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Tēnā koe Kevin

Letter of Expectations 2026 New Zealand Qualifications Authority | Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority | Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa (NZQA) plays a crucial role in supporting the Government's six education priorities and achieving my vision of an education system that provides high quality learning environments where all students get the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

This Letter of Expectations (LOE) confirms my expectations for NZQA and replaces the previous LOE issued in August 2024. It should be considered alongside the enduring LOE for Crown entities¹ and any "all -of-government" requirements set by central agencies².

Financial sustainability and business performance

NZQA must maintain a sustainable, efficient business model that delivers strong results. I acknowledge the efforts made to address the financial sustainability of the organisation. While the NZQA Financial Stabilisation Plan has been completed, I expect to see ongoing prudent strategic financial management, which addresses cost pressures and funding cliffs in out years, together with regularly updated financial projections and reporting to the Monitor and me.

As you are aware, NZQA's medium-term financial outlook remains heavily reliant on Budget bids to address historic underfunding. As Budget 26 decisions are finalised I will provide further direction on my priorities for NZQA.

Information Technology (IT) systems stabilisation and futureproofing

NZQA's IT infrastructure underpins its core functions and is crucial to public trust and confidence in the qualifications system. Consequently, as NZQA implements the Strategic Technology Enhancement Programme (STEP) it must also ensure its current IT system is maintained. STEP is a crucial piece of work to futureproof NZQA's systems to contribute to a robust digital learning environment. I expect regular updates on its implementation and that you will work closely with the monitoring team, providing updates as you progress to cost validation and issue requests for proposals.

¹ ELOE24-FINAL-signed-Enduring-Letter-of-Expectation-to-Crown-Entity-Chairs-Apr24-2-v2.pdf (publicservice.govt.nz)

² "All-of-Government" Requirements and Expectations on Statutory Crown Entities - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission.

Cybersecurity and business continuity

As NZQA moves to an increasingly digitally enabled operating model, maintaining a strong focus on managing cyber security risks is required. NZQA must ensure that it attains and maintains a minimum level 2 of the National Cyber Security Centre Minimum Cyber Security Standards issued by the Government Chief Information Security Officer under section 57 of the Public Service Act. I also understand NZQA is progressing work on its incident response reporting and escalation pathways for cyber incidents. I am expecting updates from the Monitor in due course.

Delivering core functions well and role clarity in an inter-connected system

NZQA's core mission is the effective management of assessment systems, and quality assurance of education providers (excluding universities). It is critical that all learners in the education system have their knowledge and skills recognised and credentialled appropriately through the assessment system. I expect the Qualifications and Credentials Framework to be administered in a consistent and credible manner.

NZQA plays an integral role in two significant systems reforms – the integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF) and new senior secondary school qualifications. To ensure the success of these initiatives, NZQA must be clear on the remit of its role and work in partnership with the Ministry of Education, who is the strategic, policy, and system lead. I expect NZQA to continue to consider and manage interdependencies with other agencies and be clear, transparent and proactive in its advice and communication with my office, the Ministry, and other partner agencies.

Senior Secondary School Qualifications

As well as ensuring the current National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) operates effectively, NZQA must prepare for future changes to senior secondary qualifications. I want NZQA to continue improving the scope and reliability of digital assessment ensuring they are designed so they are accessible to all learners.

The success of the proposed changes to senior secondary qualifications depends on NZQA and the Ministry of Education working in close partnership, with NZQA maintaining a 'no surprises' approach, providing early communication when issues arise, and supporting the Ministry to monitor, review and maintain the national curriculum and qualifications. The assessments developed by NZQA should reflect and support the national curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education, and NZQA should continue to support the Ministry to design and implement changes to secondary school qualifications and assessment.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

As NZQA explores the use of AI for marking and assessments I expect regular updates on progress and risk mitigation. NZQA should work with the Ministry to provide schools with clear guidance on AI use for assessments. While AI may offer efficiencies, NZQA must be realistic about its costs, limitations, and appropriate applications.

Tertiary Quality Assurance

NZQA's tertiary quality assurance function is critical in upholding the integrity of our qualifications and credentials at a national and international level and, through the Tertiary and International Learners Code of Practice ensuring the wellbeing and safety of learners. The transition from the Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework and the implementation of iQAF are fundamental in service of this function.

I expect NZQA to keep Minister Simmonds and I updated on progress implementing iQAF and any concerns that arise, particularly about the capability of Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) to deliver expected outcomes. To support TEOs to effectively conduct self-reviews and prepare for assessments, we expect NZQA to provide clear standards and guidelines.

NZQA must maintain awareness of how the iQAF reforms will affect other agencies who use data about provider quality for their own purposes. I expect the organisation to work in partnership with other agencies affected by the new model and be proactive in its communications with them.

Industry Skills Boards

Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) are operational as of 1 January 2026 and their functions include endorsing programmes developed by providers prior to their approval by NZQA. I expect NZQA to ensure that its processes do not duplicate those of the ISBs and to work collaboratively with the Tertiary Education Commission and ISBs to ensure they deliver their functions effectively.

Board Performance and Engagement

I expect the Board to ensure NZQA delivers on Government priorities and is a sustainable and efficient organisation that effectively carries out its core functions.

The Board is overseeing NZQA during a time of substantial changes both within the organisation and across the education system. These shifts present potential risks to delivery, and the Board will ultimately be accountable for ensuring changes to the qualifications system are successfully managed.

The Board must set clear expectations of the NZQA Senior Leadership Team providing guidance and tools to lead the organisation through this critical period. I also expect that the deliverables set out in this letter are reflected in the NZQA Chief Executive's performance expectations.

I would like to continue to meet with you bi-monthly to discuss risks and progress on critical issues and expect six-monthly Board performance reports to me and the Monitor.

Finally, it is important to me that NZQA continues to be transparent in its operations and engagements with the Monitor and that both the entity and Board engage closely with the Monitor. This must be supported by supplying the Monitor with the information it requires.

Nāku noa, nā



Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Education

Cc: Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive, NZQA
Cc: Andy Jackson, Hautū, Te Pou Kaupapahere | Policy
Cc: Jen Heersping, Director, Monitoring and Appointments