23 October 2025

[redacted]

Email: [redacted]

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request of 30 September 2025, under the Official Information Act 1982, for the following information:

12 September: NZQA's Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption and upcoming work programme

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982. I attach a copy of the requested briefing.

Under section 18(d) of the Official Information Act 1982, certain information (paragraphs 11 and 18) has been withheld on the grounds that the information will soon be publicly available.

We would like to clarify a few points within the Information Briefing to Minister Reti as follows:

- NZQA's future AI opportunities (paragraphs 17 and 20) are just that - **potential opportunities**.

Our response to your request may be published on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed before publication.

If you require further assistance or believe we have misinterpreted your request, please contact Elizabeth Templeton in the Office of the Chief Executive, email elizabeth.templeton@nzqa.govt.nz or telephone (04) 463 3339.

You have the right to seek an investigation or review by the Ombudsman of this decision under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982. Details of how to make a complaint can be found at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz. You can also telephone 0800 802 502 or write to the Ombudsman at PO Box 10152, Wellington, 6143.

Nāku nā

Dr Grant Klinkum
Pouwhakahaere/Chief Executive

![NZQA logo](Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa — New Zealand Qualifications Authority)

Information Update: NZQA's Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption and upcoming work programme

To:	Hon Dr Shane Reti - Minister for Universities
Cc:	Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education

Date:	12 September 2025	**Priority:**	Low
Security Level:	Unclassified	**OC No:**	OC01988
Key Contact:	Grant Klinkum - CE	**DDI:**	▓▓▓▓▓▓
Deputy Chief Executive:	Prashant Bakshi, Strategy and Corporate	**DDI:**	021 2102615

Request

1. This paper has been requested by Minister Reti's office following a conversation with NZQA on the use of AI in NZQA's work.

2. This paper provides Minister Reti with a high-level overview of NZQA's current use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI (GenAI) for its core work, in relation to realising customer experience improvements, efficiency benefits and in mitigating risks to the integrity of student assessments. Future opportunities to deepen our AI supported work are also summarised.

3. NZQA proposes to proactively release this briefing as part of the next publication of documents.

Background

4. Over the last few years NZQA has been actively pursuing opportunities presented by AI and more recently, GenAI, plus investing in a Data Science team and platform (Databricks). These capabilities allow NZQA to safely explore opportunities for GenAI to improve customer experience, realise internal efficiencies and monitor NCEA assessment integrity.

5. NZQA is an active participant in the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN). This is a consortium of education quality and integrity agencies worldwide that aims to tackle commercial cheating operations, protecting students, qualifications, and the integrity of national education systems. GAIN shares experiences and resources to help other jurisdictions develop legislative and regulatory approaches to manage academic integrity in an age of AI.

6. NZQA is part of the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA), the body for chief executives of the authorities in the Australian states and territories and in New Zealand responsible for curriculum, assessment and certification in education. We closely monitor developments in Australian state jurisdictions in relation to the challenges and opportunities for AI in senior secondary assessment.

7. NZQA has guidance for tertiary education organisations on Academic Integrity policies considering developments in GenAI. We provide a resources hub on the NZQA website, which includes guidance on AI from Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Australia, and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (the founding members of GAIN).

8. Since 2023, NZQA has published advice for schools on managing authenticity in the age of AI. This includes advice that tools that claim to check for the use of AI are unreliable. Instead, the knowledge teachers have of their students is the best way to identify work that is or is not done by the student.

9. NZQA's use of AI follows a careful, phased approach, with considerations of security, privacy and data concerns, including Māori data sovereignty.

NZQA is collaborating on its AI journey

10. NZQA has a strong collaborative relationship with Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)'s Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO) team, which is leading the all-of-government approach to AI. This relationship supports NZQA to leverage tools that DIA has already implemented and enables NZQA to share its lessons with other agencies and vice versa. GCDO has stated that NZQA is amongst a handful of public sector agencies leading from the front in AI adoption. NZQA and DIA will continue to work together, with NZQA having presented at DIA's AI Accelerate conference in August, and DIA highlighting NZQA's Chatbot as one of New Zealand's use cases in the Digital Government Exchange Summit in Singapore this September.

11.

12. Additionally, NZQA is cooperating internationally with the European Commission on Verifi-AI project that is supporting verification of qualification authenticity through AI technology. This could assist NZQA in speedier evaluation of overseas qualifications, which is a both a productivity benefit, as well as customer experience benefit.

NZQA's AI framework

13. NZQA has recently developed an AI framework. NZQA's vision is that AI:

   a. is adopted responsibly and ethically for appropriate use cases that are aligned with NZQA's strategic objectives

   b. supports NZQA's overall strategy and responsibilities in the New Zealand government and education system

   c. benefits all learners, schools, kura and tertiary providers, as well as NZQA kaimahi.

14. This framework will go alongside an existing toolkit that helps NZQA staff understand how to leverage AI's potential safely, balancing opportunities and risks. The Toolkit builds on the Public Service AI framework and provides actionable steps which include templates, checklists, processes and step by step instructions.

15. NZQA presented this draft toolkit and framework at DIA's AI Community of Practice in August 2025.

[1]

NZQA's AI initiatives

16. Over the last three years, NZQA has pursued some targeted opportunities relating to AI. These have been across three key areas, using AI to:

   a. **Improve customer experience**. Use cases include:

   I. The AI based Chatbot (Awhina), with a success rate between 55% - 80%, which has enabled the Contact Centre to meet service standards with fewer staff, lowering operating cost and improving customer experience.

   II. Implementing a GenAI chatbot powered by Large Language Models (LLM) to build on the existing chatbot.

   b. **Increase staff productivity and efficiency**. Use cases include:

   I. Developing breach detection to rapidly detect cheating in digital exams, which has eliminated approximately 4000 hours of manual effort each assessment round.

   II. Implementing Automated Text Scoring (ATS) for literary and numeracy co-requisite assessments (ATS), has decreased the turnaround time for NZQA to release results and reduce the number of scripts marked by human markers.

   c. **Identify and mitigate risk in relation to student assessment integrity**. Use cases include:

   I. Creating an online learning module: Tāku Reo, Tāku Mahi (My Words, My Work), with advice and guidance on academic honesty and integrity, plagiarism, and AI text and image generators.

17. **NZQA is actively working on other potential AI opportunities**, including exploring:

   - A GenAI powered tool to generate question banks for Literacy and Numeracy assessments that could be used by students to practice for these assessments.

   - GenAI capabilities to generate reading and writing exams; NZQA is taking a modular approach, allowing for human-in-the-loop interventions at each step of the process.

   - Using GenAI to support NZQA to moderate secondary school marked internal assessments, with 'human in the loop' (i.e. accuracy checking)

18.

19. This strong AI foundation and capability allow NZQA to be try and respond to Government and Ministerial priorities, including the potential to increase the use of AI in marking secondary schooling assessments. To this end, later this year we will use 2024 digital assessment responses for some end of year exams to see if the tool we are using for the writing section of the in-year literacy assessment can be successfully adapted to these high stake's external assessments.

NZQA's AI initiatives: future opportunities

20.   NZQA has multiple potential use cases that could be explored in 2025/26, including:

- AI agents to support Quality Assurance Division's Approvals and Accreditation function by conducting an initial scan of applications, for example, for new Tertiary Education Organisation (TEO) courses.

- A proof of concept to scan structured or unstructured data from TEOs and identify potential risks, supporting risk-based interventions. NZQA staff could then verify this intelligence, enhance it with their own subject matter knowledge and target appropriate regulatory interventions such as education, monitoring or compliance.

- NZQA internal virtual assistants to support writing memos, reports and other documents – based on training AI agents to NZQA's communication style and policies. This could also potentially support the NZQA Board in synthesizing meeting packs and identify key questions/themes.

AI and GenAI risks

21.   NZQA is determined to ensure that its use of AI and GenAI is safe. As indicated earlier, NZQA has invested in a Data Science and AI platform – Databricks – which will allow safe use of Large Language Models (LLMs) ensuring traceability.

22.   NZQA has developed an AI Policy, and an AI Toolkit to build staff's knowledge and understanding about AI. These documents are aligned with DIA[2] and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)[3] AI guidance.

23.   NZQA is taking a careful and considered approach in utilising AI, particularly GenAI. This is to ensure that any risks and biases are carefully managed. Additionally, a considered approach allows NZQA to learn and build internal confidence and capabilities while managing any risks.

24.   NZQA is undertaking an AI Readiness Review to evaluate the risks associated with AI, and the governance and control considerations needed for NZQA to adopt basic, intermediate, and advanced AI capabilities both from a current state and desired future state.

25.   NZQA will work with sector partners to give effect to Māori Data Sovereignty.

26.   From a security perspective, NZQA will ensure that any AI products developed are also supported and maintained like any other software products. This is to ensure NZQA manages organisational risks, avoids non-compliance, and implements appropriate data management and controls.

27.   Some of the AI and GenAI opportunities discussed in this paper - and the speed at which these could be leveraged - will depend on investment, security, privacy and ethical considerations, as well as the need to work through change management so that key stakeholders, government agencies and customers are brought on the journey.

GenAI capabilities and investments

28.   The investment in internal capabilities – Data Science team and Databricks – help NZQA leverage AI and GenAI safely and in a deliberate manner.

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[2] Initial advice on Generative Artificial Intelligence in the public service (DIA)
[3] Guidelines for secure AI system development (NCSC)

29. As NZQA's use of AI, particularly GenAI capabilities, increases, there will be a need to increase investment in these capabilities. This includes people, technology and vendor partnerships.

Next steps

30. NZQA will publish its AI framework on its website later this year. This framework will flow through to the 2025-2029 Statement of Intent.

31. NZQA will continue to progress various initiatives outlined in this information update and provide updates to Ministers as required.

32. If requested, NZQA can provide the Minister with further information on one or more of these initiatives.