



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Aide-Memoire: Meeting with Ben Wildavsky – visiting Fulbright scholar

To:	Hon Penny Simmonds, Minister for Vocational Education
From:	Dr Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive
Date:	13 February 2025
Reference:	OC01505

Purpose

1. You are meeting with Ben Wildavsky, a visiting Fulbright scholar, on 20 February 2025. This aide memoire provides you with a brief biography for Ben, an overview of the purpose of his visit, and how his work connects with New Zealand's micro-credentials journey.

Background

2. Ben Wildavsky is a visiting Fulbright Specialist scholar, funded by U.S. Department of State and hosted by NZQA. The Fulbright Programme aims to promote mutual understanding through educational and cultural exchanges.
3. Ben is in New Zealand for two weeks to research from a global perspective New Zealand's use of quality assured micro-credentials. He has engagements with the TEC, education providers (including universities and polytechnics) and standard-setting bodies.
4. Ben has decades of experience in journalism and education policy and is a visiting fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2024-2025. He is the author of *The Career Arts: Making the Most of College, Credentials, and Connections*, *The Great Brain Race* and co-editor of *Reinventing Higher Education and Measuring Success*. See [Wildavsky, Ben | Princeton University Press](#)
5. The intention of the visit is to gather case studies to include as part of a new book looking at initiatives underway in different countries to [REDACTED]

Discussion

6. In 2018, New Zealand was one of the first countries to include micro-credentials into the regulated education and training system. New Zealand is distinctive because micro-credentials are included as part of our national qualifications framework.

7. In addition to being credentials in their own right, micro-credentials can be 'stacked' as part of a programme leading to a full qualification. This creates more flexible part-time study pathways for learners, including 'career changers' and 'second chance' learners.
8. The number of micro-credentials has increased steadily year-on-year and there are currently 558 micro-credentials listed on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF). To date, these are mainly at levels 2 to 6 but can be at all levels of the framework. TEC has funded micro-credentials since 2019, and enrolments have increased significantly.
9. Standard-setting bodies have developed new micro-credentials in response to industry and learner needs. Micro-credentials are more common in certain industries, notably automotives, agriculture and environment, education, health, manufacturing, and engineering.

Next steps

10. Mr Wildavsky is meeting you towards the end of his study visit. NZQA will continue our relationship with him, providing advice and data for his report and book. We will share the final publications with you.
11. In 2022, NZQA published two insights papers setting out why we added micro-credentials to the NZQCF, and the potential they had to improve the relevance and responsiveness education products. We intend to produce a further insights paper in 2025 to evaluate the impact of micro-credentials so far.
12. We will continue to identify opportunities to further increase the responsiveness and relevance of the education and training system to learners and employers through micro-credentials, and share our mutual findings with overseas jurisdictions.



Dr Grant Klinkum

Chief Executive

13 February 2025

Hon Penny Simmonds

Minister for Vocational Education

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