

9 March 2020

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### Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request of 11 February 2020, under the Official Information Act 1982, for the following information:

- *How many applications for special assessment conditions have been made to the NZQA each year from 2014.*
- *How many of these applications were declined?*
- *How many of these applications were approved?*
- *What is the target time set by the NZQA for a determination on applications?*
- *What is the average response time on a determination for each year from 2014?*
- *What was the quickest response time for each year from 2014?*
- *What was the slowest response time for each year from 2014?*
- *Has the NZQA received any complaints from schools in regard to slow response times for applications for learning support/special assessment conditions? (For each year from 2014)*
- *If so, what were the reasons given by the NZQA for a delay in response times?*

#### *SAC application process background*

NZQA grants entitlement to Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) so that candidates may have fair access to assessment for National Qualifications. Special Assessment Conditions enable entitled candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding, without providing unfair advantage over other candidates. SAC provides appropriate support for students with sensory, physical, medical and/or learning difficulties/disabilities.

Applications are made by schools on behalf of students. Entitlement for SAC covers both internal and external NCEA assessments and New Zealand Scholarship.

The information required to assess an application can be collected by schools as the intention is to ensure there are no cost barriers to students and their families. Once the school has gathered the information and submitted the application through NZQA's online interactive SAC application tool, it is processed in the order received. The SAC system allows schools to communicate directly with NZQA, and vice versa.

The facility for schools to submit applications is open throughout the year. Applications are considered on a case by case basis by NZQA's SAC panel comprising independent clinical and educational psychologists, and staff with expertise in special assessment provision.

Once approved, a student's SAC entitlement remains available to them throughout their NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship assessment years. NZQA does not remove an entitlement to SAC, although a student may choose to no longer use it.

There is no charge to apply for a SAC.

#### *Application numbers*

The table below provides the information for the first three questions.

<b>SAC applications by year</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Declined</b>
2014	5,544	5,454	90
2015	7,088	6,839	249
2016	8,737	8,358	379
2017	10,214	9,948	266
2018	11,269	11,022	247
2019	12,787	12,573	214

#### *SAC application processing/response time*

NZQA aims to confirm a student's SAC entitlements as quickly as possible. More complex applications can take a little longer to process as a misapplication of a SAC could be unhelpful to a student.

NZQA's system does not record the response times. The nature of the application process means that for some applications there can be several interactions with the school. A student can apply for a number of SAC provisions such as reader or computer/writer, separate accommodation and rest breaks. Each individual assessment condition is considered on its merits. This means NZQA may immediately confirm with the school an entitlement to one condition but seek clarification and additional information in support of another. In some instances, we may decline entitlement to one of the assessment conditions applied for and approve the rest.

The majority of applications are considered shortly after receipt. However as outlined above, there may be some aspects of an application that need further clarification before the application is completed. Nevertheless, at any given time of year, on average, 90 percent of applications in our SAC application system have been fully processed.

In addition, a school may provide the requested SAC to students while NZQA is processing the application. This ensures that students can access SAC provisions without delay. Only around 2 percent of applications were not approved in 2019.

#### *Complaints from schools*

We have checked our records for 2014-2019 and have not been able to identify any specific complaints about delays in the processing of applications.

We did not receive any negative feedback about processing times during workshops with schools on administrative and SAC matters in 2019. However, we are focused on continually improving the administration and support for SAC.

Further information on the SAC process is available on the NZQA website [www.nzqa.govt.nz/sac](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/sac)

*Release of information*

As part of the commitment to open and transparent government, NZQA is proactively releasing responses to Official Information Act requests which are of public interest. NZQA intends to publish response to your request on its website in June 2020. Your name and contact details will be removed before publication.

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

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you have the right, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982, to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz). You can also telephone 0800 802 502 or write to the Ombudsman at PO Box 10152, Wellington, 6143.

Yours sincerely



Karen Poutasi (Dr)  
Chief Executive