



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

NZQA Performance Update

October – December 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, managing the qualifications system, regulating and quality assuring non-university tertiary education, delivering credible senior secondary school external assessment, quality assuring secondary school NCEA internal assessment, and administering the Education Code of Practice 2021.

Executive summary

This report summarises NZQA's performance in October – December 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:

- Ran the end of year secondary examinations (125 examination sessions, involving approximately 158,000 students).
- Implemented a new derived grades workflow to improve experience and administrative efficiency for NZQA and schools.
- Implemented the new fee structures on 1 January 2026.
- Worked closely with other agencies, such as the Ministry of Education (MOE) and others to transition to an integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF).
- Initiated structural changes in our quality assurance division to organise functions in line with the iQAF.
- Refreshed our Strategy to reflect current priorities and expectations.

Looking forward

Looking forward NZQA will:

- Continue to work closely with the Ministry of Education on the assessment components of the Curriculum Phase 5 subjects.
- Play our part in the development of the new secondary qualification.
- Run co-design workshops with schools and kura that would benefit from targeted support to further strengthen assessment capability.
- Run trials of screen recording for invigilation and plagiarism detection tools.
- Complete a proof of concept (POC) to assess the technical feasibility of using AI and/or machine learning to support the marking process.
- Continue providing information and support to tertiary education providers, the Ministry of Education and other agencies as iQAF, new Rules and fees are implemented.
- Further develop our change management approach.

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 trust and confidence in current and future 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 its 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.

Over the last three months, we have:

- Refreshed the Strategy, to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- Introduced NZQA's refreshed strategy to staff
- Supported development of the proposed new senior secondary qualification.

Looking forward, NZQA will:

- Integrate your expectations from the 2026 Letter of Expectations into the Strategy and its implementation.
- Continue to progress existing objectives and priorities, with particular emphasis on our core delivery functions, and digital initiatives that drive efficiency and improve customer experience.

NZQA's Change Agenda

We continue to balance core service delivery with large pieces of change work. These include:

- Supporting development of the new senior secondary qualification including making use of emerging technology for assessment design, marking and moderation.
- Implementing the integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF).
- 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:

- Increased the amount of change management coordination, resourcing and support available to key projects and the maturity of our change management approach.
- Finalised Rule and fee changes to support the new integrated Quality Assurance Framework, and communicated these to the sector.

Looking forward, NZQA will:

- Continue to work with the Ministry to:
 - Progress Budget 26 bids. These bids consider all costs including staffing needs.
 - Prepare to implement Cabinet decisions around the replacement of NCEA.
- Undertake budgeting and business planning for FY 2026/27, driving effective, efficient delivery of core services.
- Replace the Financial Stabilisation Plan with a Financial Position and Projection to reflect NZQA's progress in achieving financial sustainability.

Progress on selected strategic priorities (cont.)

AI developments for marking assessments

Following the decision to continue to use Automated Text Scoring (ATS) for the Literacy-Writing assessment in 2026, we continued our planning and developmental work while introducing system automation to reduce manual tasks, improve efficiency, lower operating costs, and strengthen security measures. Human oversight will remain in place to ensure quality assurance.

Two independent reviews of the in-house ATS model have been completed to enable us to consider the degree to which NZQA, schools, students and the public can be confident in the results generated by ATS. Both reports made recommendations to NZQA, which were accepted.

An exploratory Proof of Concept (POC) was initiated to assess the technical feasibility of using AI and/or Machine Learning to support the marking process for two standards. The POC used data from previous assessments and was not used in a live environment.

Looking forward

We will:

- Continue to address recommendations from the reviews of the ATS model.
- Run an exploratory POC to assess the technical feasibility of using AI and/or Machine Learning to support the marking process for a third standard. POC completion is expected to be completed by the end of March.
- Begin planning a POC to understand how AI might support NZQA's external moderation of internal assessments marked by secondary schools.

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi review

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi is a whare ako framework and methodology that allows providers to engage with NZQA using Māori approaches and values. NZQA is undertaking a review of the framework to make sure it remains fit-for-purpose, consistent, and effective as a kaupapa Māori quality-assurance framework, especially as the tertiary education system, legislation, and Māori-Crown expectations continue to evolve. This review is separate to the work underway on the Integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF). Providers that engage with Te Hono o Te Kahurangi were able to participate in the iQAF engagement.

We completed the scoping for the review of Te Hono o Te Kahurangi this quarter. Valuable input was provided by Ngā Kaitūhono, NZQA's independent advisory group. Ngā Kaitūhono was appointed to ensure that NZQA's approach to Māori knowledge is compatible with Māori values, consistent with Māori expectations and complementary to other validation processes, including those that may be established by Māori.

Detailed planning is underway for the next stage of the review. Additional resources have been allocated to gather feedback and recommendations from providers.

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

Digital Developments – Authenticity of Assessments

We commenced an *Authenticity* project which aims to safeguard the integrity of NCEA qualifications by addressing growing risks to assessment authenticity posed by AI tools, file-sharing platforms, and other digital technologies. It seeks to prevent, detect, and manage breaches of assessment rules through a multi-year, cross-functional approach that combines advanced detection technologies, improved workflows, and inclusive assessment design. The project will deliver pilots for tools such as screen recording and plagiarism detection, develop governance and equity frameworks, and engage stakeholders to build trust and ensure fairness, to create a resilient, future-ready system for digital assessments.

Looking forward

Over the next quarter, we will:

- Undertake Discovery Phase activities to refresh the Digital Authenticity Strategy, and engage stakeholders.
- Run small-scale trials of screen recording for invigilation and plagiarism detection tools to assess feasibility, accuracy, and user impact (the screen recording POC is due to be completed by March).
- Document existing breach detection and escalation workflows to identify pain points and inform process improvements for efficiency and consistency.

Strengthening NCEA Quality Assurance and support for schools and kura

Building on the *Strengthening NCEA* project, a new project *Strengthening Assessment Capability* commenced in November to strengthen internal assessment practices in 24 kura. This support focused on developing culturally grounded assessment tools, exemplars, templates, and guidance materials aimed at strengthening assessment practices in targeted kura and schools.

Additional actions this quarter included:

- Supporting schools' readiness for 2026, including sector-wide capability webinars and workshops.
- Implementing a new derived grades workflow to improve administrative efficiency for NZQA and schools, and a scaled breach investigation processes that maintain system integrity.
- Undertaking comprehensive evaluations of exam centre readiness prior to external assessments commencing, which provided assurance of compliance and informed future risk profiling.

Key quality assurance activities included Managing National Assessment reviews, school Quality Assurance check-ins, and ongoing monitoring the process of new Consent to Assess applications. These insights will guide risk-based and refinement of assurance models for 2026, ensuring readiness for evolving qualification requirements.

Looking forward

Co-design workshops with kura are scheduled for late February and draft resources expected by the end of March. The new resources will complement our existing activities and enhance the overall quality and consistency of assessment.

Strategic priorities (cont.)

Minister's proposal to replace NCEA

NZQA continues to work with MOE in providing technical advice to you on the proposed new qualifications and award, the assessment approach, and planning for the introduction of Vocational Education and Training subjects.

Looking forward

Over the next quarter, we will continue to:

- Progress our internal planning to support implementation of the new qualification and assessment system, once Cabinet decisions are made
- Work closely with the Ministry of Education on the assessment components of the Curriculum Phase 5 subjects
- Provide you with technical advice on qualification design and assessment.

Operational overview

End-of-Year Examinations

Support for schools to prepare for External assessments

In October, we ran a range of workshops with schools to support them with their preparation towards the end-of-year external examinations and submissions.

Measles outbreak prior to NCEA external examinations

We worked with Health NZ | Te Whatu Ora to:

- Agree on an overall approach and prepared draft communications for all schools and Exam Centre Managers.
- Support schools that were significantly impacted.

We provided guidance to schools and kura on managing measles during external examinations and advice on the derived grade at scale application process.

Derived grades

As at 13 January 2026, 4703 applications have been received, and 94% have been approved.

Examination breaches

The total number of possible breaches for investigation, relating to the 2025 academic year is 1238.

End-of-year examination cycle and preparation for NCEA and NZ Scholarship results release

There were 125 examination sessions, involving approximately 158000 students for NCEA and NZ Scholarship. 77 examinations were offered digitally.

Preparations for NCEA and NZ Scholarship results release, included website performance testing to ensure students can access results at high volumes [OC02274 refers]. NCEA results were released 14 January. NZ Scholarship results will be released 11 February.

We carried out 95 quality assurance visits to examination centres. The evidence-informed evaluation provided comprehensive coverage of critical areas: planning and setup, procedures and staffing, exam delivery, and post-exam tasks. Findings confirmed that most exam centres visited are performing well, with 3% requiring re-visits in 2026 and a further 10% identified for follow-up within two years.

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)

The implementation of NZQA's new integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF) for tertiary education organisations excluding universities (TEOs) began in January 2026. This follows two rounds of public consultation on iQAF over the past two years.

Four quality assurance cornerstones will support NZQA, TEOs, standard setting bodies and other regulators to work together to ensure learners receive robust, credible and relevant qualifications and credentials:

- Strong quality assurance foundations based on NZQA Rules and guidance help TEOs get it right, first time.
- TEO ownership of quality and quality improvement.
- Effective verification of TEO quality using all our education performance monitoring, compliance and regulatory levers means we can act assertively where there is poor quality, and give high performers the space to innovate.
- System assurance ensures we step back, measure our impact, share with others what we've learned, and anticipate future opportunities and risks.

Over the past quarter, NZQA's Quality Assurance Division has made structural changes to organise functions in line with iQAF. The monitoring, risk and compliance functions have been combined to centralise the intelligence from three quality lenses in one business unit, and to strengthen the identification of new and emerging risks. A new System Performance and Capability team has been established. This team is responsible for developing and refining the tools and approaches used to support TEO capability, carrying out annual reviews with TEOs, and measuring the system-level impacts of the qualifications and quality assurance frameworks.

New and updated NZQA Rules to support iQAF, and the government's vocational education and training reforms are now in effect.

Looking forward

In Quarter 3 NZQA will begin developing guidance to supplement the new Rules, and work with agencies to develop a three-tier system to describe overall TEO quality [OC02178 refers].

Implementing a simpler, fairer fee system

In 2025 NZQA completed the review of its fees for quality assurance services for TEOs. Over time, NZQA's fees had become complex and difficult for NZQA and TEOs to manage. Some fees have not changed for several years [OC02171 refers].

In this quarter we invited TEOs to participate in a working group, to help NZQA set up an efficient invoicing system for TEO qualification completions. Workshops will continue early in 2026 to ensure the new fees system meets end-user needs.

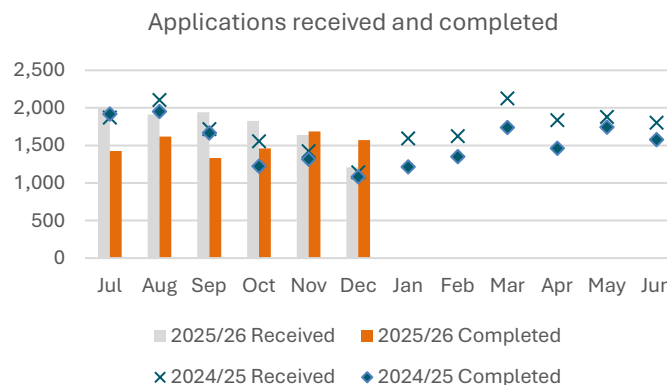
NZQA also developed and published new cost-recovery guidance in 2025 to ensure future reviews of NZQA fees are completed in accordance with principles aligned with the Treasury and Office of the Auditor General guidelines.

Operational overview

Qualification Recognition applications

NZQA evaluates applications from individuals seeking to have their overseas tertiary and vocational qualifications recognised for immigration, employment or further study purposes.

In the 2025 calendar year, NZQA received approximately 21,000 applications. Most awards were from India and the Philippines. 51% of the total number of applications received were for Teaching International Qualification Assessments [OC02161 refers].



For much of 2025, the application pipeline was increasing. In Quarter 2 we made good progress in bringing down the application pipeline, via a range of measures including re-prioritising areas of focus and staff overtime. The application wait time is approximately 10 weeks, and the pipeline has dropped below 5,000 applications. The November and December completion rates have exceeded incoming volumes for the first time this financial year.

Your Letter of Expectations 2024 included an expectation that NZQA review its charging model for the recognition of overseas qualifications to determine whether the charges are adequate. The review has been completed, and a paper summarising the outcomes and next steps will go to the Minister in Quarter 4.

Statutory actions and monitoring

This quarter our monitoring priorities have included:

- Health and wellbeing, information technology, maritime-related, and business qualifications
- English language and Artificial Intelligence in Education micro-credentials
- Following up with providers on action plans from previous NZQA monitoring.

NZQA takes statutory action where we find evidence of ongoing non-compliance with our Rules, and where learners have been disadvantaged by a TEO's practice. Statutory actions include compliance notices, which require the TEO to do or stop doing something, and conditions, which set out specific requirements in relation to a TEO's registration, approvals, or accreditations.

As at January 2026, there are eight ongoing statutory actions. Three of these were put in place in Quarter 2, three in Quarter 1*, and two from the previous financial year. We are actively managing these cases to ensure TEOs are making the necessary improvements to their education delivery.

Monitoring priorities in the coming quarter include construction, teaching and early childhood qualifications, and maritime-related micro-credentials and qualifications.

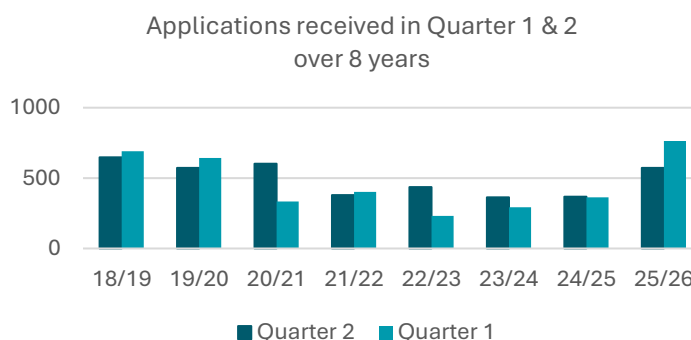
A key goal under iQAF is to better integrate our monitoring activities. In addition to NZQA's own processes, we will work with other agencies and the new Industry Skills Boards in 2026 to support a joined-up approach that minimises compliance for high performing providers.

*Whitireia/Weltec, Imperial College of New Zealand, and the New Zealand School of Vocational Education and Training.

Operational overview (cont.)

Approvals and accreditation

Demand for quality assurance of new and changed education products and new provider registrations this quarter is a return to volumes prior to the establishment of NZIST and the onset of COVID. This follows Quarter 1, which saw the highest volume of applications received in the last eight years.



NZQA's work in international education

UNESCO Tokyo Qualifications Recognition Convention

In November, NZQA hosted the UNESCO Tokyo Qualifications Recognition Convention (Tokyo Convention) meeting and the Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC) plenary in Thailand. The event represented the culmination of NZQA's (New Zealand's) role as President of the Bureau of Tokyo Convention and APNNIC for 2024 and 2025. The event drew over 60 participants from nearly 30 countries.

The overarching theme was Transforming Higher Education in Asia-Pacific: Shifting Landscape and Emerging Priorities, with a particular focus on the role of artificial intelligence and the detection of education fraud through robust international collaboration. The event strengthened regional cooperation, highlighted international trends in qualifications recognition grounded in robust quality assurance, and offered insights to advance the implementation of National Information Centres across the Asia-Pacific network.

NZQA was also elected to continue serving as a Bureau member for 2026 and 2027. This ongoing leadership role reinforces New Zealand's commitment to the multilateral treaty that facilitates learner and labour mobility worldwide.

Pacific Qualifications Recognition project

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.

The work is being carried out in 3 phases: referencing and benchmarking (2024-2025), system strengthening (2026-mid 2028) and recognition (2028). The referencing and benchmarking phase has been successfully completed. In November, the Pacific Quality Assurance Board endorsed referencing/benchmarking reports for 9 Pacific countries, New Zealand and the Pacific Qualifications Framework.

The NZQA project team is working with the Pacific Community to develop national and regional strengthening plans. The plans emphasise increasing Pacific ownership of regional structures, and transferring capability from NZQA to the Pacific Community (SPC) as the plans are implemented over the next 3 years.

Financial performance for the quarter

NZQA completed a revised Forecast for the full year 2025/26 in Quarter 2, which was approved by the Board in December.

The full year net surplus/(deficit) position decreased by \$0.6m, from a SPE Budget net surplus of \$0.1m to a Forecast net deficit of \$0.5m. This is largely due to the decrease in revenue as we transition to a new third-party fees regime. The full benefits of this change will be realised in 2027/28.

The half year result is a net surplus of \$2.6m, largely driven by lower than expected project costs. Some of this is timing related and will even out by the end of the year.

We will undertake a second forecasting exercise in March/April 2026.

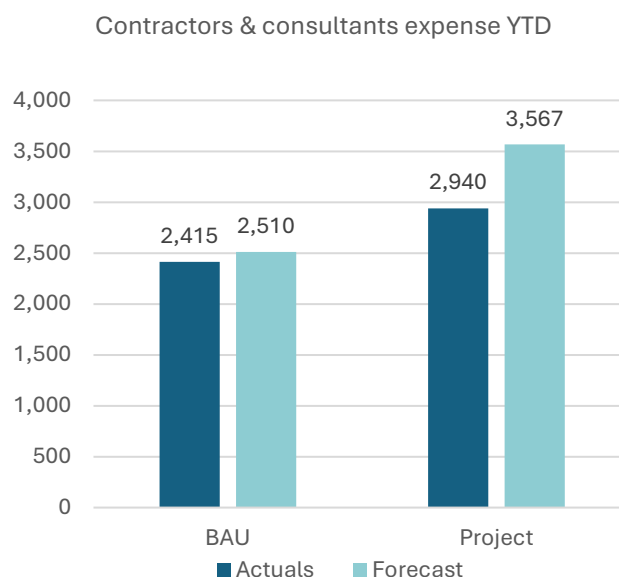
Financial performance

All figures are in \$'000's

	Year to Date (31 December 2025)				Full Year		
	Actual	Forecast	Variance*	Budget	Forecast	Budget	Last Year
REVENUE							
Crown Revenue	47,797	47,797	-	49,980	81,512	84,812	79,575
Total Fee & Charges	15,587	15,331	256	14,820	29,821	28,895	29,469
Other Income	1,520	1,413	107	952	2,396	1,695	2,233
Total Revenue	64,904	64,541	363	65,753	113,730	115,402	111,277
Personnel & Board	30,298	29,951	(347)	29,487	59,007	57,356	58,040
Examination Workforce	10,450	9,697	(753)	9,355	9,762	9,636	9,244
Specialist Workforce	7,985	7,737	(248)	8,217	12,477	12,365	11,630
Professional Services	2,978	3,138	160	3,513	5,390	6,021	6,012
Publication, print & distribution	3,075	3,124	49	2,983	3,800	3,663	3,588
Travel & Accommodation	680	672	(7)	900	1,397	1,425	1,013
IT costs	5,077	5,201	124	5,669	10,774	11,559	10,063
Other operating	3,112	3,263	151	3,321	9,102	9,434	9,136
Depreciation	453	466	13	513	1,083	1,315	1,413
Total Expenses	64,108	63,249	(860)	63,959	112,793	112,774	110,139
Net Operational Surplus	796	1,293	(497)	1,794	937	2,628	1,138
Projects							
Crown Funding	6,087	6,087	-	4,356	11,600	8,300	10,000
Expenses	4,270	5,150	880	6,477	13,063	10,826	8,037
Net investment in projects	1,817	937	880	(2,122)	(1,463)	(2,526)	1,963
Net surplus/(deficit)	2,613	2,230	383	(328)	(526)	102	3,101

*Variance Actual to Forecast

- Total revenue** is \$0.4m above Forecast due to increased activity in the Quality Assurance and Evaluation functions.
- Total expenses** of \$64.1m is \$0.9m above Forecast driven by higher than expected Examination and Specialist Workforce expenses.
- Net investment in projects** – Both Project Opex and Capex are behind Forecast by \$0.9m and \$0.1m respectively. Timing issues in securing project resources have caused delays in expenditure to date.
- Net surplus** of \$2.6m at the half year mark compares favourably to Forecast of \$2.2m, mainly as a result of the delay in project expenditure.



Financial performance (cont.)

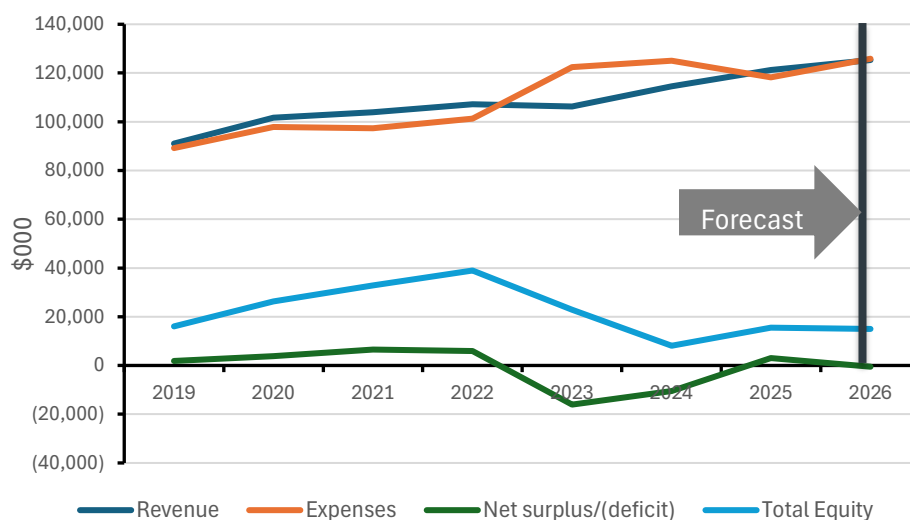
The Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2025.

	31 December 2025 Actual	30 June 2026 Forecast	30 June 2026 Budget	30 June 2025 Last year
Current Assets	58,815	23,993	21,151	27,404
Non-Current Assets	3,180	4,467	6,913	2,726
Total Assets	61,995	28,460	28,064	30,130
Current Liabilities	43,308	12,912	13,144	14,056
Non-Current Liabilities	536	537	550	536
Total Liabilities	43,845	13,449	13,694	14,593
Net Assets / Equity	18,150	15,011	14,370	15,537

Insights – Balance Sheet

- Current Assets** of \$58.8m 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 \$43.3m are also high than previous years due to the recognition of Crown revenue in advance.
- Net Equity** of \$18.2m is higher than budgeted, due to our positive results year to date. This is expected to reduce to \$15.0m by year end based on our revised Forecast.

Financial Performance and Total Equity – projection



Non-financial performance for the quarter

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

Non-financial performance

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

Quarterly Results

Of the two measures reported in Quarter 2, 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.

Past results		Target	YTD
2022/23	2023/24	70%	70%
69%	68%		



Sub-degree programme monitoring

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

Past results		Target	YTD
2022/23	2023/24	65%	61%
New measure in 2023/24	69%		



- To date, 38 sub-degree programmes were monitored. Of these, 15 did not meet monitoring criteria.
- A significant factor influencing the proportion of programmes that did not meet the criteria was the monitoring of New Zealand Diploma in Enrolled Nursing (EN). This programme is delivered by eight ITPs, with five ITPs monitored from July to December 2025. Issues raised in NZQA monitoring included insufficient evidence collection for practicum components, some assessment tasks not sufficiently covering the stated learning outcomes, and improvements required to moderation systems and processes. NZQA has discussed these outcomes with the Nursing Council and has received action plans from the relevant ITPs.