



**Briefing to the Incoming Minister**  
**He whakahoutanga ki te Minita tomo mai**  
November 2023

**NZQA**

Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority



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## Welcome | Nau Mai

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Education. We look forward to working with you to implement your priorities for New Zealand's qualifications and credentials system.

This Briefing is intended to support you in your responsibilities for the Education portfolio. It sets out the role and purpose of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, what we do, how we work, and how we can support you in your role.

## Introduction to NZQA | He whakaurunga ki Te Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa

Our vision, 'Qualify for the Future World: Kia Noho Takatū Ki Tō Āmua Ao', encapsulates our ambition for learners and for New Zealand.

Our primary role is to ensure that New Zealand qualifications and credentials are accepted as credible and robust, both nationally and internationally. We do this through our stewardship of the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF), management of the qualifications system, quality assurance of tertiary education organisations (except universities), quality assurance of assessment in schools and kura, and delivery of robust senior-secondary-school level assessment. We work interdependently with other education agencies to carry out our responsibilities and functions, particularly regarding the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

We enable qualification pathways and credentials that offer relevant opportunities for different learner needs and contexts. We deliver assessments and services that are accessible for all learners, especially those who face barriers to education.

As a public sector organisation, we are committed to giving effect to Te Tiriti obligations in the Education and Training Act 2020 through an education system that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and supports Māori Crown relationships. We also work alongside schools, education providers, iwi, and communities to build capability and support them in their work to achieve equity for all learners.

NZQA is committed to equitable outcomes for Māori as tangata whenua. We are also committed to equitable outcomes for Pacific learners, disabled learners, and learners from socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances. These commitments apply across NZQA's work, and underpin our deliberate equity focus on learners who face the greatest barriers to educational success through the compounding effects of disadvantage. These equity commitments are a component of how we fulfil our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and reflect the priorities described in NZQA's strategic action plans *Te Kōkiritanga* and *Takiala Pasifika*, and NZQA's Disability Action Plan.

We work in collaboration with others including our sector colleague agencies, education organisations, teachers, whānau, iwi and communities on system improvements and implementing change. We also take a broad and collaborative approach to managing other opportunities and challenges which impact on education. This includes how educators can best harness new technologies such as artificial intelligence and manage the associated risks effectively.

Sustainability is an important focus in how we run our organisation. This includes the security and future proofing of our business systems and infrastructure, financial management, having robust health and safety, risk management and business continuity processes, as well as taking action to reduce our carbon footprint as much as possible.

We are committed to working effectively towards our outcomes of relevant qualifications and credentials and trusted assessment and quality assurance.

## **Your responsibilities | Ngā haepapa**

As Minister of Education, you have responsibility for NZQA as a Crown entity under both the Education and Training Act 2020 and the Crown Entities Act 2004. The Crown Entities Act 2004 creates an accountability relationship between the NZQA Board and you as responsible Minister. You are responsible to the House of Representatives for the oversight and management of the Crown's interest in and relationship with NZQA.

## **How we work with you | Ā mātou mahi me tō kāhui**

### **Our Board | Te Poari**

As a Crown entity under the Crown Entities Act 2004, we are governed by a Board appointed by you. The Board currently has 10 members and is chaired by Hon Tracey Martin. See our [website](#) for profiles and terms. The NZQA Board sets NZQA's strategic direction and annual performance expectations, in consultation with you.

The Board has recently adopted the following Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statement in line with our obligations under section 4(d) of the Education and Training Act 2020.

### **NZQA Board – Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statement**

NZQA's Board has adopted the following Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statement.

“The NZQA Board gives effect to section 4(d) of the Act by ensuring that its strategy, oversight (resourcing and monitoring) and stakeholder management roles honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We understand our Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations to mean that the Board should actively advance the interests of Māori and seek opportunities to enable

tino rangatiratanga, by Māori, for Māori, in relation to how NZQA performs its functions.

Practically this means:

- We embrace opportunities to support Māori-Crown relationships and honour the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in how we exercise our statutory functions
- We work in partnership with [Ngā Kaitūhono](#)
- We place equity of access to opportunities for ākonga Māori to experience educational success at the forefront of our decision-making
- We support the increased prominence of Mātauranga Māori within qualifications, over time, to strengthen their credibility and relevance
- We expect the organisation to create space for key Māori stakeholders in the development of assessment/aromatawai and quality assurance processes so Māori can exercise their mana motuhake in what is learnt, how it is assessed and how quality is defined
- We expect the organisation to continue building te ao Māori internal capacity and capability across all its functions.

## **Our responsibilities | Ngā Haepapa**

We are responsible for providing you with quality and timely advice concerning the qualifications system, international recognition of qualifications, the quality assurance of tertiary education organisations (except universities) and the administration of the national secondary school assessment system.

Our Chief Executive Dr Grant Klinkum attends the weekly agency meetings with your office. Currently, our Chief Executive, and other members of our Strategic Leadership Team as needed, meet with the Minister of Education once a month. We would welcome the opportunity to continue this arrangement.

We provide regular updates to you through our written fortnightly update on upcoming issues and our quarterly reports outlining our progress towards our strategic intentions and goals, plus key deliverables outlined in our accountability documents.

We operate under a 'no-surprises' principle. This means we will keep you well-informed of matters of significance within your portfolio responsibilities that relate to our role.

## **Immediate priorities | Ngā kaupapa nui tonu**

We will be seeking some early guidance / decisions from you, including:

- discussion about options for any national approach to advance digital equity. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic with you before the end of this year.
- approval to consult on changes relating to the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework, which we will seek in early 2024.

- guidance on our redesigned quality assurance framework, which we will seek in early 2024.
- support for preparing a Budget 2025 bid for investing in replacing our core technology system which is coming to the end of its serviceable life. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you before the end of this year.

These are covered more in the *matters for your attention* section.

We are also actively providing advice to the Ministry of Education on our financial position and the extent to which baseline financial savings can be made and/or costs reprioritised to manage financial pressures, while maintaining service delivery.

## **Accountability documents | Ngā puka papanga**

Your *Letter of Expectations*, which outlines your key priorities and expectations for the forthcoming year, will inform our planning for 2024/25. Your priorities and directions for the education sector will be reflected in our governance and accountability documents.

Our *Statement of Intent* sets out our strategic direction and provides a medium-term outlook (four years) with a focus on our strategic objectives and how we will deliver them. Our *Statement of Intent* should be read alongside our *Statement of Performance Expectations*, which has a one-year horizon and sets out what we will deliver and how our performance will be assessed to account for the funding we receive. We develop a *Statement of Performance Expectations* annually.

As a Crown Entity, we prepare an annual report to give a clear picture of our overall performance, both in how we have operated financially and our progress against our strategic direction as detailed in our Statement of Intent. We will also provide you with quarterly performance updates about our financial, strategic and operational progress.

## Who we are and what we do | Ko wai mātou

We ensure that New Zealand qualifications and credentials are accepted as credible and robust, both nationally and internationally.

We are responsible for:

- maintaining the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework and the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards
- overseeing the setting of standards for qualifications in schools and tertiary education
- monitoring and reviewing the standards for qualifications
- setting the common standard for entrance to universities
- ensuring assessment and moderation procedures are fair, equitable and consistent for programmes and micro-credentials requiring national consistency
- ensuring tertiary and vocational qualifications maintain international comparability
- assisting overseas governments and agencies to develop qualifications systems
- recognising overseas educational and vocational qualifications
- monitoring workforce development councils.

We deliver robust senior secondary school assessments and quality assure internal assessments for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). We quality assure tertiary education providers (except universities). We also support and monitor providers' implementation of the *Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021*.

## Our key relationships | Ngā hononga matua

We work closely and in collaboration with the wider government sector, education agencies (particularly the Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission, Education Review Office, and Education New Zealand), workforce development councils, tertiary education organisations, schools and kura to deliver the best outcomes for learners.

Alongside other education agencies, we make sure education in New Zealand is high quality, help learners make informed choices about their education, and maintain records of learners' national educational achievements. We share information to help each other's work, streamline processes and support Government strategies to improve education in New Zealand. We provide NCEA data to the Education Review Office and the Ministry of Education to inform discussions about educational achievement.

Our role regarding secondary schooling is in relation to curriculum assessment. The Ministry of Education is the curriculum owner responsible for curriculum development.

Our work plays a key part in achieving the Government's education objectives set out in the *Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* and the *Tertiary*

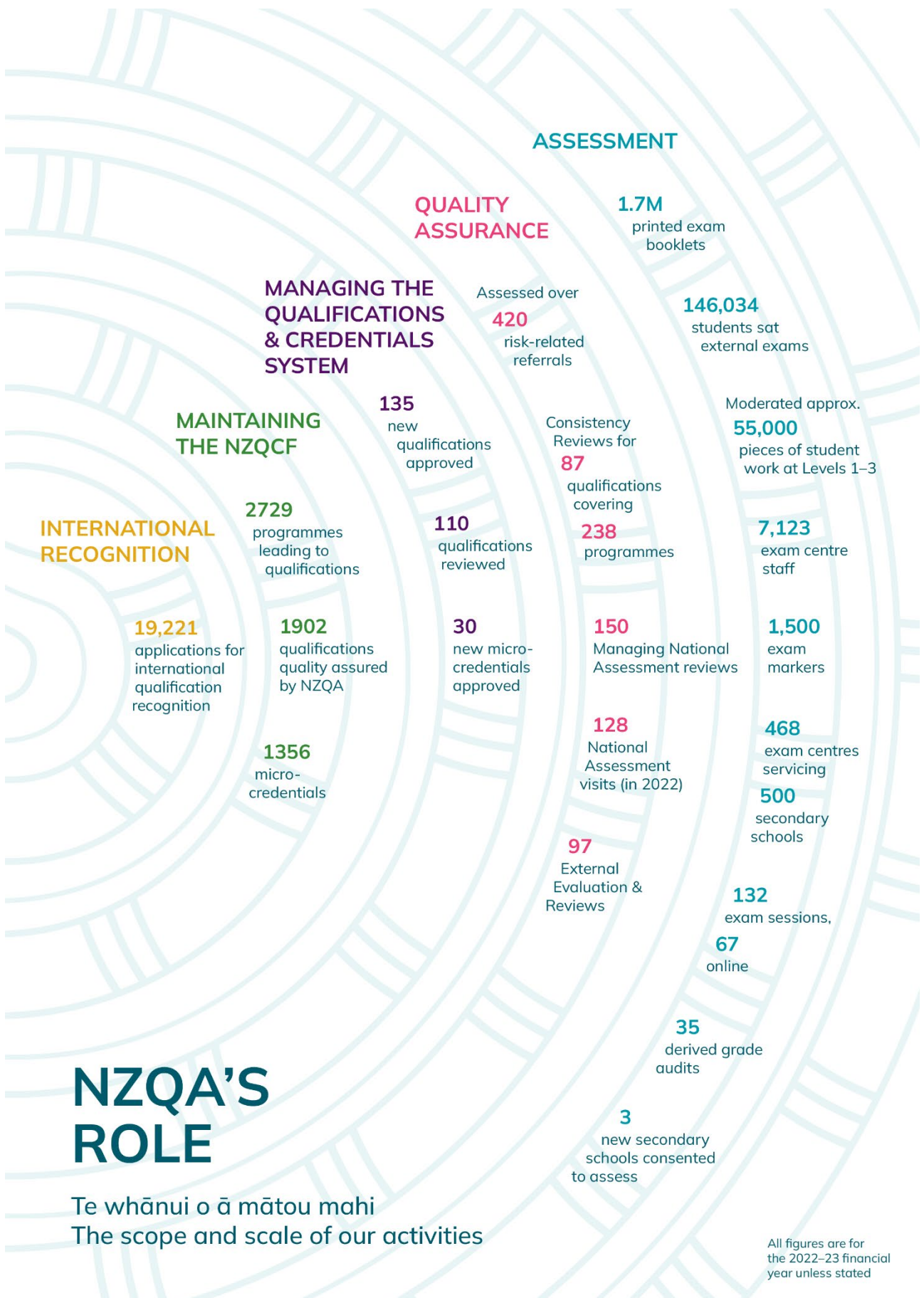
*Education Strategy, as well as Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia, Tau Mai te Reo, the Action Plan for Pacific Education, and the Learning Support Action Plan.*

In the secondary school sector, we work with students and their families, teachers, principals, school administration staff, peak bodies and representative groups. In the tertiary sector, we work with tertiary students, adult learners, national student associations, tertiary education providers and peak bodies, workforce development councils and regulatory/registration bodies.

We also interact with international students and immigrants wanting their qualifications recognised for study and employment opportunities in New Zealand.



# The scope and scale of our activities | Te whānui o ā mātou mahi



## NZQA'S ROLE

Te whānui o ā mātou mahi  
The scope and scale of our activities

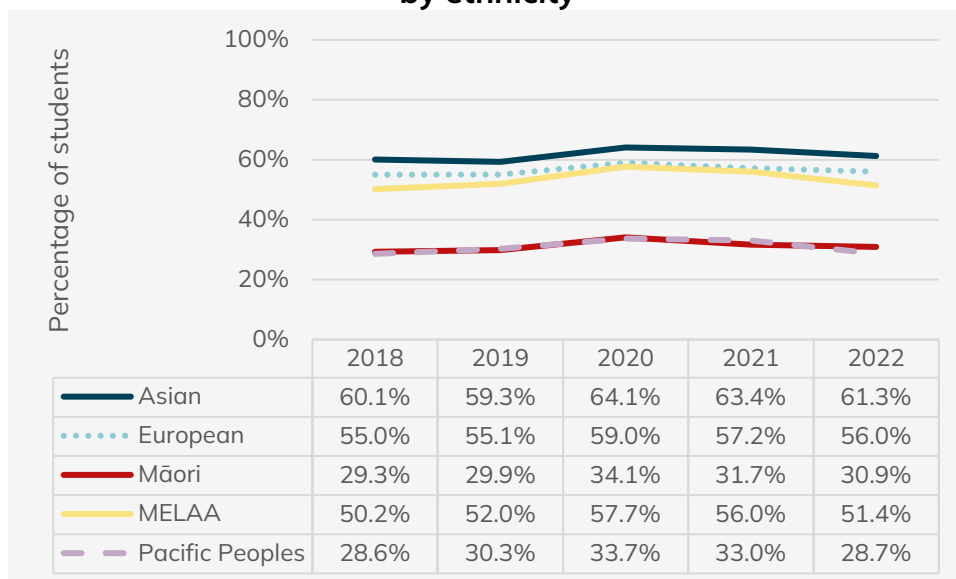
All figures are for the 2022–23 financial year unless stated

## Our operating environment | Te whare e tū nei

Our operating environment is constantly changing as education evolves and adapts to the needs and expectations of learners, their families, employers, industry and iwi.

While New Zealand’s education system meets the needs of many learners, it continues to underperform for ākonga Māori, Pacific learners, disabled learners and those needing learning support, as well as those facing socioeconomic disadvantage. Figure One outlines the enrolment-based attainment rates by ethnicity, highlighting the attainment gap between ākonga Māori and Pacific learners with other ethnicities.

**Figure One: Enrolment-based Year 13 learners’ attainment of University Entrance, by ethnicity**



We are concerned that the evolution of digital technology will further impact learners who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

We are operating in a digital age with technology being a key driver and accelerator of change. It is becoming increasingly important for us to be able to adapt and harness technology to meet the changing needs of learners and other key stakeholder groups.

A major change that is currently occurring is the disruptive and potentially paradigm-shifting impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI). AI related change has implications for assessment, our regulatory framework and more broadly our business operations. AI will also contribute to changes in the world of work, providing new employment opportunities and disruption that will require new skill sets and ways of working. We are cognisant of the importance of being able to respond and adapt to future changes and continue to consider the numerous opportunities, benefits, challenges and risks that the rapid and accelerating pace of AI related change creates.

We monitor local and international developments, including the use of AI detectors or checkers. We collaborate with education providers and government agencies to keep up with the rapidly changing technology landscape.

Another factor in our operating environment is high inflation. This has contributed to increasing cost pressures at a time when we need to both have financial restraint and replace our ageing digital infrastructure to continue to deliver our core regulatory and assessment functions.

We have also been operating in a constrained labour market for some time, with associated skill shortages, especially in the information technology area. Increasing immigration may ease some of these pressures but will likely have implications on our qualification recognition functions, as indicated in the 'key risks' section.

NZQA is delivering an inaugural Disability Action Plan, focused on partnerships, data, providing information in an accessible way, and building the confidence of staff in working with and for disabled people. This aligns with the five priority areas set out in Papa Pounamu – the diversity and inclusion work programme for the wider Public Service.

NZQA is also supporting research led by the National Disabled Students' Association, looking at disabled students' experiences in tertiary education. The project's initial literature review finds that the need to repeatedly disclose medical information is a barrier to learners receiving support. Similar barriers have been identified at secondary school level, and a trial is underway to address this barrier to accessing Special Assessment Conditions. In this trial, information about students will be held by the school, which makes a decision on needs and notifies NZQA – in comparison to the existing application process in which NZQA determines needs based on information passed from schools to us.

The education eco-system in which we operate has many inter-dependencies. Much of our work is influenced by and progressed in collaboration with education agencies, tertiary education organisations, schools and kura.

We have a key role to play in addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the environment in which we are operating, through our assessment, qualifications, quality assurance and credentialing roles. We do not respond to our changing operating environment in isolation, but work closely and collaboratively with our sector colleague agencies, other education organisations, teachers and families.

## **Matters for your attention | Kia whakamau te titiro**

We look forward to working with you to progress your priorities for senior secondary education, and alongside the Minister for Tertiary Education and Skills to advance the Government's tertiary education priorities.

We have the following four key areas that we are currently progressing, which we would like to bring to your attention.

### **Addressing digital inequality | Tautika-kore me ngā mea matihiko**

NZQA is focused on setting learners up to succeed in a digital world. We are transforming assessment to respond to the different contexts and changing needs of learners, communities and employers. Digital technologies provide opportunities for new types of support and services that can significantly reduce barriers for disadvantaged learners.

The benefits of digital external assessment include greater efficiency and enhanced quality assurance. It provides opportunities to include functionality such as text to speech, spell check and editing, where appropriate, for students participating in digital assessments. Over 97% of respondents who participate in digital assessments say their experience is positive. A reason for this is that it is easier and faster to type and edit than to handwrite responses. The ability to auto mark some standards provides greater consistency and reliability, along with access to different data sets providing insights that can be passed back to the sector.

In 2023 we are offering 138 NCEA and scholarship end-of-year external assessment (exam) sessions. 72 of these are available digitally. Last year 34.3% of students sat a digital assessment where the subject was available digitally, compared to 19.6% in 2021. Approximately 40% of students are expected to participate in digital assessments during the 2023 end-of-year external assessments.

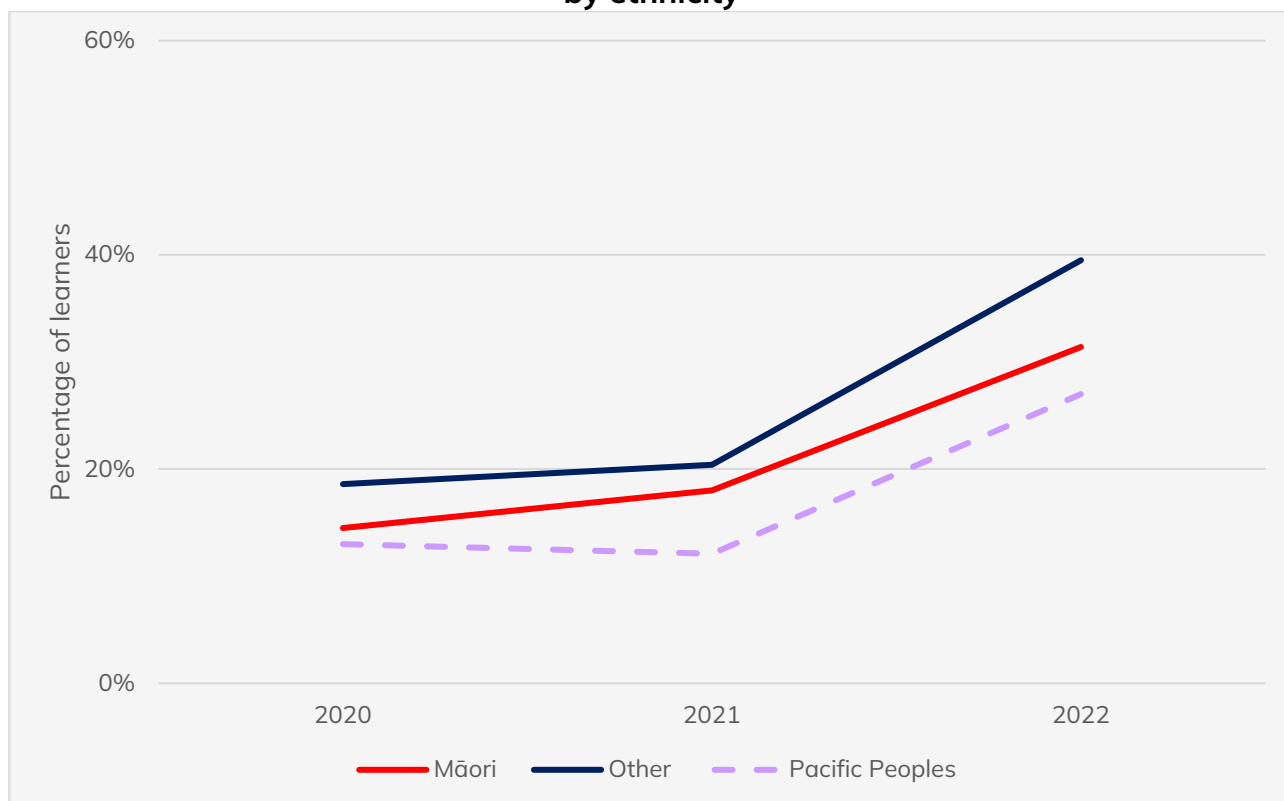
The implementation of the NCEA Te Reo Matatini, Literacy, Pāngarau and Numeracy co-requisite ('NCEA co-requisite') has also enabled more students to complete digital assessments. In 2022, nearly 30,000 students across all year levels participated in the NCEA co-requisite digital assessments. This has increased to over 40,000 students in the June 2023 assessments, and almost 50,000 students in October / November.

The review of NCEA has changed how we will deliver external assessments. Following three years of pilots, new Level 1 NCEA achievement standards and NCEA co-requisite unit standards are being implemented from 2024. The new standards will predominantly be offered digitally ('digital first'), however the Special Assessment Conditions provide schools and students with the option to sit these assessments on paper. Internal standards will be moderated online and assessment for external standards will be offered at timetabled times during the year.

We have now laid the foundations for digital assessment by default, but the variability in device and connectivity access across students, schools, communities and regions is

a significant impediment to digital uptake. Various local initiatives, involving leased devices and community level connectivity, have helped remove inequities, however none of these initiatives have been nationally scaled. In addition, not all schools have the devices, full-school infrastructure or IT support needed to provide reliable digital external assessment for all learners.

**Figure Two: Learners’ participation in digital external assessment Years 11-13, by ethnicity**



The NZQA Board consider that there is a strong case for government to prioritise a national approach to optional device access and linked home connectivity, and full school connectivity through parental purchase or leasing schemes. Working alongside other education agencies, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic with you and to discuss with you how we might support you in any future budget bid, if you were in support of addressing this foundational equity issue.

### **NZQCF review | Arotake NZQCF**

The New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) is central to New Zealand’s education and training system. It is the definitive source of information on all quality assured qualifications and micro-credentials. As New Zealand’s national qualifications framework, it provides confidence to stakeholders worldwide in the credibility of our qualifications system. It enables qualifications and credentials to be compared and validated so they can be used for employment and study purposes in other countries.

The NZQCF is made up of a register of approved qualifications and micro-credentials, the quality assurance of those qualifications and credentials, and the descriptions of the key features of the framework. These descriptions are presented in a document and on our website, and are used for explaining, comparing and approving qualifications and credentials.

We review the NZQCF periodically to ensure it remains fit for purpose, flexible and adaptive to the future needs of learners, employers, iwi and other stakeholders. The most recent review has led to a range of proposed changes. The first of these changes were implemented in 2022-23 and included listing quality assured micro-credentials on the NZQCF and enabling qualifications and micro-credentials to be listed in English, te reo Māori, or both languages.

The other proposed changes are still to be implemented:

- Updating the 'level descriptors' to specifically include transferable skills of critical thinking, communication and collaboration. These skills are sought by employers and give greater visibility to vocational skills.
- Developing a revised pictorial representation of the framework which will present qualifications and credentials across a spectrum rather than a hierarchy.
- Amending the definitions of qualifications (certificate, bachelor degree, etc) and credentials to reflect current practice and provide for mātauranga Māori to be included where it is appropriate and relevant.
- Including te ao Māori alongside the key features of the framework (level descriptors and qualification definitions) and enabling mātauranga Māori, where appropriate, to be included in the design of a qualification.

To progress these, we anticipate seeking your approval to consult on changes to the NZQCF early next year. Following formal consultation, we will make changes to NZQA Rules and publish an updated key features document in a bilingual format.

## **Quality Assurance Framework redesign | Te Anga Tino Kounga hōu**

NZQA quality assures all private training establishments, wānanga, Te Pūkenga and government training establishments. Universities New Zealand is responsible for quality assurance in universities. NZQA engages closely with Universities New Zealand and its associated committees over quality assurance matters.

Our quality assurance framework was introduced in 2009. Some new quality assurance activities and minor refinements have been introduced but it has not been revised since. Following on from the recent changes to the Education and Training Act 2020 and qualifications system, we are reviewing, from 'first principles', our quality assurance framework. We expect this review to lead to a redesign of the framework which will further develop our regulatory maturity, focus on both system and provider risk, and add further value to the work of education providers.

We are actively considering how we move away from a single approach to quality assurance that is applied to all education organisations to a more tailored approach

that can be adapted to provider characteristics and the level of risk. This would mean the quality assurance levers applied to a small provider delivering one or two programmes could differ from a provider delivering multiple programmes across multiple sites. We are also considering reducing the number and range of quality assurance activities to focus on those that give the most meaningful evidence of quality education practice, especially in the area of monitoring.

Another area we are looking at is how we can use thematic reviews across tertiary education and share system-wide insights to lift the performance of the sector and develop good practice. For example, we could evaluate evidence of how providers successfully support under-served learners, such as disabled learners, to achieve equity of education and employment outcomes. We could also make better use of the wealth of data available across government to inform NZQA, sector and learner activities.

As we look at redesigning the framework, we will also consider how to increase the reliance we place on, and the value delivered through, providers' self-review. We use self-review to understand the provider's processes for identifying and implementing quality improvement.

We are currently engaging with internal and some external stakeholders. We anticipate seeking the Minister for Tertiary Education and Skills' guidance on our proposed direction of travel in early 2024 with a view to further engagement and formal consultation on our proposals.

## **eQA replacement | Te whakakapi mō eQA**

NZQA's 'eQA' (electronic Qualifications Authority) is a technology system that supports all our core business functions. We use this system to underpin our quality assurance and assessment responsibilities. It links to the vast majority of internal applications and customer channels. The eQA system began operation in 2005 and is now almost two decades old. It is coming to the end of its serviceable life with increasing costs and decreasing availability of support and change capability. It can no longer be relied on to support our future business needs, requirements and rate of change. The need for investment in this ageing core technology system is escalating over time and increasingly creating unsustainable operational and security risks.

We need to replace eQA with an enhanced technology capability so we can continue to provide our core services in a secure and sustainable way and mitigate the ongoing operational and security risk of maintaining the ageing legacy platform. An enhanced technology capability will also allow us to remain flexible and responsive to the changing demands coming from the education sector and help us to become a more sustainable, smarter regulator. Through leveraging an enhanced business intelligence capability and improved digital systems and processes, we would be better placed to influence sector outcomes.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic with you, to provide you with a level of understanding of the issues and opportunities, and to discuss with you a

potential Budget 2025 bid for a future-proofed technology capability to support NZQA's statutory functions.



## Key risks | Ngā tūraru nui

The risks to assessment from artificial intelligence and the need to invest in our core technology system are conveyed earlier in this BIM. We also cover risks to our financial sustainability in the *financial outlook* section.

We have one other immediate risk to bring to your attention as you oversee this portfolio:

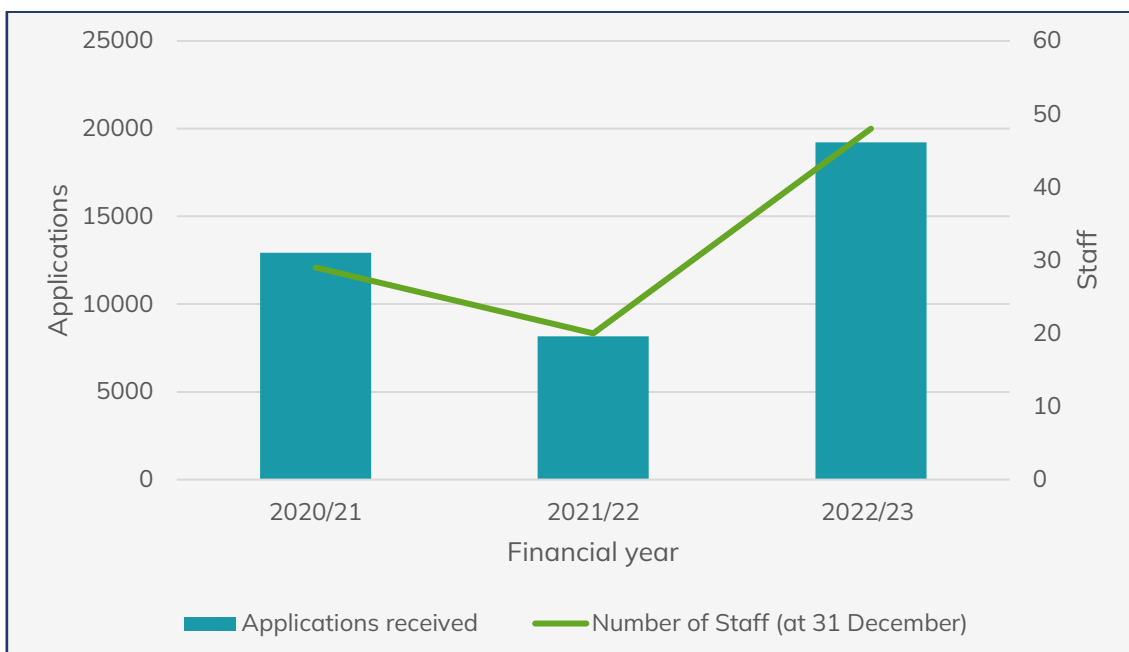
### International qualification assessment timeframes | Ngā angawā aromatawai tohu tawāhi

Our goal is for 70% of those who apply for an international qualification assessment to receive an outcome within 35 working days. As of 30 September 2023, 73% were within this timeframe.

Since the New Zealand borders opened in 2022, there has been a sustained increase in applications for recognition of overseas qualifications as a result of renewed immigration activity. We anticipate a rise in application volumes in October following changes to Immigration New Zealand policy and the release of their updated *List of Qualifications Exempt from Assessment*.

We have employed a significant number of additional staff and streamlined and simplified business processes to meet this demand. We are also working to improve and automate aspects of our application management system and communication to better help applicants get it right the first time and avoid common application errors leading to delays. Even with these mitigating factors, the risk remains that further increases in application volume may lead to our stated timeframes not being met.

**Figure Three: International Qualification Assessments – applications and staff numbers**



## Significant ongoing work | Ngā mahi hirahira o te wā

We continue to maintain the qualifications system, deliver robust senior-secondary school assessments, quality assure all tertiary education providers (except for universities), assess international qualifications and administer the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice. While doing this, we are also progressing the following significant pieces of work.

We understand that incoming Ministers will have new policies to progress and priority areas of focus. We look forward to understanding those priorities, providing advice, and working to implement your decisions.

### Supporting the NCEA Change Programme | Hāpaitia te Hōtaka Whakawhiti NCEA

We are working closely with the Ministry of Education ('the Ministry') on the NCEA Change Programme. This includes implementing the NCEA co-requisite and reviewing the new achievement standards for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and New Zealand Curriculum. The NCEA Change Programme is expected to run through to the end of 2027. NZQA is represented on the Ministry's Curriculum and Assessment Change Programme Governance Board.

We have a key role in assuring the quality of the new achievement standards, the design of external assessment and supporting schools and kura deliver the new assessments (both internal and external). We also provide assessment expertise and input to the Ministry's achievement standard development work, including supporting the pilots of draft standards through our digital assessment platform. The new external assessments are designed with a digital-first approach. Paper versions of the external assessments will be made available to schools and kura on request.

We are developing and marking external assessments for the NCEA co-requisite. The standards and associated assessments were piloted in 2021 and 2022. 2023 is an 'opt-in' year before the co-requisite becomes mandatory in 2024.

This year *Te Ao Haka* (formerly Māori Performing Arts) levels 1-3 achievement standards were fully implemented. These standards provide a pathway for learners to progress through NCEA and University Entrance to NZ Scholarship and further study.

In response to the Ministry-led Review of Achievement Standards, we have a work programme to recalibrate the NCEA quality assurance system and to support the implementation of the new achievement standards. We are reviewing moderation processes for school based NCEA assessment, further developing NZQA's model for Managing National Assessment, and developing new evidence and evaluation frameworks for assessment.

## Review of University Entrance | Arotake Urunga Whare Wānanga

NZQA is leading a review of the University Entrance (UE) award over the next three years to ensure it is aligned with the changes related to the NCEA Change Programme. We want to ensure it continues to be a robust indicator of a learner's readiness for degree-level study and that learners have equitable access to the UE award. We expect that any changes to UE will apply from 2027. We will provide you with regular updates throughout the process.

## Supporting vocational education | Tautokona te mātauranga ringarehe

### Te Pūkenga

We have been working with Te Pūkenga since it was formally established in 2020, as it establishes an organisation-wide approach to delivering and managing quality education. Key elements include developing quality assurance structures and processes, a comprehensive quality management system, and progressively consolidating and unifying the suite of qualifications and programmes across its network.

We have also agreed interim quality assurance arrangements during this transition period. Te Pūkenga will submit a self-assessment report in November 2023. This report will give us oversight of Te Pūkenga's progress in developing and implementing its education quality systems, and adoption of national or regional policies and procedures to support those functions.

We intend to substantiate aspects of their performance identified from the self-assessment with thematic or focused reviews. This will focus on evidence of meeting regional needs, effectiveness of academic oversight, approaches to learner support and the robustness of quality management systems.

### The Code | Te Rārangi Tikanga

In addition to granting statutory permissions such as programme approvals and accreditations, we have continued with our schedule of monitoring programme delivery and compliance with the *Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021*.

On the whole, the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 (the Code) is bedding in well as tertiary providers and schools with international learners adapt their systems and processes to meet the Code outcomes. We are pleased to see learner voice being included in more provider processes ensuring learners are heard and informed of change. NZQA has delegated responsibility to UNZ for monitoring how universities are giving effect to the Code and are planning a full self-review of all Code outcomes for 2024 with verification to follow in 2025. As part of our Code monitoring plan, we are checking that tertiary providers

have published their self-review reports which include complaints and critical incident data.

## **Skills standards and standard setting | Paerewa pūkenga, whakatau paerewa**

Standard setting is a critical function in the vocational education system. Standard setting bodies have a range of responsibilities and are required to collaborate with industries, providers and other key stakeholders. They carry out national external moderation of assessment practice, endorse provider programmes, and develop and maintain standards, qualifications, micro-credentials and New Zealand Programmes. Workforce development councils are the key standard setting bodies for vocational education. Other standard setting bodies are NZQA (for specific fields of learning) and the Ministry of Education (for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and New Zealand Curriculum based standards).

Skill standards have been introduced into vocational education as the common component of learning. Through teaching and assessing learners in programmes based on skill standards, employers, communities and other end users can have greater confidence that graduates have achieved outcomes to a nationally consistent and common standard. Skill standards will enable learners to move seamlessly between learning modes and regions without having to repeat learning. Skill standards combine the best components of learning and assessment standards and will form the basis of New Zealand Programmes and provider programmes.

As a new component of learning, skill standards have been designed collaboratively with a wide range of education stakeholders. Workforce development councils have started developing subject-specific skill standards, with plans over the coming year to develop more skill standards and transform existing unit standards into skill standards. This will include consultation with education providers, other workforce development councils, NZQA and relevant regulatory and industry bodies as appropriate.

## **Quality of assessment and academic integrity | Te koununga o te aromatawai, te pono o mātauranga**

Schools and tertiary education providers are responsible for ensuring academic integrity.

NZQA provides schools and tertiary providers with information and advice to support and identify challenges to valid, authentic assessment. We support schools in developing innovative assessment tasks and proactively monitor, maintain and help to improve the quality of assessments across tertiary education providers (except universities). This includes scanning, locally and globally, for possible threats to academic integrity, providing support and guidance to education providers and assisting them in mitigating any potential risks. NZQA is a member of the Global Academic Integrity Network and is working with Universities New Zealand on integrity challenges across the tertiary system.

In February 2023 we released a new online learning module for assessors called *Tāku Reo, Tāku Mahi* (My Words, My Work). It includes advice and guidance around academic honesty and integrity, plagiarism and artificial intelligence (AI) text and image generators.

We also led a national symposium, *Assessment in the Age of AI*, in May 2023. This provided a forum for assessment leaders from across the secondary and tertiary education to understand the risks, challenges and opportunities of generative AI in education. It included how AI may affect the future form and function of assessment and mitigate inequities, as well as potential risks to assessment rigour and challenges to academic integrity. We will continue to work with providers and provide guidance in this area.

Each year we monitor a sample of programmes delivered by tertiary providers to determine whether they are being delivered as approved. We select programmes based on risk indicators such as programmes that are aligned to faster residency pathways, those with high enrolments, and those that previously had poor monitoring outcomes. Over the past year there has been an increase in the number of programmes monitored receiving poor monitoring outcomes.

## **Progressing our international work programme | Te kōkiri i te hōtaka mahinga tāwāhi**

NZQA's international functions are outlined in the Education and Training Act 2020. Key features of our international work include furthering the reputation of New Zealand qualifications overseas and supporting labour and student mobility. Our work helps assure all learners (including international students) that New Zealand qualifications are valued and credible here and abroad. We evaluate overseas qualifications (around 19,000 in the 2022/23 financial year) to support individuals coming to New Zealand to live, work or study.

NZQA has a range of responsibilities to support qualifications recognition as part of New Zealand's international treaty obligations under UNESCO conventions and bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements. Qualifications recognition work enables New Zealand to attract skilled migrants, who help meet skill needs and improve productivity and economic sustainability. We also contribute to New Zealand's wider international strategy through supporting other countries with developing qualification and quality assurance systems.

## **Supporting the development of the Pacific Qualifications Framework and quality assurance | Tautokona te whakawhanaketanga i te anga Tohu Moananui a Kiwa me te whakatūtu kounga**

Almost \$7 million funding has been confirmed for NZQA and the Pacific Community's Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP) for a five-year work programme with Pacific quality assurance agencies to enable improved recognition of Pacific qualifications.

The work delivers on New Zealand's obligations under the PACER Plus aid and trade agreement and the associated non-binding Labour Mobility Arrangement. It aims to strengthen Pacific qualifications systems so other jurisdictions, such as New Zealand, can recognise their qualifications. This will enable more consistent recognition of Pacific qualification and assurance processes, wider ownership, trust in, and support of regional qualification systems, and more employment opportunities.

We are working closely with EQAP on the detailed planning for the implementation phase. This has included consulting with representatives of the nine Pacific nations involved in the project. We anticipate starting the implementation work with EQAP and national partner agencies in November 2023.

We will deliver the project in two phases: the first two years will focus on 'referencing' the national qualifications frameworks and systems of each of the Pacific nations to the Pacific Qualifications Framework. 'Referencing' is a way of comparing the qualifications frameworks and systems to enable recognition of the qualifications. We will also reference the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework to the Pacific Qualifications Framework.

The second phase of the project will focus on strengthening systems to support improved recognition of Pacific qualifications, based on the barriers to recognition identified through the referencing process.

NZQA's key role in this work programme is capability building. We will work with EQAP, officials in Pacific national qualifications agencies, Ministries of Education, and Ministries of Labour and Economic Development. We will collaborate with local education and industry representatives as required.

## **Ratifying the Global Convention | Te Whakapūmāutanga i te Tikanga Ao Whānui**

NZQA has led the process for New Zealand to become part of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education (Global Convention). New Zealand is in the final stages of ratifying the Convention.

The Convention establishes universal principles for transparent and nondiscriminatory recognition of higher education qualifications and partial studies, giving access to higher education and avenues for further study and employment. It is a multilateral international treaty, which establishes universal principles for fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory recognition of qualifications. New Zealand is already party to similar regional conventions (the Lisbon Convention, and the Tokyo Convention).

The Education and Workforce Committee completed an international treaty examination of the Convention in August 2023. No change in legislation is required to implement the convention domestically.

MFAT will draft New Zealand's Instrument of Ratification and an accompanying submission to be signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. No action is required by you. The Convention enters into force for New Zealand three-months after the deposit of the instrument of ratification.

## Our resources | Ngā rauemi

### Our people | Ō mātou tāngata

As at 31 August 2023, NZQA's core workforce is 531 FTE. Most of our people are based in our Wellington office, with some in our Auckland office and some working remotely across the country. We also engage a specialist workforce of around 6,000 FTE, covering about 8000 positions, to enable the successful delivery of examinations. These are a combination of employees and contractors.

We are implementing a new Human Capital Management system as part of our investment in our people capability. The system will strengthen our data and enable us to have better oversight and make more informed decisions. It will help us be more strategic in giving effect to our pay equity plan *Kia Toipoto*, the Public Service work programme *Papa Pounamu* and other workstreams.

NZQA settled a new collective agreement with the PSA in early 2023. This agreement aligns with the Public Service Pay Adjustment that was announced late 2022.

Like many organisations, a tight labour market has put pressure on NZQA's turnover. For the 2022-23 financial year our turnover was 15.3%. This is lower than the 20.8% turnover the previous year and is in line with what other public sector organisations have experienced.

NZQA continues to invest for the future and implement Government-led education initiatives. To support these programmes of work, we have engaged contractors and consultants where skill shortages exist, specifically in the information technology area.

### Financial outlook | Te anganga ahumoni

#### Our 2023/24 outlook | Te Tirohanga mō 2023/24

NZQA's estimated total revenue for 2023/24 is \$111.0 million.

- Crown revenue contributes \$82.4 million (74%), with \$65.5 million attributed to the delivery of NCEA assessments.
- Of this Crown revenue, \$63.5 million is baseline and \$19.0 million is time limited funding for implementation of the Review of Achievement Standards (ending 2025/26) and NCEA assessment workforce (ending 2024/25).
- Third party revenue is \$28.6 million (26%).
- Third party revenue is attributed to fees and charges for services such as Quality Assurance, Qualification Recognition and credit reporting for Standards.

Our 2023/24 Statement of Performance Expectations outlines the major categories of expenses. It also includes provisions to maintain or enhance NZQA's capability through a programme of prioritised investments funded from accumulated financial reserves.

With these reserves now depleted we are actively providing advice to the Ministry of Education on our challenging financial position.

### **Out years financial sustainability | Te pūmautanga pūtea mō te tau**

NZQA has had a planned strategy of investments over the past five years to maintain and enhance required organisational capability and resilience, funded from accumulated financial reserves. Significant progress has been made with this investment programme. However, this has eroded financial reserves to a level where any substantial future investments will rely on Crown support beyond what can be funded from depreciation. As mentioned previously, this includes the need to replace the 'eQA' (electronic Qualifications Authority) business application that supports all NZQA's core business functions. The replacement of 'eQA' is considered a crucial investment to meet the evolving needs of learners and stakeholders that depend upon high-quality assessment and repository for qualifications.

The current operating environment, characterised by declining purchasing power and higher labour costs, also means that the ability to manage within NZQA's operating baseline is requiring active management and increasingly becoming a challenge.

Any Crown budget bids will only be after we have worked with the Ministry of Education on required savings initiatives and/or where cost pressures cannot be met from the reprioritisation of our baseline. Work on areas for financial savings are on-going.



## Further information | He pitopito kōrero anō

The following information is available on our website:

[Strategic Leadership team](#)

[NZQA Board](#)

[External advisory groups](#)

- [Ngā Kaituhono](#)
- [Taupulega](#)

[Strategic documents:](#)

- [Statement of Intent](#)
- [Statement of Performance Expectations](#)
- [Annual Report](#)
- Te Kōkiritanga (an updated copy of this will be provided to your office).
- Takiala Pasifika (an updated copy of this will be provided to your office).