

Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House

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Neil Quigley
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Dear Neil

New Zealand Qualifications Authority Letter of Expectations 2021

I am writing to convey the Government's priorities for the education system, and my expectations for your role in achieving these. This letter replaces my previous Letter of Expectations (LOE) and needs to be considered alongside the enduring LOE for Crown entities.¹ In addition to the priorities set out in this letter, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) needs to be aware of and informed by any guidance or direction to Crown entities set by Government.²

The new National Education Learning Priorities (NELP), the new Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) and the Government's overarching reforms for education (the Education Work Programme – EWP 2021) require NZQA to work collaboratively and cohesively with partner agencies and the sector.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti)

I expect the Board and NZQA to honour and give effect to the Crown's Te Tiriti responsibilities and deliver on Ka Hikita and Tau Mai Te Reo. This means:

- Understanding what the legislative changes to bring Te Tiriti to the forefront of the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) means for NZQA
- Creating and continuing authentic and sustainable partnering with iwi and Māori to ensure the education system delivers with, and for, Māori
- Ensuring Māori enjoy and achieve education success as Māori as they develop the skills to participate in te ao Māori, Aotearoa and the wider world (Ka Hikitia – Ka Hapaitia)
- NZQA making on the ground change for Māori learners and whānau including lifting leadership and staff cultural capability and practice to support the Crown to meet its public sector objectives for Māori-Crown relationships.

After consultation with Māori, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and I intend to issue an additional Statement of Expectations (Statement) about what NZQA must do to give effect to public service objectives that relate to Te Tiriti for the purpose of providing equitable outcomes for all students. It will provide greater guidance on what we expect NZQA to be doing to implement the Crown's Te Tiriti responsibilities provided for in section 6 of the Act.

I understand that the Ministry of Education (the Ministry), as Monitor of NZQA, is developing an equity monitoring framework to ensure I am provided with appropriate assurance across the year on how you are meeting your Te Tiriti obligations and addressing inequity in the system. I am pleased to note your recent publication of Te Kōkiritanga and I look forward to hearing about your

¹ <https://ssc.govt.nz/resources/ending-letter-of-expectations-to-statutory-crown-entities-2019/>

² This includes [Cabinet Office circular CO \(19\) 5: Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi Guidance for policy makers](#), National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) guidance for public sector Chief Executives.

progress and how you are embedding a commitment to Te Tiriti across the organisation.

COVID-19, equity and access

As COVID-19 has amplified existing inequities in the education system, the sector's initial response to the pandemic has shown us the importance of supporting schools, their leaders, learners and their whānau. I appreciate how education sector Crown entities and the Ministry have worked with each other through the pandemic. The whole-of-sector approach has ensured delivery of core services and holistic management of the continually changing environment.

Continued, joined-up planning for the uncertain environment is critical. The education entities must also continue to work together to support the wellbeing and achievement of students.

In the secondary sector, I expect NZQA to:

- deliver the examination cycle(s) and results release(s)
- continue to work with the Ministry in the use of innovative approaches to assist schools to utilise online learning and assessment if another lock down is required
- continue to focus on how to improve equitable access, including inclusive assessment design and encouraging schools to uptake Special Assessment Conditions for learners who need them.

In the tertiary sector, I expect NZQA to continue to:

- innovatively support the sector, as it did last year with streamlining approval processes for online delivery, extensions to temporary approvals and the relief package to support TEOs experiencing difficulty
- work to enhance the global recognition of New Zealand qualifications
- support the well-being of tertiary students via the Domestic and International Codes.

NZQA demonstrates a strong commitment to achieving equitable outcomes for all learners. I expect it to continue to reduce and remove barriers to access and participation and to work for the success of all learners, especially Māori students, Pacific students, other disabled students and other students from socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances. I recognise NZQA is deliberately focusing its efforts through a Māori and Pacific learner equity lens, reflecting voices heard in Te Kōrero Mātauranga. I also expect NZQA to extend its work on innovative and accessible assessment practices for disabled students, those with learning support needs and those from socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances.

I expect you to:

- tell me how you are incorporating equity across your organisation and seeking to ensure equitable outcomes for diverse ākonga
- tell me, in particular, how barriers will continue to be reduced for students accessing national assessments, including encouraging schools to uptake Special Assessment Conditions for learners who need them and reducing ākonga reliance on these through the innovation in the design and delivery of external assessments
- share with me NZQA's longer-term roadmap for developing an accessible and inclusive NCEA environment
- report regularly to me on this work through the existing reporting channels.

As outlined earlier, Government and education sector Crown entities have joint responsibility to genuinely partner with Māori to ensure the education system delivers with, and for, Māori. Lifting leadership practice and cultural capability of NZQA staff to effectively partner with Māori is a critical aspect of this.³ I appreciate NZQA's efforts to date in this regard and expect to see this continue.

³ See <https://www.tearawhiti.govt.nz/te-kahui-hikina-maori-crown-relations/engagement/> and <https://www.tearawhiti.govt.nz/assets/Tools-and-Resources/Maori-Crown-Relations-Capability-Framework-Organisational-Capability-Component.pdf>

Reform in the Education system

I expect NZQA to do all it must to ensure successful delivery of the Government's ambitious work programme for the education portfolio

NCEA Review and Review of Achievement Standards

I expect NZQA to continue to collaborate with the Ministry on the design and delivery of the findings of the NCEA Review, including on the delivery of the Review of Achievement Standards (RAS).

Key to achieving equitable NCEA outcomes for ākonga Māori and ākonga Pacific, and ensuring inclusivity and accessibility of NCEA for disabled students and students from socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances is actively seeking feedback from these learners, and using student voice to drive improvements and innovations in the nature of assessment and assessment processes. The development of new assessment tasks based on the redeveloped standards must have equity, inclusivity and accessibility at the forefront of design. I expect to see NZQA deliver this through the implementation of the NCEA Review findings and your work to support the development and delivery of the RAS, and the design of assessment. In particular, I expect NZQA to provide leadership over the design of innovative, inclusive external assessments, and to monitor and evaluate whether assessment tasks and standards are meeting the needs of diverse ākonga.

While delivering on the findings of the NCEA Review and the RAS, I expect NZQA to plan for and manage two NCEA systems concurrently. As part of this, NZQA will need to ensure its assessment operating environment will be able to meet the current and future changes. This is critical work for me. I need assurance that it is being prioritised and will:

- consider the capacity, capability and expertise that NZQA will need to develop and deliver innovative, inclusive and accessible external assessments to support the Government's NCEA Changes
- meet expected timelines
- put in place a robust internal assessment moderation system that drives improvements in assessment practice for our workforce.

Alongside this I expect NZQA to work alongside the Ministry to continue to expand the range of subjects available to be examined digitally as the system is ready (appropriate pedagogy and device availability). In expanding the range of subjects, NZQA will need to continue to work with schools and students to ensure technology offers a good user experience for a subject before it is offered as a digital assessment.

New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) review

I expect NZQA to complete the comprehensive review of the NZQF to the agreed timelines and objectives – the framework needs to be easier to understand and more clearly recognise vocational education and, where relevant, mātauranga Māori.

Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE)

I expect NZQA to change as it responds to RoVE. Moving from sixteen Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics and eleven Transitional Industry Training Organisations to Te Pūkenga and the six new Workforce Development Councils will mean some of its responsibilities will transfer within a more devolved accountability framework for vocational education. NZQA will need to adapt and appropriately scale its regulatory approach. This means:

- focusing on Te Pūkenga's governance and other systems that ensure the quality of education performance and capability to manage its network. These will change and develop as the operating model gets implemented.
- having approval and monitoring processes, using the available levers, that support an environment where it works with WDCs as they undertake their qualification development, standard setting and other functions.

NZQA will need to maintain a strong change orientation and be agile and adaptive in ensuring delivery of core business-as-usual functions as the vocational sector undergoes significant structural change.

I expect NZQA to provide me with a clear view of what it will do to change its organisation and ensure the successful implementation of RoVE across the year, both for the sector and what is needed to fully embed RoVE internally within NZQA.

Data in the tertiary system

I expect NZQA to drive best practice across the sector in the collection and management of its data and information. A key aspect of this is the development of, alongside the Ministry and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), a new platform to exchange data across the tertiary education sector and the work with TEOs to further enhance it. I understand this data collection process has still to be developed and implemented.

Tertiary Student Wellbeing

Tertiary student wellbeing is of heightened interest to me because of the tragic death of a student at Sonoda student accommodation in Christchurch in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic. I appreciate the work NZQA has undertaken to produce guidelines for the Education (Pastoral Care of Domestic Tertiary Students) Interim Code of Practice 2019 (the Interim Code) and its work to raise sector awareness of their responsibilities under the Interim Code and build sector capability to implement the Interim Code.

I expect NZQA to continue to work with the Ministry on the replacement Code, as I expect it to work with providers to ensure the wellbeing of all students (domestic tertiary and international). Establishing and operating the quality assurance framework and processes to investigate complaints and potential breaches of either the domestic or international Codes is a priority for me. This includes targeted monitoring and integrating the Code into relevant external quality assurance processes such as External Evaluation and Review.

I expect NZQA to work with those who have been delegated code administration responsibilities to ensure that tertiary education providers better support student wellbeing.

Operational expectations

NZQA needs to have constructive relationships with Ministers and a 'no surprises' approach to keeping me informed of matters of significance within my portfolio responsibilities.

I expect NZQA to assess and build board performance and share its insights with the Ministry. Within NZQA, it is important the Board works effectively together, and has a cohesive and collaborative approach.

I expect NZQA to be transparent with its investment and operational spend. NZQA will need to use its funds effectively to ensure it is providing benefits for the sector and will need to carefully manage resources and where required, make appropriate planned trade-offs to deliver on key priority areas.

I encourage NZQA to continue to build its use of business intelligence throughout its work and its data management and stewardship particularly in supporting wider work across the sector, for example TEC's work on Data2020.

Through the regular reports I receive from NZQA and the Ministry, I look forward to seeing progress against this LOE and receiving assurance that performance and risk are being well managed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CHIPKINS', written in a cursive style.

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

cc Dr Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive, New Zealand Qualifications Authority
cc Emily Fabling, Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Planning and Governance, Ministry of Education