



Kevin Jenkins
Board Chair
New Zealand Qualifications Authority |
Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
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Tēnā koe Kevin

Budget 26 funding – additional Letter of Expectations for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority

With Budget 2026 announcements confirming successful funding bids for NZQA, this letter complements my Letter of Expectations issued 8 April 2026. It provides further direction on my priorities, specific to the additional funding received by NZQA.

With NZQA having improved its financial outlook significantly, I expect that any further cost pressures within the next four years will be met from its baseline or reserves in the first instance.

Strategic Technology Enhancement Project (STEP)

Timelines and alignment with the implementation of the new senior secondary qualification are my main concerns regarding STEP. I expect NZQA to regularly update me on STEP implementation through the fortnightly reports and/or other STEP-specific reporting as appropriate. In particular, should NZQA not be able to meet the deadline to get Approval To Deliver in October 2026, I would like to be briefed as early as possible on the implications resulting from any delay, including for the drawdown of the contingency funding, and any plans for mitigation.

The STEP team should continue their bi-monthly engagement with the monitor and to have open, free and frank conversations about all aspects of the project so I can be apprised of emerging risks and issues in a timely manner.

In view of the recent review of the Immigration New Zealand Biometric Projects, the monitor will be testing with NZQA whether all the steps and actions that were identified as lacking or flawed in that review have been covered off. In relation to vendor contract management, I would like to be assured that this is carried out in a prudent and comprehensive manner and takes into account potential issues arising from knowledge transfer and intellectual property.

Artificial intelligence (AI)

I am pleased to see NZQA progressing several AI initiatives. I expect to be updated regularly through the appropriate mechanism about how any of the trials, pilots and proofs of concept are progressing.

It is also important to me that NZQA continues its open and transparent communication with schools about the use of AI, including clearly explaining rationale, parameters, risks and risk mitigation.

Implementing the new secondary school qualification

NZQA is receiving additional funding to implement the new secondary school qualification, which includes the development of internal and external assessments and associated products for testing for 128 subjects across year 12 and 13. I see it as critical that schools have access to these resources for the new qualification as soon as possible.

I want to be updated regularly on how this work is progressing, including early indications of work and resources required for 2027/28 and beyond to fully implement the new qualifications. I would like to reinforce the importance of a strong relationship between NZQA, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) and other stakeholders during this transitional period. NZQA and the Ministry need to ensure they are well connected, roles are clear at all levels and that communication to the sector is aligned.

NCEA and NZ scholarships delivery

The additional baseline funding for NCEA and NZ scholarships delivery supports core business-as-usual services for schools and kura over the next four years while we transition towards the new senior secondary qualifications. I expect these additional resources will be spent prudently and conscientiously and that no further additional funding will be needed in this area.

Please pass on my thanks to the Board and NZQA staff for the work they are doing.

Nāku noa, nā



Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Education

Cc: Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive, New Zealand Qualifications Authority
Cc: Jennifer Heersping, Director, Monitoring & Appointments, Ministry of Education