

## Aide-Memoire: feedback from consultation on proposed changes to the NZQF and next steps

<b>To:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
<b>From:</b>	Dr Karen Poutasi, Chief Executive
<b>Date:</b>	19 February 2019
<b>Reference:</b>	CR18752

### Purpose

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1. This paper provides you with a summary of the feedback from the recent consultation on proposed changes to the New Zealand Qualification Framework (NZQF), and the next steps in the review.
2. NZQA proposes to proactively release this paper with the next tranche of publications.

### Situation

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3. NZQA released a consultation paper for feedback in October 2018. The consultation closed on 14 December 2018. The paper sought views on four high level proposals:
  - including a wider range of education products on the NZQF
  - more explicitly embedding transferable competencies into the NZQF
  - addressing some long-standing issues, including parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications
  - making the NZQF easier to use and more relevant to all stakeholders
4. NZQA received 64 responses: 46 responses from TEOs, five from education peak bodies, nine from individuals and four from other organisations<sup>1</sup>. The analysis of the feedback will be made available on NZQA's website on 28 February 2019 and is summarised below.

*Including a wider range of education products on the NZQF e.g. micro-credentials, standards that are currently listed separately on the Directory of Assessment Standards, training schemes*

5. Of the 61 respondents to this proposal, the majority (66 per cent) strongly supported or somewhat supported greater flexibility in the range of quality assured educational products

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<sup>1</sup> Business New Zealand, City and Guilds, the New Zealand Defence Force and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions

which could be listed on the NZQF. Respondents said that including a wider range of NZQA-quality assured products would promote a wider range of choice, flexibility and employment opportunities and better reflect the contemporary learning environment.

6. The respondents who did not support this proposal (26 per cent strongly opposed or were somewhat opposed) were concerned about the risk of proliferation and confusion. Some respondents were concerned that the proposal would not help learners make good choices as it could lead to piecemeal learning rather than full qualifications.

*More explicitly embedding transferable competencies into the NZQF i.e. critical thinking, communication, collaboration and citizenship)*

7. Of the 58 respondents to this proposal, 57 per cent strongly or somewhat supported it. Their reasons included the relevancy of the proposed competencies in the 21st century and in a globally connected world. Some respondents supported the proposal in principle but commented that some of these competencies are already included in the knowledge and skills descriptors, although not necessarily systematically. Others thought that the proposed competencies could better align with other competencies in current use e.g. in the New Zealand Curriculum, Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and the Employability Skills Framework. There was also some concern about the proposed 'citizenship' competency, with respondents referring to practicalities and unintended consequences (for example, that it could infer that people with higher level qualifications are 'better' citizens).
8. Those who did not support the proposal (36% strongly or somewhat opposed it) indicated a number of concerns. Some respondents said that the competencies should not be described by level of the NZQF as there isn't necessarily a clear hierarchy between levels of the competencies and higher levels of learning. Some respondents were concerned about assessment (e.g. that the competencies may be difficult to assess objectively). Others were concerned about the impact on qualification and programme developers, identifying that the proposal could require significant capability building in the sector.

*Addressing some long-standing issues, including parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications*

9. Ten respondents (ITOs and ITPs) commented on vocational qualifications and achieving parity of esteem. Respondents were concerned that vocational qualifications tend to be at the lower levels of the NZQF (i.e. most are at Level 4 or below), particularly compared to other jurisdictions. They were also concerned about parity of esteem issues. Their feedback included that the NZQF must ensure that all skills are recognised and valued. Respondents generally agreed that revising the level and qualification-type descriptors would help vocational qualification developers to develop qualifications which can be listed at higher levels on the NZQF.
10. Some of the respondents also commented that there are other drivers of the issues, including the funding determination for the Industry Training Fund, which specifies that a maximum of ten per cent of the fund can be allocated to training at Level 5 and above (this limit has long since been reached), broader societal values, and/or other policy issues.
11. Feedback on other long-standing issues included eighteen respondents (ITPs and PTEs) commenting on the proposal to review the need for Level 7 Diplomas. Twelve respondents commented on the on-going need for Level 7 Diplomas and the potential impact of removing the qualification-type on the industry that their qualification serves, such as air traffic control and marine engineering.

*Making the NZQF easier to use and more relevant to all stakeholders*

12. Forty-four respondents agreed that the usability and accessibility of the NZQF could be improved, particularly for learners. There were a wide range of suggestions including



support for the fan design used in the Irish Qualifications Framework and for segmented customer-focussed interactive versions of the NZQF.

13. Thirty-five respondents commented on the proposal to ensure that the NZQF better reflects Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and Mātauranga Māori. Respondents generally agreed that the NZQF is mono-cultural in its presentation and that improvements could be made. Two respondents also suggested that the NZQF could do more to position NCEA as New Zealand's foundational qualification.

## Next steps

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14. We will develop a further discussion paper for consultation in June – July 2019. It will be informed by the feedback we have received to date, our desk top research and other activities and by the advice of the Advisory Group (which is meeting again in April). At this stage, it is likely to:
  - set out the proposed direction of travel on including a wider range of educational products on the NZQF e.g. micro-credentials and other NZQA-quality assured products
  - signal that we will progress work on adding key competencies to the NZQF
  - set out how the NZQF can better reflect vocational education and training pathways
  - identify options for addressing other identified long standing issues.
15. The timelines for the review have been extended to take into account the development and consultation on the above paper and the consultation on other changes underway in the sector. We anticipate that the review will be completed by the end of 2019. This will enable the sector to fully engage with us on the review and for the review to be able to take into account the government's decisions on the NCEA review and the Reform of Vocational Education.
16. We intend to undertake the technical work on reviewing and revising the level and qualification type descriptors in the NZQF later in 2019. This work will be informed by the feedback we receive on the next discussion document. We will consult on the detailed proposals towards the end of 2019. The final design work will take place once all the decisions are made. Some of the proposed changes would require Cabinet approval (for example, including new education products on the NZQF would require legislative changes).
17. We will continue to keep you informed of progress in the NZQF review.

## Recommendations

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18. It is recommended that you:
  - a. **note** the contents of this paper.



Karen Poutasi (Dr)  
Chief Executive  
19 February 2019

**Hon Chris Hipkins**  
Minister of Education  
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NOTED/APPROVED