

2025 School and Kura Pulse Check – Feedback to Schools

Overview

The first annual School and Kura Pulse Check survey was open for Principal's Nominees (PNs) to complete between 5 February and 10 March 2025. We received 237 responses to the survey. The survey response rate was 47% (of the 506 schools and kura NZQA engages with).

This is a reasonably good overall response rate, and sufficient for drawing reliable conclusions about your views of NZQA and our services¹. That said, only 20% of kura Māori responded to the survey. NZQA will be using other existing avenues to better understand kura Māori views of our services.

Thank you to all those PNs/schools who completed the survey for us. We asked both closed- and open-ended questions². From your responses, and the insights we captured from our Leading National Assessment Seminars held in February and March this year, we have been able to get a clearer picture of:

- what is working well,
- what didn't work so well in 2024 but is being addressed for 2025; and
- what didn't work so well in 2024 that we need to feed into our continuous improvement cycle planning.

The table below summarises your survey feedback³ and our preliminary response, couched around the three categories above. We also note where some of our questions need to be reviewed, as respondents found them difficult to answer.

We would like to acknowledge upfront the challenges schools and kura faced with the implementation of NCEA Level 1.

¹ Noting that when responses are disaggregated by School EQI group and region there is some under and over representation in the survey responses.

² Respondents found some of the survey questions difficult to answer or were uncertain about how to answer them. These will be revised for any future surveys.

³ A full report of the survey results is available on request.

Topic	NZQA response
<p><i>Participation in NCEA</i></p> <p>77% of respondents (183 of 237) were offering the NCEA Level 1 qualification to the majority of their learners in 2025. An additional 14% (32 of 237) were offering some NCEA Level 1 achievement standards in 2025.</p> <p>20 respondents (9%) were offering alternatives to NCEA such as Cambridge International and International Baccalaureate.</p> <p>97% of respondents (210 of 217) said they participated in the 2024 co-requisite assessments.</p>	<p>This information is helpful for initial planning. For NCEA Level 1 and the co-requisite assessments, as we receive entries from 1 April, we will get a more definitive view of 2025 participation by schools and kura, and students.</p>
<p>External examinations</p> <p>65% of respondents (142 of 217) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the external examination questions were appropriate for the level of the qualification.</p> <p>66% of respondents (143 of 217) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the external examination questions were presented clearly.</p> <p>90 respondents provided additional comments about external assessments. In summary, the comments suggest that respondents felt there was a need for improved quality control, better communication, more consistency in difficulty, expectations, and marking across subjects, and greater consideration of equity and accessibility issues in the assessment system.</p> <p>Specifically, digital examination implementation issues raised included devices crashing, challenges for non-BYOD schools, and the extra burden on staff to supervise digital exams.</p>	<p>Just under a quarter of respondents to both questions neither agreed nor disagreed which is an indicator that respondents found this question difficult to answer or were uncertain. We will review how to adjust these questions for future surveys.</p> <p>The comments made by respondents are noted. These will feed into our continuous improvement cycle activities.</p>

Topic	NZQA response
<p>NCEA co-requisite assessments</p> <p>The two-week assessment window for each co-requisite assessment event appears to be working well, with 87% of respondents (181 of 208) strongly agreeing or somewhat agreeing that the two-week duration enabled flexibility to fit in with their school/kura events.</p> <p>However, a lower 64% of respondents (134 of 208) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the dates for the co-requisite assessment events fitted in with their school/kura events.</p> <p>98 respondents provided additional comments about alternative timings or length of the co-requisite assessment events, the logistical and resource challenges of administering the co-requisite, and result turnaround time.</p>	<p>There are no changes to arrangements for 2025 with respect to the two-week assessment events and the assessment event timings (May and September). There will be two different assessments, a week one and a week two assessment. The feedback about holding a third event within the examination period has been considered but no further increases to assessment events is currently envisaged.</p> <p>In February, all schools that administered co-requisite assessments in 2024 received an additional payment to help offset the costs of resource requirements associated with running the co-requisite assessments.</p> <p>Timeframes for results release of these assessments will be reduced in 2025. Results release dates for the May assessment event will be published in April.</p>
<p>Digital assessment platform</p> <p>82% of respondents (174 of 212) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their school/kura was prepared for delivering digital external assessments in 2024.</p> <p>76% of respondents (161 of 212) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that NZQA</p>	<p>Respondents were generally positive about school preparedness and NZQA guidance about our digital assessment platform, however the comments noted the ongoing challenges schools</p>

Topic	NZQA response
<p>guidance on the digital assessment platform was clear.</p> <p>106 respondents provided additional comments about how NZQA could support schools/kura to deliver a positive digital experience for students. In summary, the responses highlighted technical challenges during assessments, NZQA ‘help desk’ support during examinations, the importance of maintaining paper options, login and authentication issues, exam centre supervisor upskilling on digital issues, and school connectivity and infrastructure issues.</p>	<p>are facing which NZQA will need to factor in to our digital strategy planning.</p> <p>We have as a focus for 2025 on how to support schools experiencing digital examination implementation issues including additional ECM training and guidance.</p>
<p>Digital submissions portal</p> <p>66% of respondents (139 of 212) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the digital submissions portal was easy to use for teachers and kaiako in their school/kura.</p> <p>69% of respondents (146 of 212) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that NZQA guidance on the digital submissions portal was clear.</p>	<p>Respondents were less positive about the digital submissions’ portal. This may partly be because in 2024 it was used for submissions for a large number of the new level 1 standards in subject areas that previously did not have submissions as an external assessment method, e.g. Science, History, English, and schools had to adjust to the new administrative requirements.</p> <p>Concerns over the authenticity of the submission method of assessment for certain subjects may also have impacted on your views.</p> <p>From 2025, the number of subjects with submissions at Level 1 has reduced considerably.</p> <p>For the 2025 assessment round, we will review our guidance for the digital submissions portal, and we will make other small improvements to the user</p>

Topic	NZQA response
	<p>experience. NZQA will also engage further with schools and kura to better understand the issues experienced and how to resolve them.</p>
<p>External moderation</p> <p>42% of respondents (88 of 211) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed external moderation reports support their teachers and kaiako to make valid and reliable assessment judgements. 38% of respondents (81 of 211) strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed.</p> <p>38% of respondents (80 of 211) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the feedback in NZQA’s external moderation reports was clear. 44% (92 of 211) of respondents strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed.</p> <p>Additional comments about external moderation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delayed return of moderation results • limited detail in moderation reports, particularly for standards marked as ‘Not yet consistent’ making it difficult to understand what improvements are needed • the digital platform for uploading moderation materials being problematic, with reports of crashes and difficulties finding standards • perceived disconnects between those who developed the standards and those who moderate them, leading to confusion and frustration 	<p>2024 was the first year of implementation of the new NCEA Level 1 standards. In-year moderation was also introduced. Moderation of the new NCEA Level 1 standards was prioritised in 2024 (63% of all standards moderated were Level 1 standards).</p> <p>NZQA acknowledges issues around timeliness of moderation feedback in 2024 were greater than usual due primarily to the additional benchmarking processes we put in place for moderation of the new Level 1 standards, as well as the additional moderation for standards with Mātauranga Māori explanatory note requirements. We also acknowledge the adjustments schools have had to make to meet the requirements of in-year moderation.</p> <p>For the 2025 assessment round, we expect moderation feedback times to reduce, and there will be a focus on the clarity of the feedback in moderation reports.</p>

Topic	NZQA response
<p>Managing National Assessment reviews</p> <p>27% of respondents (57 of 237) said that they had had an MNA review in the last 12 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89% of respondents (51 of 57) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the actions raised in their MNA report were useful. • 93% of respondents (53 of 57) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the MNA review process supports improvements to assessment and quality assurance processes at their school/kura. <p>65% of respondents (135 of 209) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they would be open to trialling an online MNA review in the coming years. Some respondents commented however that while online options are appreciated for convenience, many respondents valued in-person meetings with School Relationship Managers (SRMs) for more meaningful discussions and relationship building.</p>	<p>We are pleased with the positive feedback on how helpful our Managing National Assessment reviews are for schools. We went through a process of revising/refining our approach to MNAs with a focus on continuous improvement.</p> <p>Before proceeding with further online MNA reviews, NZQA will consider this feedback.</p>
<p>Other related support</p> <p>82% of respondents (171 of 209) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the resources, including the Leading National Assessment seminars and online webinars, supported their school/kura to understand NZQA processes.</p> <p>65% of respondents (135 of 209) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the Principal's Nominees webinars, introduced in 2024, supported their understanding of the Principal's Nominee role and responsibilities.</p> <p>69 respondents provided additional comments about how NZQA could improve including the timing of webinars (not during the school teaching day), and recording of webinars for later access.</p>	<p>A third of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed which is an indicator that they found this question difficult to answer or were uncertain. We will review how to adjust this question for future surveys.</p> <p>NZQA will give further thought to flexible scheduling of LNA and Principal's Nominee webinars in 2025.</p>

Topic	NZQA response
<p>Several comments noted the significant responsibilities of the Principal's Nominee role, with suggestions that it should be better recognised and funded.</p> <p>Several comments highlighted importance of responsive and supportive SRMs, though some note concerns about frequent changes in assigned SRMs.</p>	<p>The feedback on the workload of Principal's Nominees is noted.</p> <p>This feedback is noted.</p>
Assessor support	
<p>92% of respondents (192 of 209) reported they used or engaged with NZQA resources and assessor support.</p>	<p>We are pleased that there is good engagement with NZQA resources and assessor support</p>
<p>57% of respondents (110 of 192) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that NZQA's resources (e.g. exemplars and assessment schedules) support their teachers and kaiako to develop assessments which are aligned with individual standards.</p>	<p>For 2025, we are aiming to develop 9 new Pūtake modules and between 120 to 400 new samples for the Assessor Practice Tool. In addition, we are offering on request NZQA staff to speak at National and regional conferences. Subject Associations are also able to request bespoke webinars covering topics associated with the assessment of internally assessed standards.</p>
<p>58% of respondents (111 of 192) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that NZQA's assessor support (i.e. online modules on Pūtake, our Learning Management System) has helped their school / kura to improve their assessment capability.</p>	
<p>40% of respondents (76 of 192) strongly agreed or somewhat their school/kura prefers to engage in assessor support digitally. 47% of respondents (91 of 192) neither agreed nor disagreed which is an indicator that respondents were uncertain about how to answer this question.</p>	<p>33% of respondents (63 of 192) neither agreed nor disagreed which is an indicator that respondents were uncertain about how to answer this question.</p>
<p>The survey asked specifically about how NZQA could improve our support and resources for creating assessments with te reo Māori and / or mātauranga Māori content. 78 respondents provided additional comments. In summary, the</p>	<p>47% of respondents (91 of 192) neither agreed nor disagreed which is an indicator that respondents were uncertain about how to answer this question.</p> <p>NZQA will review these comments in detail with a view to how we can best provide schools and kura with additional resources and support.</p>

Topic	NZQA response																
<p>responses highlighted while the intent to integrate te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori content into teaching and assessment is valued, there are significant practical challenges in implementation, and more comprehensive, timely, and accessible support resources are needed.</p>																	
<p>Communication</p> <p>When asked about the frequency of receiving communications (e.g. notifications, circulars and newsletters) from NZQA, the feedback was mixed. The table below shows the preferences:</p> <table> <tr> <th>Frequency</th><th>%</th></tr> <tr> <td>Weekly</td><td>11% (34)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Fortnightly</td><td>24% (72)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Monthly</td><td>18% (56)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Beginning of term</td><td>11% (32)</td></tr> <tr> <td>End of term</td><td>5% (16)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Quarterly</td><td><1% (1)</td></tr> <tr> <td>As and when required</td><td>30% (92)</td></tr> </table> <p>Respondents mention difficulties navigating resources spread across different locations (old/new NZQA portal, website, emails), making it challenging to find needed information.</p>	Frequency	%	Weekly	11% (34)	Fortnightly	24% (72)	Monthly	18% (56)	Beginning of term	11% (32)	End of term	5% (16)	Quarterly	<1% (1)	As and when required	30% (92)	<p>In 2025, our main communications tool with PNs will continue to be email link (twice a term). Assessment Matters circulars will be used for matters of significant changes to assessment. We will aim to minimise other communications except where necessary due to urgency or importance. Generally, we will communicate with PNs but may on occasion communicate directly with Principals, copying in PNs.</p> <p>We understand this can be an issue. We are actively working on our channels and improving our website content and navigation. Our vision for our NZQA provider portal is to be a user-friendly hub for Providers with links to our website on various matters, and we are starting with building a</p>
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	hub for literacy and numeracy as a model for how we may progress. To mid-2025, our main focus has been on the Learner portal and upgrades to that.

Overall feedback on NZQA quality assurance and support functions

77% of respondents (160 of 208) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that NZQA's quality assurance and support functions enable their school/kura to improve their assessment / aromatawai practices.

The table below summarises the level of agreement:

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
40	120	32	12	4

The agreement rate for this overall feedback question is an NZQA accountability reporting measure. We note that those somewhat agreeing are a much larger number than those strongly agreeing. Answers and written comments to the more detailed questions within the survey give NZQA a clear steer on areas for improvement (as well as those that are working well).