularly review the quality of learner wellbeing and safety practices to achieve the outcomes and practices of the Code and publish a self-review report
- Identify emerging concerns about learners' wellbeing and safety or behaviour and take all reasonable steps to connect learners quickly to culturally appropriate social, medical, and mental health services
- Foster learning environments that are safe and designed to support positive learning experiences of diverse learner groups.

Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2026

- Clear, relevant and appropriate regulations for admission, credit recognition and transfer, recognition of prior learning programme length and structure, Practical and work-based components, assessment procedures, authenticity of student work, progression within the programme and completion
- Fair, valid, and consistent assessment methodology, and an effective system for moderation of assessment materials and decisions
- Capability and capacity to support sustained delivery of the programme through appropriate academic staffing, teaching facilities, educational and physical resources, and support services
- Effective processes for monitoring the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders, and for reviewing programme regulations and content
- Continue to deliver the programme as approved by NZQA, and notify and/or seek approval from NZQA for any changes
- Meeting ISB programme endorsement requirements
- Verifying English language proficiency of international students prior to enrolment.

Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2026

- Evidence of the need for the micro-credential, supported by stakeholders and, where appropriate, the relevant ISB
- Requirements for admission, credit recognition and transfer, recognition of prior learning, length and structure, assessment methods, and completion are clearly set out
- The TEP has the capability and capacity to:
 - deliver the micro-credential, including suitably qualified or experienced staff, facilities, educational and physical resources, and student support services
 - ensure assessment materials and decisions are fair, valid, consistent and appropriate for the level, given the stated learning outcomes
- Effective process for regular review of the micro-credential that assesses its currency and content, outcomes for students, and the TEP's ongoing capability to provide the micro-credential.

We propose that the overall descriptor of TEP quality is based on **four core quality criteria** aligned to NZQA Rules and the Code, that make the most significant contribution to the purpose of iQAF, i.e. that learners are achieving robust, credible, and relevant qualifications and credentials.

These are:

- 1. Programme and micro-credential design**
- 2. Delivery of education and training**
- 3. Assessment practice**
- 4. Quality management system implementation.**

TEPs and NZQA have a shared responsibility in gathering evidence in relation to the quality criteria:

- **TEPs** are responsible for carrying out an annual self-review to understand:
 - the quality of education or training provided
 - the effectiveness of the tertiary education provider's quality assurance systems and practice
 - the outcomes achieved by learners.
- Each TEP must also provide a report on their self-review to NZQA every year that:
 - identifies areas for improvement arising from its self-review and the plan to address those areas
 - confirms its compliance with relevant requirements of the Act, NZQA Rules and the Code
 - describes its practice on specific themes or areas set out in an annual schedule published on NZQA's website.
- **NZQA** is responsible for applying its regulatory levers (approvals, monitoring, and compliance activities) to provide independent assurance of the extent to which a TEP has the ongoing capability to deliver high-quality education and training.

Within the quality assurance practices underpinning these criteria, TEPs are able to engage with NZQA through a Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance lens should they wish to do so.

Quality criterion 1: Programme and micro-credential design

TEPs are responsible for designing programmes leading to qualifications, and/or micro-credentials listed on the NZQCF. To ensure programmes and/or micro-credentials are likely to result in graduates who can be and do what the

outcomes of the credential require, TEPs must apply to NZQA and meet rigorous approval and accreditation criteria.

High quality applications for approval and accreditation are a crucial factor in NZQA's risk-informed approach to regulation. Like the day-to-day delivery of education and training, TEPs have the primary responsibility for ensuring that programmes and micro-credentials are well designed, informed by NZQA Rules and guidance, and show evidence of internal quality assurance.

Part of NZQA's role as a modern regulator is to help TEPs get it right. We want to do this by ensuring our guidelines for different application types are kept up to date, and by sharing system-level insights into the quality of TEP programmes and/or micro-credentials, rather than providing repeated guidance to approve an individual application.

Once a TEP is established (e.g. registered as a PTE), we expect **the majority** of its applications for programmes and/or micro-credentials to meet approvals and accreditation criteria. As a result, we propose a threshold of **75%** of a TEP's most recent applications will meet the following quality requirements:

- the application is approved by NZQA, with a maximum of one request for further information per application
- minimal guidance is provided by NZQA to meet rule criteria
- the application is not withdrawn by the TEP due to NZQA quality concerns.

We also acknowledge that NZQA has not explicitly reported on the quality of TEP applications in its previous quality assurance approach. Therefore, we propose this quality criterion carries the lowest weighting towards an overall quality descriptor (a score of 0-1 out of 10).

Quality criterion 2: Delivery of education and training

Delivery of high-quality education and training is core business for TEPs. Consequently, we propose it forms the largest contribution to an overall quality descriptor.

NZQA seeks to verify the existence of high-quality education and training via our monitoring regulatory lever.

We use the term 'monitoring' to cover a range of activities related to NZQA Rules and the Code. Monitoring activities vary depending on the type of education and training each TEP delivers and NZQA's risk-assessment. For example, we may monitor delivery through moderating the assessments of

non-standard based programmes or micro-credentials, or we may interview learners, or conduct site visits.

In general, we look for evidence that:

- Programmes and micro-credentials are delivered as approved
- Programmes and micro-credentials are regularly reviewed by the TEP to monitor the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders
- Assessment practices are fair, valid and consistent
- Learner wellbeing and safety is supported
- TEPs have good governance and management.

Where possible, NZQA will integrate monitoring activities to minimise compliance burden for TEPs.

For this quality criterion, we propose setting a variable score (0-4 out of 10), reflective of NZQA's most recent monitoring activities and reports on the quality of education and training delivery. The score would be based on the percentage of most recent monitoring activities achieving a 'satisfactory outcome'.

NZQA will publish and/or refresh guidance for different types of monitoring activity, including what requirements must be met to achieve a satisfactory outcome. The requirements will reflect criteria set out in NZQA Rules and the Code.

As an example, in our current monitoring of [sub-degree programmes](#), a satisfactory outcome is where a TEP 'meets' or 'partially meets' monitoring requirements.

Quality criterion 3: Assessment practice

High-quality assessment practice provides assurance that learners have achieved the learning outcomes for which they are credentialed. This is an important aspect in confirming the credibility, relevance, and transferability of skills and knowledge gained through New Zealand qualifications and micro-credentials.

The purpose of moderation is to confirm that assessment is fair, valid, and consistent in relation to the learning outcomes of a programme leading to a qualification or a micro-credential. *Pre-assessment* moderation confirms that an assessment activity will generate valid evidence to inform a judgement about a learner's skills and knowledge. *Post-assessment* or 'onsite/live'

moderation provides assurance that assessors are making valid and reliable assessment judgements.

For this criterion the focus is on post-assessment moderation, i.e. verifying assessor decisions:

- Where TEPs deliver standards-based programmes or micro-credentials, the outcomes of post-assessment moderation conducted by the relevant standard setting body/bodies (SSB) will contribute to this criterion.
- For programmes or micro-credentials that do not include standards (including degree-level and above) NZQA monitoring activities will include verification of a sample of assessor decisions from that programme or micro-credential.

NZQA acknowledges there may be variability in the quality of assessor judgements within and across a TEP's delivery scope. However, implementing rigorous, organisation-wide quality management systems for assessment and moderation is a core requirement for TEPs. We therefore propose setting post-assessment moderation targets that reflect our experience of monitoring system-wide moderation outcomes.

Over time, NZQA has found the quality of a TEP's assessment practice to be a powerful proxy for overall TEP quality. Where we have found issues with assessment practice in a particular programme, there are often gaps in the TEP's broader quality management system. As a result, we propose the assessment practice quality criterion carries a significant weighting towards the overall quality descriptor (0-3 out of 10).

Quality criterion 4: Quality management system implementation

TEPs are required to meet compliance obligations specified in NZQA Rules and the Code. Obligations include various organisational and reporting requirements such as:

- maintaining an up-to-date quality management system
- completing an annual self-review and reporting to NZQA
- Code self-review publication
- academic record keeping
- credit reporting
- financial returns
- student fee protection, and
- implementing action plans post-monitoring (if applicable).

Meeting compliance obligations contributes to the overall descriptor because it provides NZQA with confidence in the governance and management of a TEP in ensuring it has robust, effective organisational systems and processes for providing quality education and training.

Where possible, we will integrate compliance activities to reduce burden on providers. This includes working with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) for funded TEPs, across data reporting, audits/reviews, and Investment Plan evaluations.

The effectiveness of a TEP's systems for supporting quality education and training and quality improvement is best demonstrated *in practice*, through the quality of its programme design, delivery, assessment, and review processes. These are measured through the three previous quality criteria. As a result, this quality criterion, focused more on compliance, carries a lower weighting than some others (0-2 out of 10).

NZQA will publish a list of requirements that contribute to quality management system implementation. A TEP will be assigned a score based on whether it meets all, meets most, or does not meet the published requirements.

We are also considering whether there should be a minimum score for this criterion, that a TEP must achieve to be deemed 'Effective' or 'Highly Effective' overall. Please refer to the consultation questions on page 24.

The TEP quality descriptor

A TEP quality descriptor is intended to be:

- a best-fit with the quality criteria, acknowledging that TEPs are diverse in nature and some characteristics will be more relevant than others
- based on cumulative outcomes of NZQA (and where relevant the SSB) quality assurance activities; not determined by a single 'event'.

Table 1 shows how each of the four quality criteria would contribute to an overall TEP quality descriptor.

Table 1: Quality criteria contribution to the overall descriptor

Quality criteria	Description	Contribution (out of 10)
Programme and micro-credential design <i>% most recent applications meet quality requirements</i>	75-100%	1
	0-74%	0
Delivery of education and training <i>% most recent monitoring activities satisfactory</i>	80-100%	4
	60-79%	3
	40-59%	2
	20-39%	1
	0-19%	0
Assessment practice <i>% most recent assessor decisions verified</i>	75-100%	3
	50-74%	2
	25-49%	1
	0-24%	0
Quality management system implementation <i>Meeting expectations of organisational systems for supporting quality education and training and quality improvement</i>	Meets	2
	Meets most	1
	Does not meet	0

Table 2 sets out the proposed quality descriptors and corresponding thresholds, and Appendix 1 includes some TEP examples of how the descriptor would apply.

We propose using the term ‘effective’ for the overall descriptor because it means *producing a desired or intended result or outcome*. For iQAF, the desired outcome is **effective** education and training that supports learners to achieve credible and robust qualifications and credentials.

Table 2: The overall quality descriptor

Highly Effective	Effective	Not Effective
Meets quality criteria [9-10]	Meets most quality criteria [5-8]	Does not meet quality criteria [1-4]

Statutory actions will influence the descriptor

NZQA uses statutory actions, such as compliance notices and conditions on TEP approvals and accreditations, where we have concerns about quality and to minimise risk to learners. Statutory actions relating to TEP non-compliance, corrective action or intervention are published on the [NZQA website](#).

NZQA will not assign a TEP with a published statutory action a ‘highly effective’ overall quality descriptor, regardless of its cumulative threshold score.

In most cases we expect to assign these TEPs a ‘not effective’ descriptor.

In some cases, depending on the nature of the statutory action and the proportion of the TEP’s learners impacted, NZQA may assign an ‘effective’ overall quality descriptor to a TEP with a statutory action.



Questions

1. Do you think the proposed approach will be effective in summarising overall TEP quality? What other options would you suggest?
2. Do you think ‘highly effective, effective, and not effective’ are appropriate overall descriptors? What other options would you suggest?

3. For the 'quality management system implementation' criterion, should there be a minimum score required for a TEP to be assigned the 'Highly effective' and 'Effective' descriptors? What would you suggest?
4. Looking at the provider examples in Appendix 1, do you think the proposed approach sufficiently reflects the diverse nature of TEPs, and the materiality of quality criteria outcomes?

Issuing, updating and publishing the quality descriptor

The overall TEP quality descriptor will be publicly available on the NZQA website and we propose it is updated quarterly, by exception. This will provide students and stakeholders with high-level and, importantly, up-to-date information about the quality of a provider.

If significant concerns arise out of any quality assurance activity, the descriptor will be updated within a shorter timeframe. For example, where there is:

- significant or repeated non-compliance with the Act, NZQA Rules, or the Code
- a significant change in a TEP's circumstance, which detrimentally impacts on delivery and learners.

Information about an individual TEP, including the outcomes of NZQA quality assurance activities, is recorded and kept up to date on the TEP's portal on the NZQA website. This ensures NZQA and the TEP have a shared view of the activities and outcomes that contribute to the quality descriptor. We are working on improving the presentation and accessibility of information on the portal as part of NZQA's technology improvement project.

If a TEP chooses to use the quality descriptor in its communications or marketing material, NZQA will expect the TEP to keep its descriptor up to date and aligned with information on NZQA website.

We propose that the first publication of TEP descriptors will occur from July 2027. This timeframe provides an opportunity for providers to continue maturing their quality assurance processes during early implementation of the iQAF, and for NZQA to ensure we are drawing on robust, quality-assured information.

An important benefit of iQAF is that it will provide a more up-to-date view of TEP quality. For this reason, we intend to base the overall descriptor on the most recent information for each quality criterion.

When descriptors are introduced, we will need to determine an appropriate timeframe for 'the most recent information'. The amount of information available for each criterion will vary across TEPs, with some TEPs delivering only one or two education products and rarely submitting an application to NZQA.

Once the initial TEP descriptor has been established, if no activity occurs in relation to a criterion over the period, the outcome assigned from the previous

period will carry over. For example, if a TEP has not submitted an application in the past six months and was previously assigned 'Met' for the 'applications and approvals', it will retain 'Met' for the criterion.

Requesting a review

TEPs will be able to request a review of their overall TEP descriptor. As the descriptor is calculated from objective performance data, we do not envisage many reviews.

Where a TEP asks for a review, we will provide a template and request supporting evidence.

Reviews will be charged at NZQA's standard fee for service rate (currently \$240 per hour GST exclusive).

Data and information sharing with other agencies and ISBs

NZQA data and information is used to inform other entities' processes, including the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), Immigration New Zealand (INZ), Education New Zealand, ISBs, and other regulators with an interest in TEP quality.

TEC will use the overall TEP quality descriptor and other NZQA data and information (for example finalised monitoring reports) to inform investment decisions, including flexible funding eligibility, additional funding requests, the assessment of annual Investment Plans and funding decisions.

INZ may use the overall TEP quality descriptor and supporting NZQA quality assurance information to inform immigration policy advice and settings relating to international students. The descriptor may also contribute to INZ's understanding of provider-related risk within the immigration system. The descriptor would be considered alongside other relevant information and would not be relied upon in isolation.

Education New Zealand will use the overall TEP quality descriptor and other NZQA data and information to deliver strategies, programmes, and activities to promote New Zealand international education, and provide support to TEPs on strategies to promote sector coordination and professional development.

NZQA and ISBs will also share data and information to inform our respective quality assurance activities.

Consistent with the aim of taking a more integrated approach to quality assurance, we want to minimise requests for the same data from TEPs and reduce compliance burden wherever possible.

We are currently developing or updating our Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) for information sharing with other entities, and we will clarify with TEPs the scope of each MoU once they have been finalised.



Questions

5. Do you have any comments or suggestions for issuing and publishing the overall quality descriptor?
6. NZQA will need to use outcomes from quality assurance activities over a specific timeframe to determine an initial overall descriptor for each TEP. What timeframe would you suggest is appropriate?

How to have your say

NZQA seeks written submissions on the proposed quality descriptors by **Monday 7 September**.

You can respond:

- Online: [Qualtrics link](#)
- Email: Send your submission as a Microsoft Word document or searchable PDF to QAFredesign@nzqa.govt.nz.

Once submitted, your information will become a formal record for this consultation.

If you have any questions about the submissions process or would like to provide your feedback in another way, please contact us at the above email address.

Consultation questions

We are interested in your feedback on any aspect of the proposal and the following:

- Question 1.** Do you think the proposed approach will be effective in summarising overall TEP quality? What other options would you suggest?
- Question 2.** Do you think 'highly effective, effective, and not effective' are appropriate overall descriptors? What other options would you suggest?
- Question 3.** For the 'quality management system implementation' criterion, should there be a minimum score required for a TEP to be assigned the 'Highly effective' and 'Effective' descriptors? What would you suggest?
- Question 4.** Looking at the provider examples in Appendix 1, do you think the proposed approach sufficiently reflects the diverse nature of TEPs, and the materiality of quality criteria outcomes?
- Question 5.** Do you have any comments or suggestions for issuing and publishing the overall quality descriptor?

Question 6. NZQA will need to use outcomes from quality assurance activities over a specific timeframe to determine an initial overall descriptor for each TEP. What timeframe would you suggest is appropriate?

Use of information

The information provided in your submission will be used to inform the development of processes and rules to summarise and describe TEP quality. All personal information you supply to NZQA in either an online or written submission will only be used for the intended purpose. We will retain this information in accordance with NZQA policies and processes.

NZQA will not use or disclose your personal information without your consent, unless authorised or required by law. We may contact you directly if we require further clarification of any matters in your submission. Your submission may be publicly disclosed in official documents or as required by the Official Information Act 1982.

If your submission contains any information that is confidential, or you do not want us to publish, then in your submission please include 'CONFIDENTIAL' for the relevant information with an outline of any objection you or your organisation may have to the release of information. Please identify which parts you consider should be withheld, along with the grounds for doing so.

Please indicate clearly if you do not wish your organisation name to be included in official documents that NZQA may publish.

For further information on how your information is managed, please visit [NZQA's website](#).

After the consultation

We will consider your feedback on how NZQA proposes to summarise overall TEP quality and publish a summary of submissions on the NZQA website.

NZQA reviews all submissions received through the online questionnaire platform and consultation inbox. The questions from the consultation document are used to structure the analysis and collate themes.

Each submission will be read and categorised according to the relevant consultation question. NZQA uses Microsoft CoPilot to group and summarise the feedback under each category. We then review the accuracy of the

summarised feedback under each category, further synthesising or refining the text to ensure it reflects the content of submissions.

Pending the outcome of the consultation, we will seek your feedback on draft rules to support the implementation of quality descriptors from July 2027.

We will also publish tertiary quality indicators and other guidance to help TEPs meet the requirements of the new Rules.

Appendix 1: Scenarios for how the descriptor would apply to TEPs

These scenarios show how different quality criteria scores would influence the overall quality descriptor. We recognise there are many other scenarios.

Quality criteria	Provider A <i>A medium-sized provider delivering 10 programmes (sub-degree and degree)</i>	Provider B <i>A small provider offering two standards-based micro-credentials, with two skill standards in each micro-credential</i>	Provider C <i>A large provider offering 25 non-standards-based programmes and micro-credentials across all levels of the NZQCF</i>	Provider D <i>A very large provider offering 50 programmes across all levels of the NZQCF</i>
Programme and micro-credential design	All recent applications meet quality requirements (100%).	No recent applications. Retain previously assigned outcome.	40% of most recent applications meet quality requirements.	Over 90% of most recent applications meet quality requirements.
	Contribution to overall quality: [1]	Contribution to overall quality: [1]	Contribution to overall quality: [0]	Contribution to overall quality: [1]
Delivery of education and training	All three recent monitoring activities have a satisfactory outcome (100%).	No recent monitoring. Retain previously assigned outcome.	One out of the four most recent monitoring activities has a satisfactory outcome (25%).	Six out of the seven most recent monitoring activities have a satisfactory outcome (86%). The remaining activity, with a high proportion of the TEP's learners, resulted in NZQA taking statutory action.

	Contribution to overall quality: [4]	Contribution to overall quality: [4]	Contribution to overall quality: [1]	Contribution to overall quality: [statutory action]
Assessment practice	92% of assessor decisions are verified across most recent SSB post-assessment moderation results.	66.7% of assessor decisions are verified across most recent SSB post-assessment moderation results.	33% of assessor decisions are verified across most recent NZQA moderation results.	100% of assessor decisions are verified across most recent SSB post-assessment moderation results.
	Contribution to overall quality: [3]	Contribution to overall quality: [2]	Contribution to overall quality: [1]	Contribution to overall quality: [3]
Quality management system implementation	Met all organisational and reporting requirements.	Met requirements but were late in submitting documentations and reporting.	Met organisational and reporting requirements.	Met organisational and reporting requirements.
	Contribution to overall quality: [2]	Contribution to overall quality: [1]	Contribution to overall quality: [2]	Contribution to overall quality: [2]
Descriptor	Highly Effective [10]	Effective [8]	Not Effective [4]	Not Effective*

* NZQA will not assign this TEP a 'Highly effective' descriptor due to the statutory action. Depending on the materiality of the statutory action, the TEP will be assigned a 'not effective' (as in this case) or an 'effective' descriptor. Refer statutory action information of page 19.