

# Description of the New Zealand Tertiary Education System 2026

This document provides information on the New Zealand tertiary education system for the Tertiary Education Qualification Statement (TEQS), a Diploma-supplement equivalent.

## Introduction

New Zealand’s tertiary education system encompasses higher and vocational education. The system includes a range of public and private independent, self-governing tertiary education organisations (TEOs) that award tertiary education qualifications. Each type of TEO makes a distinctive contribution to the tertiary education system, as outlined in the Education and Training Act 2020. The Act recognises the strength and differences of each type of TEO across the whole system.

The tertiary education system reflects the spirit of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ the Treaty of Waitangi, which is a founding document of New Zealand that establishes the relationship between the Crown and Māori. The Treaty protects Māori knowledge and skills (mātauranga Māori) as a national taonga (treasure) and recognises that Māori have full and equal participation in society, including education, as Māori.

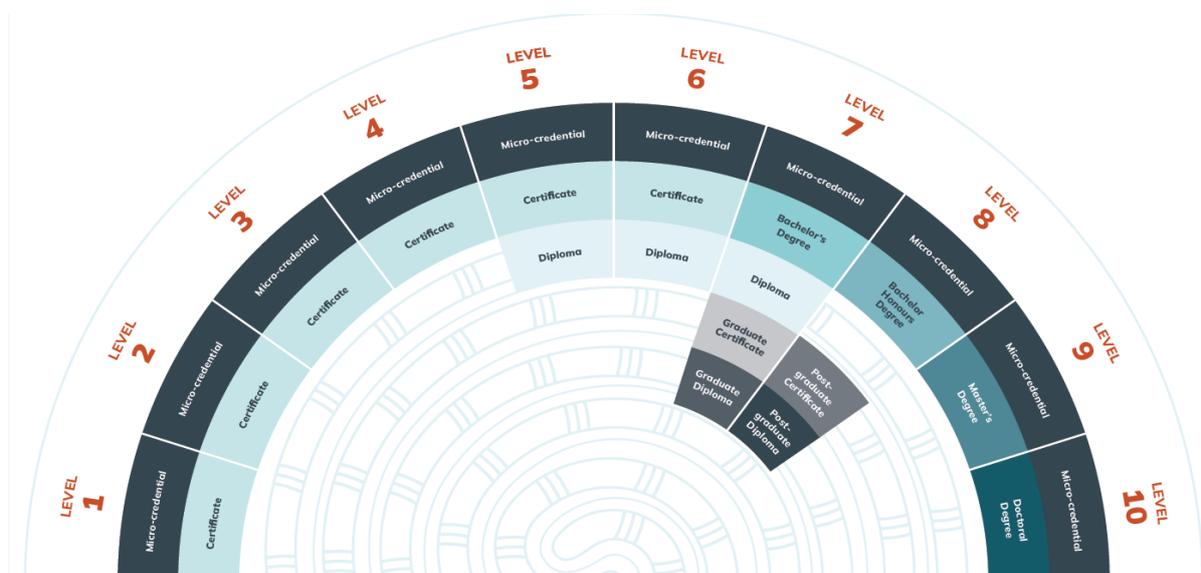
Degree-level qualifications may be granted by universities, polytechnics, wānanga (Māori centres of tertiary learning) and some private training establishments (PTEs).

## New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF)

The NZQCF is a comprehensive list of all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand. The qualifications on the NZQCF can be viewed and compared at:

<https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-and-standards/about-qualifications-and-credentials/>

The NZQCF has ten levels, which increase in complexity: level 1 is the least complex and level 10 the most.



## Credits

A total of 120 credits is considered an annual full-time study load for a student. 120 credits is equivalent to 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System).

## Quality Assurance

Two organisations quality assure and approve qualifications listed on the NZQCF:

- The *New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)*. NZQA approves all programmes and qualifications developed by wānanga, PTEs, polytechnics and Industry Skills Boards, excluding universities - [www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz).
- The *New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee* (operating as Universities New Zealand). Universities New Zealand's Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) approves and accredits all university qualifications - [www.universitiesnz.ac.nz](http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz).

Both organisations apply the rules set by NZQA as appropriate, to ensure that a programme is based on clear and consistent aims, content, outcomes, and assessment practices. Information on New Zealand's quality assurance processes can be found at: <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/tertiary/quality-assurance/>.

## Government agencies

The Ministry of Education is the government department responsible for developing the broad policy framework for tertiary education – [www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz).

The Tertiary Education Commission is a Crown Entity responsible for managing the Government's investment in tertiary education and providing career services from education through to employment – [www.tec.govt.nz](http://www.tec.govt.nz).

NZQA quality assures programmes, qualifications (as outlined above) and tertiary education organisations, excluding universities, and evaluates overseas qualifications and administers the NZQCF. NZQA fulfils the role of National Education Information Centre under UNESCO's Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997), Tokyo Recognition Convention (2011) and Global Recognition Convention (2019) – <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/why-we-are-here/international-role/neic/>.

## Comparability with other national qualifications frameworks

NZQA works with key overseas education agencies to strengthen and support the recognition of each other's qualifications. These arrangements are negotiated by NZQA on behalf of the New Zealand Government.

A list of countries with which NZQA has recognition arrangements can be found on the following page:

- [New Zealand's recognition arrangements with other countries](#)