

Aide-Memoire: Application of Unspecified Credit(s) to School Leaver qualifications in response to Adverse Events

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister of Education
From:	Dr Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive
Date:	8 August 2023
Reference:	OC00384

Purpose

1. This aide memoire is to update you of NZQA's work in to mitigate prolonged disruptions to teaching, learning and assessment of NCEA due to the impact of adverse events such as destructive weather events or other natural disasters, and adverse public health events.

Background

2. Cyclone Gabrielle affected New Zealand from 12 to 16 February 2023, resulting in the declaration of a state of emergency on 14 February.
3. As identified in your letter of expectation to the NZQA Board Chair, Hon Tracey Martin, [JT3532 refers], we are likely to face further adverse events in the future, such as pandemics or those generated by climate change.
4. Where an Adverse Event has prevented students from accessing assessment opportunities, in most cases schools can use the flexibility of the NCEA qualification to mitigate the impact of the event and meet individual student needs.
5. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, in response to the ongoing and significant impact of the disruption of COVID-19 on teaching, learning and assessment opportunities, changes were made to NCEA and University Entrance. These changes were put in place to help ensure learners had a fair opportunity to achieve their NCEAs and/or University Entrance.
6. In March 2023, NZQA and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) notified all schools that Learning Recognition Credits (a measure to respond on a large scale to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic) were not available to ākonga in 2023. However, we also referred to the recent weather-related disruptions and noted that, as per the response to the Canterbury earthquake, where we implemented a range of interventions to mitigate the disruption to teaching, learning and assessment from school closures, should the need arise, we would revisit these arrangements to determine the most appropriate options to deliver equitable outcomes for affected students.
7. Over the last few months, schools in the cyclone affected areas of Tairāwhiti and Hawkes Bay have raised concerns with NZQA and the the Ministry about their potential inability to meet students' assessment for qualifications goals due to the significant subsequent loss of teaching, learning and assessment time.

Discussion

8. Informed by discussions with the Hawke's Bay Secondary Schools Principals' Association and with the Ministry of Education (MoE), we have developed an *Adverse Event Framework* (Appendix 1) to identify when an event occurs, where the management of the event is located (school, NZQA, or NZQA and MoE), and possible interventions.
9. The levels and management of the interventions are informed by the period and nature of the disruption on teaching, learning and assessment and/or student access to assessment opportunities.
10. The Framework includes the introduction of a new level of intervention (managed by NZQA) which includes the provision of 'unspecified credits'¹ which can be applied to qualification(s) for eligible school leavers.
11. This intervention sits within a suite of three levels of intervention in one or more events that affect students access to teaching, learning and assessment opportunities. The three levels, which are based around the impact and overall length of disruption, are: school based, NZQA based, and joint Ministry of Education/NZQA based:
 - a. School based mitigations - schools use the flexibility of the NCEA qualification to mitigate the impact of an event and meet individual student need.
 - b. NZQA based – schools have implemented mitigation measures and a school leaver misses out on the qualification by up to five credits, a school can apply to NZQA for an Unspecified Credit(s) entitlement.
 - c. NZQA and MoE jointly manage disruption, as appropriate – the highest possible intervention by NZQA/MoE is modification to the qualification requirements following a critical event. The event may affect a region, or several regions.
12. The intervention has been designed to maintain the integrity of NCEA whilst also addressing the impact of the loss of teaching, learning and assessment opportunities due to one or more adverse events for an extended period (20-29 days) on a specific group of students (school leavers who have missed out on achieving their qualifications by up to five credits). For learners, who are still at school, the flexibility of the NCEA qualification enables them to complete the qualification over more than one year.
13. On 15 June, the Adverse Event Framework was presented to and confirmed at a special meeting of your NCEA Principals' Advisory Group. The Framework was also discussed with NZQA's Secondary Qualifications Advisory Group on 20 July.

Provision of unspecified credits to School Leaver qualifications in response to Adverse Events

14. Where one or more adverse events are of such scale or intensity that there is a direct and significant prolonged impact on a school and student, up to five (5) Unspecified Credits can be applied to students meeting the following eligibility criteria:
 - Evidence of having accessed a range of documented, school-managed mitigations (see Appendix 1)
 - Evidence of 20 - 29 days of prolonged disruption during the current academic year due to the impact of the event(s)
 - Having achieved within 5 credits of the requirement for the highest level of qualification available for their current academic year

¹ Unspecified credits are credits which can be used towards the achievement of a qualification, but are not assigned to any standard, subject or course, do not appear on the Record of Achievement, nor have a grade attached to them (Achieved, Merit, Excellence).

- Leaving school during or at the end of the affected academic year.
15. To give effect to this change, an amendment to the *NZQA Assessment Rules for Schools, TEOs assessing against Achievement Standards, and Candidates 2023* was required. The NZQA Board Chair approved the amendment to the Rules on 7 August 2023 under her delegated authority [OC00388: NZQA Assessment Rules for Schools, TEOs assessing against Achievement Standards, and Candidates 2023, Amendment No.1 refers].

Communications

16. NZQA has a communications plan to ensure students, schools, peak bodies and key stakeholders are aware of the Adverse Events Framework and how it will operate, and available support.
17. Communications were sent to schools, peak bodies and key stakeholders once the Rules were signed by the NZQA Board Chair.

Next steps

18. To implement the response, NZQA has prepared *Guidelines for schools managing assessment following an Adverse Event*.
19. NZQA School Relationship Managers (SRMs) will continue to support the needs of schools and their students to discuss options, clarify next steps and determine any assistance needed to maintain continuity of assessment.
20. NZQA will monitor student achievement towards qualifications to support school tracking of achievement results. Should a school identify that they expect to apply for Unexpected Credit(s), NZQA SRMs will work with schools to support them through the process.
21. NZQA will keep you informed of further developments.



Dr Grant Klinkum

Chief Executive, NZQA

8 August 2023



Hon Jan Tinetti

Minister of Education

13 / 08 / 2023

Adverse Event(s) Framework

Presenting Issues	Management	Possible Interventions
<p>School closed or significantly disrupted for up to 19 days during which students have no access to teaching, learning and assessment opportunities AND/OR</p> <p>Students unable to access teaching, learning and assessment opportunities for up to 19 school days as a consequence of the event.</p> <p>Affects some or all students.</p> <p>Not all students are equally affected during or beyond the Adverse event(s) with students experiencing varying impact.</p>	<p>School manages the disruption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using credits gained at one level to count towards more than one certificate. • Removing pre-requisites to reduce the burden of completing lower-level assessments. • Reviewing and modifying the assessment programme if required. For example, reducing the number, range and timing of standards offered to students - focusing on what is required for the next step in a student pathway. • Applying missed and late assessment processes to internal assessment. • Recognition of alternative learning/prior learning • Enabling students to meet the requirements of more than one NCEA qualification within a single year. • Schools offering multilevel assessment both within an individual subject/course or across the subjects/courses in an individual student's assessment programme. • Students completing a qualification by undertaking additional assessment at summer school or returning to school in the following year to undertake further study and assessment and on application be awarded the NCEA qualification before the end of the year. • Students completing an NCEA qualification while undertaking tertiary study after leaving school. • Using hybrid/online/remote learning and assessment where appropriate. • Use evidence gathering templates for internals to remove the need for formal assessment events.
<p>School closed or significantly disrupted for 20-29 school days during which students have no access to teaching, learning and assessment opportunities, AND/OR</p> <p>Students unable to access teaching, learning and assessment opportunities for 20-29 school days as a consequence of the event.</p> <p>Affects some or all students.</p> <p>Not all students are equally affected during or beyond the adverse event(s).</p>	<p>NZQA (in consultation with MoE) manages the disruption on a case-by-case basis at local, regional, or national level.</p>	<p>Implement school mitigations as appropriate</p> <p>Access Unspecified Credit(s) due to an Adverse Event(s) for the award of an NCEA for students who have not met credit requirements, as approved by NZQA</p>
<p>School closed or significantly disrupted for 30 or more school days during which students have no access to teaching, learning and assessment opportunities,</p> <p>Affects all students.</p>	<p>NZQA and MoE jointly manage disruption, as appropriate</p>	<p>Implement school mitigations as appropriate</p> <p>An extended period of extra teaching / learning may be required to mitigate the disruption.</p> <p>The highest possible intervention by NZQA / MoE is modification to the qualification requirements following a critical event. The event may affect a region, or several regions.</p>

Please note, should an Adverse Event occur close to the examination period, NZQA will work with the school(s) to determine whether additional interventions are required