

The NZQA logo features the letters 'NZQA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter 'Q' is stylized with a white swirl inside its counter.

Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

NZQA Performance Update

July – September 2025

Introduction

NZQA is one of the agencies that manage and regulate the education system in New Zealand. We work with other education agencies to make sure education is high-quality and running well in New Zealand.

This is achieved through its stewardship of the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework and management of the qualifications system. It also regulates and quality assures non-university tertiary education, administers the Education Code of Practice 2021, delivers credible secondary school external assessment and quality assures internal assessment for national qualifications.

Executive summary

This report summarises NZQA's performance in July – September 2025. It is designed to give readers a high-level picture of NZQA's performance at the time of writing so some items fall outside of this date range.

For the year-to-date NZQA has:

- Submitted the Strategic Technology Enhancement Project (STEP) Detailed Business Case for Cabinet review and approval.
- Worked closely with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and others to prepare Budget 26 bids.
- Successfully run the second NCEA co-requisite event. There were around 145,000 attempts across the five assessments: Reading, Writing, Numeracy, Pāngarau, Reo Toruhū (listening/reading).
- Completed consultation on a simpler, fairer fee system.
- Completed consultation on finalising the design for the integrated quality assurance framework (iQAF). iQAF proposes a more risk-informed, tailored approach to quality assurance that reflects NZQA's strategic priority for utilising 'right touch, right size regulation'.

Looking forward

Looking forward NZQA will:

- Refresh our Strategy to reflect current priorities and expectations including STEP, implementing iQAF, progressing AI development work and contributing to any new senior secondary qualifications [completed Nov 2026].
- Finalise and submit Budget 26 bids.
- Refresh our Financial Stabilisation Plan to reflect the progress we have made and respond to our current operating expectations.
- [REDACTED]
- Run end of year examinations in November.
- Release NCEA results on 14 January 2026.
- Prepare for the new fee structures implementation on 1 January 2026.
- Work closely with other agencies including MOE and Immigration New Zealand in our transition to iQAF.
- Host the Tokyo Convention meeting and the Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres plenary in November 2025.

Strategic priorities

NZQA's strategic priorities are:

- 1 Perform core functions well, supported by strong corporate infrastructure.
- 2 Utilise right touch, right size regulation that balances the needs of all stakeholders.
- 3 Improve stakeholder understanding of qualifications and credentials.
- 4 Leverage digital solutions to increase business efficiency and quality.

This section discusses work underway to achieve selected priorities.

Progress on selected strategic priorities

Refreshing NZQA's Strategy

NZQA developed and implemented its current strategy in October 2024. This strategy focused on a set of priorities designed to strengthen NZQA's foundations in anticipation of a period of significant change.

The majority of priorities in this strategy are either completed (e.g. NZQA's new regulatory framework) or well advanced (e.g. NZQA's STEP work).

Over the last three months:

- Identified potential updates to NZQA's current Strategy that ensure we are responding to a range of expectations including supporting development of the proposed new senior secondary qualification, utilising Artificial Intelligence, progressing the Strategic Technology Enhancement Project (STEP), and implementing the Integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF).

Looking forward, NZQA will:

- [REDACTED]
- Refresh its Strategy to reflect upcoming priorities and expectations [completed Nov 2026].
- Continue to progress existing objectives and priorities, with particular emphasis on reviewing the operating model and business processes of our core delivery functions and progressing digital initiatives that drive efficiency and improve customer experience.

NZQA's Change Agenda

We are balancing core service delivery with several large pieces of change work. These include:

- [REDACTED]
- implementing the integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF), and
- the Strategic Technology Enhancement Project (STEP).

These changes occur against a backdrop of challenges to medium to longer-term financial sustainability.

Over the last three months, we have:

- Finalised the STEP Detailed Business Case.
- Worked closely with MOE and others to prepare Budget 26 bids.
- Begun preparing to implement iQAF (see page 10).

Looking forward, NZQA will:

- Continue work on our change approach.
- Finalise and submit Budget 26 bids.
- Work with MOE and others on our iQAF implementation.
- Refresh our Financial Stabilisation Plan to reflect the progress we have made and respond to our current operating expectations.

Progress on selected strategic priorities cont.

Pacific Qualifications Recognition project 2024 - 2028

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has contracted NZQA to strengthen the national and regional qualifications systems for the 9 Pacific countries that are party to the PACER Plus trade agreement. This will improve qualifications recognition processes, which will give Pacific people greater access to relevant, quality assured qualifications that are recognised within and outside the Pacific region. NZQA is supporting the project work with a dedicated team in the Office of the DCE Pacific and People.

The work is being carried out in 3 phases: referencing and benchmarking (2024-2025), system strengthening (2026-mid 2028) and recognition (2028). In the referencing and benchmarking phase, the 9 Pacific countries participating and New Zealand have compared their national qualifications frameworks and systems to the Pacific Qualifications Framework, administered by the Pacific Community (SPC). This process is also being used to identify gaps in qualification, quality assurance processes and supporting information systems that present barriers to recognising qualifications from Pacific qualifications systems.

The project is nearing completion of the first phase. New Zealand, all 9 countries and SPC have completed referencing and benchmarking reports, which were reviewed by international experts over the last 3 months. The project team is facilitating a process through which Pacific Quality Assurance Board (PQAB) will endorse these 11 reports in November. The project team is also working with SPC and each country to develop national and regional strengthening plans before the end of February next year. These plans will inform the second phase of the project.

What we are aiming to achieve

The intention is that over the 5 years of the Project, NZQA will transfer their technical expertise to 4 Pacific entities who are permanent players in qualifications recognition in the Pacific region:

- 1. The Pacific Community (SPC)** - SPC supports Pacific education systems in the quality assurance, validation and accreditation of tertiary education programmes and institutions. It coordinates a regional external quality assurance function for the PQF and is the secretariat for PQF and the Pacific Qualifications Advisory Board (PQAB).
- 2. Pacific Board for Educational Quality (PBEQ)** - the governing board of the PQF, made up of representatives from the 15 Pacific Island member countries of SPC, donor representatives, University of the South Pacific, UNESCO and UNICEF.
- 3. Pacific Qualifications Advisory Board (PQAB)** - comprised of heads of quality assurance agencies and senior education representatives from the countries with whom SPC works, which provides strategic advice on the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS), PQF and Pacific Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF).
- 4. Partner countries** - the project emphasises building the capability of staff within the qualification agencies and education ministries so that they can better carry out their role to meet international standards.

Secondary Assessment

NZQA administers, quality assures and reports on senior secondary credentials (including NCEA, New Zealand Scholarship and University Entrance). Responsibilities include:

- 1** Quality assuring senior secondary schools' assessment systems through Consent to Assess and Managing National Assessment Reviews.
- 2** Moderating internally assessed achievement standards and providing assessor support.
- 3** Delivering external NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship assessments.

This section discusses work underway to achieve selected priorities.

Strategic priorities

Strengthening NCEA and Quality Assurance

Year-to-date

In Budget 24, NZQA received \$10m for a Capability Investment Programme. Of this, \$496k was allocated to the 'Strengthening NCEA' project which included several interconnected workstreams aimed at enhancing the quality of internal assessment and to address grade disparity. To date, the completed deliverables of this project are:

Additional targeted moderation of internally assessed standards:

- 734 additional standards moderated across approximately 300 schools and kura.
- Follow-up with schools, as necessary, on the outcomes of this moderation. This will shift into 'business as usual' with a tailored approach being developed for targeted schools and kura to improve moderation engagement, with NZQA support.

The additional targeted moderation enabled us to identify further areas of assessment practice that required improvement in some schools and kura. We continue to work with these schools on improvement actions and are offering appropriate support.

Quality Assurance of school management/administration of NCEA co-requisite Event 2

- Completed, with visits to 43 schools and kura. School/kura effectiveness ratings: 30 effective, 11 somewhat effective, and 2 not effective.
- We are working individually with 13 schools on improvement actions.

The approach we undertook for this workstream is being evaluated to inform future quality assurance planning.

Additional resources for the Assessor Practice Tool

- Completed, with samples of student work published for 13 standards with high-levels of inconsistent assessment.

These resources provide assessors with a wider range of student work to practice on, better preparing them for making accurate assessment decisions.

Scoping assessment practices and processes teacher professional development and/or training

- Completed, with a report and recommendations for a training programme (online workshops or modules) to support teachers new to NCEA.

Looking forward

A new initiative, *Strengthening Assessment Capability*, launches in November to support schools and kura who we identified as part of the Strengthening NCEA work, require further support to improve their assessment practices. This additional support will include culturally grounded assessment tools, exemplars, templates, and guidance materials designed to improve internal assessment practices in targeted kura and schools and will complement our existing activities.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Operational overview

NCEA co-requisite assessments

Year-to-date

The second NCEA co-requisite assessment event ran smoothly in September with around 145,000 attempts across the five assessments: Reading, Writing, Numeracy, Pāngarau, Reo Toruhū (listening/reading). NZQA applied lessons from the first event and improved Automated Text Scoring (ATS) for marking the Literacy - Writing assessment, enabling faster results. Reading results, which are entirely machine-marked, were released within 4 weeks, and the others within 6-7 weeks.

Looking forward

Planning for the continued use of ATS for 2026, with the introduction of an API-based solution to save operating effort and costs and mitigate security risks.

We are also looking towards additional automation of the Numeracy assessment to further reduce human marking time and to move assessments currently marked on paper to our online assessment platform.

End-of-Year Examinations

Year-to-date

The digital platform performed well during the August/September NCEA co-requisite assessments with no issues, following capacity enhancements and alignment of testing regimes with the vendor. Our testing confirms the platform can support 50,000 concurrent users, which is higher than required to meet demand for our largest online examination cohort, Level 1 English, with just over 37,200 students entered for the digital assessment.

In August 2024, we implemented a new Human Capital Management System to streamline recruitment, and payment processes for our specialist workforce, including end-of-year Examination Centre workforce. Lessons from the 2024 cycle informed a comprehensive overhaul in January 2025.

Recruitment and onboarding processes for the 2025 Examination Centre workforce and markers began two to three months earlier than in previous years and was completed in the target timeframes.

To enhance the preparedness and effectiveness of Examination Centre Managers, a series of improvements are being implemented:

- Online training modules have been redeveloped to reinforce key operational messages, particularly managing unexpected events and ensuring continuity of service.
- A new Exam Centre Manager (ECM) Mentoring Programme is being piloted to provide targeted support for newly appointed ECMs. The programme leverages regionally based experienced ECMs acting as Mentors.

To support schools with their preparation towards external examinations we ran a range of workshops in October.

Looking forward

Examinations will take place between Tuesday 4 and Friday 28 November, with Level 1 English (46,200 students, the largest cohort) on 11 November. We aim to have all marking (and associated quality assurance activities including check marking) completed before Christmas. NCEA results will be released on 14 January 2026, and NZ Scholarship results on 11 February 2026.

Qualifications and TEO Quality Assurance

NZQA is responsible for:

- 1 Maintaining the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF).
- 2 Quality assurance of tertiary education organisations (excluding universities).
- 3 Setting Rules for and monitoring tertiary education organisations (TEOs).
- 4 Administering the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.
- 5 Recognising international qualifications and supporting the international recognition of New Zealand qualifications.
- 6 Meeting New Zealand's education-related international obligations.

This section discusses work underway to achieve selected priorities.

Strategic priorities

Integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF)

On 26 September NZQA closed a six-week consultation on finalising the design for the integrated quality assurance framework (iQAF) for tertiary education organisations (other than universities). iQAF proposes a more risk-informed, tailored approach to quality assurance that reflects NZQA's strategic priority for utilising 'right touch, right size regulation'.

The second consultation focused on the proposed activities under each iQAF lever, key transition matters, and the rules required to implement iQAF and the Government's changes to vocational education and training (OC02125 refers).

We received 59 submissions from private training establishments (PTEs), peak bodies, standard setting bodies, New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology business divisions, wānanga, individuals and an agency. There is general support for the proposed activities and the associated Rule changes.

Following Board endorsement of iQAF, the proposed Rules to enable iQAF implementation will be submitted to the Minister of Education for approval. We expect the updated Rules to be effective from January 2026 and the phased transition to the iQAF will commence at the same time.

Working with other agencies

The intention is for iQAF to provide a more up-to-date view of provider compliance than the current External Evaluation and Review (EER) process, so that learners and other stakeholders can be confident in the credibility of qualifications or micro-credentials they achieve.

With the discontinuation of the EER under iQAF, MBIE/INZ will extend their use of EER ratings for the next 12 months, aligning with the Tertiary Education Commission's (TEC) plans for 2026.

We continue to work with both agencies on transition matters and how the outcomes of future quality assurance activities under the iQAF can inform their operations. We recently shared with the Minister an international learner's perspective on selecting a high-quality NZQA-approved provider under iQAF, developed in collaboration with MBIE/INZ (OC02143 refers).

Follow-up consultation for a simpler, fairer fee system

On 9 September NZQA closed a four-week consultation on proposed changes to its fee regime, aiming to create a simpler, transparent and equitable model for tertiary education organisations (TEOs), excluding universities (OC01884 refers).

The current fees have remained unchanged for many years, and the review of third-party fees forms part of NZQA's overall financial stabilisation plan. While the proposed changes will result in overall fee increases for some TEOs, the changes seek to establish a more equitable and sustainable funding model that reflects the actual costs of services.

We received 22 submissions from various groups, including PTEs, peak bodies, wānanga, and New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology. Feedback generally showed support regarding the reduction in the credit reporting fee and the move away from charging by the hour toward set fees for professional services, which gives providers more cost predictability. However, strong concerns were also raised by some providers about affordability, timing, and equity.

NZQA is currently preparing for the new fee structure's implementation, set for 1 January 2026 following necessary approvals, including for updated NZQA Rules.

Operational overview

NZQA's work in international education

Government's International Education Going for Growth plan and Government Policy Statement

NZQA plays an important role in the Government's International Education Going for Growth Plan (the Plan) announced in July. We are responsible for four key actions: two co-led with MOE and Education New Zealand (ENZ) to support the delivery of quality education and diversifying qualifications, and two focusing on quality assurance for providers working with education agents.

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (the Tokyo Convention)

As President of the Tokyo Convention, NZQA will host the Tokyo Convention meeting and the Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC) plenary in Thailand in November 2025. We are collaborating with the Convention Bureau and UNESCO Bangkok to prepare for this event.

As part of the lead up, NZQA hosted a webinar in September titled "Micro-Credentials in Focus: Advancing Recognition and Lifelong Learning in Asia-Pacific." The session attracted participants from nearly 30 countries and forms part of a wider UNESCO webinar series (designed by NZQA) to strengthen knowledge-sharing and dialogue among members of the Tokyo Convention and APNNIC.

The Convention promotes fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory practices in the recognition of qualifications, while fostering regional cooperation. It also helps improve access to higher education for learner and supports labour mobility.

Statutory actions and monitoring

While still relatively low compared to pre-COVID levels, the number of statutory actions taken by NZQA for poor educational delivery and provider non-compliance has nearly doubled over the last year, increasing from four in 2023/24 to seven in 2024/25. One further statutory action has been taken this quarter with two more underway.

Not all risk management activities result in statutory actions, and a number of tertiary education organisations (TEOs) have action plans that we are actively monitoring. For example, TEOs are required to submit an improvement plan where we have found them to have ineffective internal moderation systems to support valid assessment decisions.

Our monitoring activities also focus on delivery areas with rapid enrolment growth (especially of international students) which can be linked to changes in immigration policies.

We are also working with MOE, the Ministry of Transport, Civil Aviation Authority and Ringa Hora Workforce Development Council to address concerns raised by the aviation industry regarding the alignment of current training options with industry needs.

Financial performance for the quarter ending 30 September 2025

NZQA is budgeting to achieve a small year end surplus of \$0.1m.

We have started the year positively, recording a \$4.4m surplus for the first three months of the year. This surplus is driven by higher than expected revenue, lower than expected operating costs and lower than expected project costs. Some of this is timing-related and will even out during the year. A full analysis of drivers is included on the following pages.

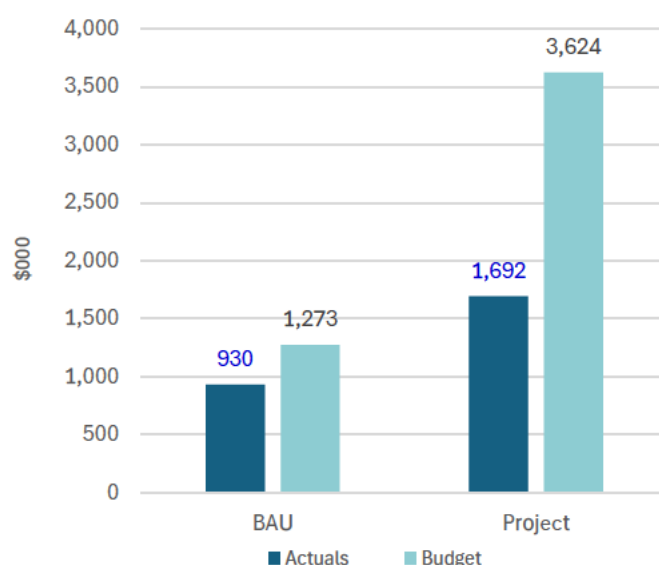
We will undertake a forecasting exercise in November / December which will enable us to better identify how much of this change is permanent versus timing-related.

Financial performance

	Year to Date (30 September 2025)			Full Year	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Last Year
REVENUE					
Crown Revenue	18,434	18,434	-	84,812	79,575
Total Fee & Charges	7,755	7,214	541	28,895	29,469
Other Income	756	494	263	1,695	2,233
Total Revenue	26,946	26,142	804	115,402	111,277
Expenses					
Personnel & Board	14,599	14,523	(76)	57,356	58,040
Examination Workforce	27	16	(11)	9,636	9,244
Specialist Workforce	1,330	2,027	697	12,365	11,630
Professional Services	1,338	1,691	353	6,021	6,012
Publication, print & distribution	979	1,103	124	3,663	3,588
Travel & Accommodation	296	476	180	1,425	1,013
IT costs	2,359	2,797	437	11,559	10,063
Other operating	1,308	1,493	186	9,434	9,136
Depreciation	233	244	11	1,315	1,413
Total Expenses	22,469	24,369	1,900	112,774	110,139
Net Operational Surplus	4,477	1,773	2,704	2,628	1,138
Projects					
Crown Funding	2,227	2,227	-	8,300	10,000
Expenses	2,293	3,755	1,462	10,826	8,037
Net investment in projects	(65)	(1,527)	1,462	(2,526)	1,963
Net surplus/(deficit)	4,411	245	4,166	102	3,101

- Total Revenue** is currently 0.8m above budget driven by higher than expected examination fee receipts.
- Total Expenses** are currently \$1.9m below budget driven by lower than expected Specialist Workforce Costs due to the success of our auto marking approach, ongoing savings driven by our Financial Stabilisation Plan and some timing differences that are likely to even out during the year. Our upcoming forecasting exercise will help determine how much of this underspend is permanent.
- Project Expenses** are currently \$1.5m below budget driven by the timing of project initiation. We expect we will reduce but maybe not completely eliminate this variance as our projects come online.

Contractors & Consultants Expense YTD



Financial performance (cont.)

The Balance Sheet as at 30 September remains sound with a working capital ratio of 1.5 and cash position of \$25.7m.

	30 September 2025	30 June 2026	30 June 2025
	Actual	Budget	Last year
Current Assets	56,331	21,151	27,404
Non-Current Assets	2,906	6,913	2,726
Total Assets	59,237	28,064	30,130
Current Liabilities	38,753	13,144	14,056
Non-Current Liabilities	536	550	536
Total Liabilities	39,288	13,694	14,593
Net Assets / Equity	19,949	14,370	15,537

Insights – Balance Sheet

- Current Assets** of \$56.3m are higher than in previous years due to the receipt of Crown Revenue in advance. This revenue is held in a series of term deposit investments so it is available when required.
- Current Liabilities** of \$38.8m are also high than previous years due to the recognition of Crown Revenue in Advance.
- Net Equity** of \$20m is stronger than budgeted, due to our strong quarter one result. This is expected to reduce to \$14.4m by year end. This is still a very healthy position for an entity of NZQA's size.

Non-financial performance for the quarter ending 30 September 2025

2 of 15 SPE/Appropriations measures are reported at the end of Q1. Of these one met target and one was below target.

We continue to develop our non-financial performance reporting. We are developing a measures improvement plan that will enable iterative improvement of our measures suite to better demonstrate the outcomes and impacts that NZQA contribute to.

Non-financial performance

NZQA's 2025/26 Statement of Performance Expectations includes 15 performance measures, of which 9 are appropriations measures.


Quarterly Results

Of the two measures reported in Quarter 1, one met target whilst one did not.

Quality of information received from NZQA

The percentage of survey respondents who agree/ strongly agree that the information they received from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority met their needs.

	Target	YTD
	70%	72%




Past results

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	69%	68%	70%

Sub-degree programme monitoring

The percentage of non-university sub-degree tertiary programmes monitored that continue to meet the programme approval and accreditation criteria.

	Target	YTD
	65%	55%



- 20 programmes were monitored in Q1, of these 9 did not meet monitoring criteria. This was largely due to a focus on Enrolled Nursing programmes delivered via the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology that have been found to have issues. NZQA is working with all providers to address identified issues.
- This measure will be replaced as part of our measures improvement plan as this measure is indicative of provider rather than NZQA's performance.

Past results

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
		69%	55%
New measure in 2023/24			