

NZQA Tertiary Education and Skills Update for Minister Simmonds

Key Achievements from November 2023 to November 2024

Integrated Quality Assurance Framework (Minister Simmonds)

- NZQA has this month started public consultation on a modernised, fit-for-purpose Quality Assurance Framework to regulate tertiary education organisations (excluding universities). The previous framework was established in 2009. The changing tertiary education environment and sector feedback means that it is time for another step-change. The revised framework aims to:
 - ensure learner, employer, and community interests are protected
 - add value to tertiary providers and the system as a whole
 - minimise compliance for high-performing providers.
- NZQA is consulting on the quality assurance cornerstones that set out roles and responsibilities, the enablers of compliance and continuous improvement and the levers for NZQA as the regulator to effect change where needed.

Code of Practice for Pastoral Care (Minister Simmonds)

- In August 2024, NZQA published a [Summary report on student accommodation monitoring](#) up until 2023. Areas of good practice and improvement were identified, but no significant concerns were found during the monitoring of tertiary student accommodation. As a risk-based regulator, NZQA has shifted its focus to looking at the quality of homestays, particularly for school children.
- As a capability-building agency, NZQA provided 25 workshops and information sessions to learners, providers and key stakeholders across the education sector with over 500 participants. NZQA also hosted 7 focus groups on homestay and offshore provision to understand the best ways to support providers and learners.

Skills Standards (Minister Simmonds)

- Skills Standards are being introduced to replace Unit Standards to make standards more outcome focused. In addition, Skills Standards are intended to be the mandatory building blocks of vocational qualifications and micro-credentials, which prevents duplication and promotes portability of learning. The first 144 Skills Standards have been approved over this last year, including two qualifications with a full set of skills standards.

New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) (Ministers Stanford and Simmonds)

- The NZQCF is at the heart of New Zealand's education system, providing information about quality assured qualifications and credentials to learners, employers and international organisations.

- NZQA is this month completing [public consultation on an updated Framework and Rules](#). This work has been expedited to ensure the consistency, credibility, flexibility and portability of all New Zealand qualifications and credentials.
- NZQA is proposing amendments so that all qualification type and level descriptions are up-to-date and to include micro-credentials (a world-first). Proposals also include further embedding the transferable skills of critical thinking, collaboration and communication in our national framework.

English Language Requirements (Minister Simmonds)

- NZQA has also taken the opportunity to consult on updating its Rules, and proposes some changes to the English language requirements for international students. One part is to maintain the integrity of the education and student visa system by clarifying a requirement for in-person testing and a requirement for providers to verify test results. The second part is to reduce compliance.
- NZQA is proposing to accept secondary school English as evidence of proficiency sufficient for student to undertake higher education from Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.
- To reduce barriers for Pacific students, NZQA is proposing to add Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to the list of countries where we accept education in English as evidence of proficiency.

INTERNATIONAL

The UNESCO Global Convention (Ministers Stanford and Simmonds)

- In September 2024, New Zealand became the 32nd country to formally ratify the Global Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education.
- UNESCO qualifications recognition conventions require signatories to remove barriers to recognition, combat document fraud and provide fair and transparent evaluation of qualifications to support learner and labour mobility.
- The Global Convention also gives New Zealand access to a network of technical expertise and research, and further enhances the credibility of New Zealand qualifications around the world. It comes into force from 17 December 2024.

Pacific Qualifications Recognition (Ministers Stanford and Simmonds)

- NZQA worked closely with MoE and MFAT to support the Realm of New Zealand by establishing or improving NCEA delivery. New Zealand is exploring the possibility of an interagency approach to developing MOUs with Niue and NCEA support for the Cook Islands. The development of an MOU with Tokelau is in progress.
- NZQA partners with the Pacific Community's Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP), to carry out the MFAT funded (\$6.9m) Pacific Qualifications Recognition project. This year we launched the implementation phase to strengthen

qualifications' frameworks, quality assurance, and recognition in the Pacific region. NZQA has regularly hosted Pacific representatives as we work together to grow capability.

Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (Minister Simmonds)

- NZQA was elected President of the Tokyo Convention/APNNIC for 2024/25. New Zealand's leadership of this Asia-Pacific community of practice strengthens both qualification recognition and our international relationships.

Micro-credentials (Minister Simmonds)

- New Zealand is world leading in formalising micro-credentials as part of its national qualifications' framework. In the past year, we presented on this subject to several overseas stakeholders, including Hungary, Singapore, Australia and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education.

Qualification Recognition with Philippines (Minister Simmonds)

- NZQA hosted the Philippines Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on the completion of the joint publication, Making Connections: Comparing Qualifications in the Philippines and New Zealand (user guide).
- This guidance supports labour mobility between both countries, and the New Zealand government's intent to strengthen its relationship with the Southeast Asia region through an education lens.

Recognition of Distance Learning Qualifications by China (Minister Simmonds)

- Under the Strategic Cooperation Arrangement between New Zealand and China, the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) and NZQA established a Working Group on the Recognition of Distance Learning Qualifications.

Cooperation Agreement with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) (Minister Simmonds)

- In November 2023, NZQA and QQI signed an updated memorandum of cooperation, which includes the exchange of information on qualifications and quality assurance.

International delegations (Minister Simmonds)

- NZQA hosted delegation visits from South African Qualifications Authority, Shanghai Municipal Educational Examinations Authority and Bhutan Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority.