

Briefing: The UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
From:	Dr Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive
Date:	23 September 2022
Reference:	CR25177

Purpose

1. The purpose of this briefing is to inform you of the steps the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) proposes to take to enable New Zealand's ratification of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) [Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#) ("the Global Convention").

Background

2. The Global Convention to promote and strengthen international cooperation in higher education was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference on 25 November 2019.
3. The Convention currently has 17 State Parties and requires three more State Parties to enter into force. New Zealand has the opportunity to be one of the founding member states to ratify the Convention. By actively participating in establishing the supporting network of recognition bodies as the Convention comes into effect, New Zealand will be in a stronger position to influence global approaches to supporting transparent, fair and equitable qualifications recognition.

Discussion

4. This is the first United Nations treaty on higher education qualifications recognition with a global scope. The Convention provides a multilateral framework for improved global recognition of qualifications and partial studies (including micro-credentials). It establishes universal principles for improving recognition practices and will facilitate inter-regional student and employment mobility.
5. The Convention builds on and aligns with existing regional conventions on the recognition of qualifications, including the Lisbon and Tokyo Conventions to which New Zealand is a signatory. These regional conventions already commit New Zealand to many of the same mutual recognition actions as the Global Convention.
6. Aspects of the Global Convention that strengthen elements of recognition related to partial studies, prior learning, different learning modes and transnational education, are generally

already able to be met through NZQA's existing processes or can be readily met through adaptation of those processes.

7. Benefits to New Zealand entering the Global Convention could include strengthening:
 - New Zealand's international reputation for high quality education
 - the recognition and understanding of New Zealand's qualifications
 - the mobility of students between education institutions globally which supports the New Zealand international education strategy 2022-30
 - global best practice networks for qualifications recognition.

Next steps

8. NZQA is currently working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) to draft a National Interest Analysis in preparation for a Cabinet Paper for your consideration.
9. A targeted public consultation period is required prior to Cabinet approval. NZQA as the lead agency for the work would facilitate that process, which will include:
 - consultation with MFAT and the Ministry of Education (already underway) as well as other relevant agencies as required
 - public consultation including relevant stakeholders and interest groups such as education providers who make admissions decisions for international students
 - engagement with Māori to identify areas of relevance to Māori interests
 - consultation with the Government of Tokelau.
10. A potential timeline for the ratification of the Global Convention is attached (see Appendix 1), which details the involvement of your office and the Ministry of Education.
11. If Cabinet approves New Zealand's ratification of the Global Convention, the National Interest Analysis and text of the Global Convention will be presented to the House of Representatives to undergo Parliamentary Treaty Examination as set out in Standing Orders 405 – 408.
12. Ratification of the Global Convention requires the execution of an instrument of ratification by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, expressing the intent of the State to be bound by the treaty. If Cabinet are in support of ratifying the Global Convention, the signing of this instrument of ratification could potentially occur in the first half of 2023.

Recommended Actions

13. NZQA recommends that you:

- a) note NZQA's preparatory work to support, subject to Cabinet approval, ratification of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications.

Noted

- b) provide feedback to NZQA on the proposal, including whether to proceed to prepare a Cabinet paper for your consideration.

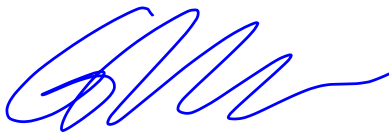
Agree / Disagree



Dr Grant Klinkum

Chief Executive

23 September 2022



Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

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Appendix 1: Indicative Timeline for the Ratification of the Global Convention

What	Who	When (Earliest Date)
Draft National Interest Analysis and Cabinet Paper	NZQA in consultation with MFAT and Ministry of Education	October 2022
Submit draft Cabinet Paper and National Interest Analysis to the Minister of Education for feedback	NZQA / Minister's Office	October 2022
Consultation period begins	NZQA	November 2022
Consultation period complete	NZQA	December 2022
Cabinet Paper and National Interest Analysis to Minister for referral to Cabinet	NZQA in consultation with MFAT and Ministry of Education	December 2022
Cabinet Paper and National Interest Analysis to Cabinet Office	Minister's Office	December 2022
Cabinet Paper and National Interest Analysis to Cabinet External Relations and Security Committee	Cabinet Office	January/February 2023
Cabinet Paper and National Interest Analysis to Cabinet for approval to ratify the treaty	Cabinet Office	February 2023
National Interest Analysis and treaty text presented in the House	MFAT (Legal Division)	March 2023
National Interest Analysis to Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee	March 2023
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee Report Back	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee	April 2023
Minister of Foreign Affairs signs the Instrument of Ratification	MFAT (Legal Division)	April 2023
Instrument of Ratification deposited with UNESCO	NZQA	April 2023