



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

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Briefing Note: COVID-19 Senior Secondary Assessment update

Date:	26 March 2020	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In confidence	CR No:	20464
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Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to update you on NZQA's COVID-19 pandemic planning with the Ministry of Education, and activities underway to support senior secondary assessment linked to teaching and learning.

Background

2. On 16 March 2020, NZQA commenced joint COVID-19 pandemic planning with the Ministry of Education. Our objective is to ensure secondary teaching, learning, and assessment towards NCEA is maintained, and that schools are supported. This approach is consistent with each agency's pandemic planning procedures, and the agencies are also consulting on all communications.
3. NZQA and the Ministry have well established policies, processes, and materials in place to respond to emergencies that may impact delivery of core assessment and quality assurance services for secondary qualifications, while maintaining their validity, reliability, and credibility.
4. NZQA has updated its pandemic plan to reflect the Government's new Alert system announced by the Prime Minister on 21 March 2020.
5. COVID-19 planning for the secondary sector aligns with the '4 Rs' of emergency management (reduction, readiness, response and recovery). For now, the focus is on response (ensuring continuity of learning and assessment). We expect to also begin preparation for recovery efforts, and steps to reduce risk and ready the system for further COVID-related incidents.
6. Our approach considers the needs of schools and wharekura, students, parents and whānau in incidents throughout the remainder of 2020 ranging from an isolated case in a single school, to the current threat level 4 national lockdown scenario.

Discussion

7. NZQA's School Relationship Managers are working closely with and supporting all secondary schools and wharekura (including those in Niue and the Cook Islands) to plan for secondary assessment throughout the duration of COVID-19.
8. Development of 2020 external examination papers is well advanced for NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship, and production to planned delivery timelines is on track.
9. On 18 and 20 March, schools received from NZQA, packages of written advice, guidance and templates to support continuity of teaching, learning, and assessment, should a student need to be absent or if the school calendar is disrupted for progressively prolonged periods due to COVID-19.
10. The guidance sets out how teachers can, within the context of curriculum and learning, continue to conduct credible assessment to:
 - a. assess and award a grade for internal assessment by using remote assessment conditions for unit standards and achievement standards;
 - b. collect standard-specific evidence during the teaching and learning process. These may potentially support applications for an Unexpected Event Grade for externally assessed achievement standards from which to derive a grade, minimising the need to run practice examinations.
11. NZQA's guidance on assessment complements the Ministry's activities to support teachers' delivery of teaching and learning to the curriculum. We are jointly planning work to expand access to digital and physical teaching and learning materials, guidance on remote delivery of senior secondary learning programmes (including vocational pathways), and increased support for teachers and students to provide peer support.

Next steps

12. Moderation for internal assessment and development of external examinations will continue to be delivered by NZQA's subject specialists currently teaching the subject. NZQA will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on its specialist workforce, and related moderation and examination processes. NZQA will further explore alternative actions such as the extension of submission dates, to allow for more teaching time.
13. NZQA has extended the April and May due date to 1 June for external moderation materials from schools, although schools may continue to submit their materials online. NZQA has asked schools not to make physical submissions of materials; and has deferred the return of physical materials until moderation is completed and schools re-open.
14. NZQA will continue to progress its programme of monitoring national assessments, by working with schools to prepare the necessary documents for proposed visits, when travel resumes. Planned Managing National Assessment (MNA) reviews in 2020 may be rescheduled with schools or reprioritised, as the situation requires.
15. NZQA is in contact with peak bodies, including the Secondary Principals Association of New Zealand (SPANZ), New Zealand Secondary Principals' Council (PPTA), and the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA). We will also be in contact with the New Zealand School Trustees Association, Ngā Kura ā-Iwi, and Te Rūnanga Nui o Nga Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa.
16. In case it is necessary for schools to be closed for an extended period, NZQA is working with the Ministry to develop options to enable students to have their learning and achievement

recognised, and continue to gain qualifications and awards, allowing access to further education or employment opportunities.

17. We will work with schools and universities, Universities New Zealand, and other tertiary organisations as these options are prepared. Our priority is ensuring that students will not be disadvantaged as a result of Covid-19.



Karen Poutasi (Dr)
Chief Executive, NZQA

26 March 2020

Noted/Approved

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

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