



Guidelines for micro-credential listing, approval, and accreditation

NZQA

Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority



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1. Introduction

This document supports education organisations applying to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for listing and approval of a micro-credential, and/or accreditation to deliver a micro-credential.

To list a micro-credential on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) an application must meet the requirements of the [Qualification and Micro-credential Listing and Operational Rules 2022](#). To gain approval and/or accreditation an application must meet the criteria in the [Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022](#).

These guidelines set out the NZQA's expectations for a quality application that meets the Rules. They address and explain each criterion and offer examples of supporting documents.


Changes made since February 2023

This guide has been updated to add information for online delivery, stacking, titles, accreditation-only applications, and the updating of deemed training schemes and micro-credentials approved under the training scheme rules. Key evaluation questions were removed, and content simplified. The application form has also been amended for different types of application.

Updates to this guide will be ongoing. Please send feedback to qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

Navigating these guidelines

Rules are cited in a shaded box.

 'Folder icon' signals suggestions for documents to provide evidence

 'Arrow icon' draws attention to website resources.

What is a micro-credential?

Micro-credentials are units of learning designed to allow recognition of a discrete set of skills that meet specific learner, employer, industry, community, and iwi needs.

NZQA-approved micro-credentials:

- certify the achievement of a coherent set of skills and knowledge
- meet a specified need
- include an assessment
- are no more than 40 credits
- can be at any level on the NZQCF
- are quality assured by NZQA or Universities New Zealand
- are delivered by NZQA-recognised education providers.

Like qualifications, micro-credentials are listed on the NZQCF. When a learner has achieved a micro-credential, education organisations report their achievement to NZQA,

so it is displayed on the learner's New Zealand Record of Achievement.

Micro-credentials are defined under the Act as study or training that (a) leads to an award; but (b) does not, of itself, lead to an award of a qualification listed on the NZQCF.

Background

Micro-credentials were introduced by NZQA in 2018 through changes to the Training Scheme Rules. Since then, micro-credentials have met three main demands for an education product in Aotearoa New Zealand:

- a taster to provide a pathway into work and enrolment in qualifications
- to upskill existing employees and career changers or non-working learners
- a response to urgent or emerging skill needs.

Under the Training Scheme Rules there was no separation of the micro-credential approval and its delivery. Education organisations that sought approval were required to have the ability to deliver the micro-credential.

Under the Qualification and Micro-credential Listing and Operational Rules 2022 and Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, Micro-credentials now have three aspects. Similar to an NZQCF qualification, which has a listing, programmes that lead to the qualification, and provider accreditations to deliver those programmes, micro-credentials have:

- Listing on the NZQCF
- Micro-credential approval*
- Accreditation to deliver.

*Approval = approval of the micro-credential content.

The 2022 rules allow for standard setting bodies including Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) and other bodies to develop micro-credentials for providers to deliver.

The rules also build on the success of micro-credentials and made them more robust by strengthening the requirements for evidence of industry need, and by extending the purpose of micro-credentials to meet learner and community, as well as vocational needs.

More information on micro-credentials can be found on the NZQA website:

↩ [Improving relevance and responsiveness: Aotearoa New Zealand's early micro-credentials journey](#)

↩ [Improving relevance and responsiveness: Aotearoa New Zealand's rationale for micro-credentials](#)

Quality assurance

NZQA quality assures the applications for micro-credential listing, approval, and accreditation from NZQA-recognised education organisations (not including universities, as below).

NZQA's decision to list, approve and/or accredit an education organisation to deliver a micro-credential is based on the quality and sufficiency of evidence provided.

The application process is detailed in Section 8 [How to apply](#).

Register of micro-credentials

The approved listing details of title, level and credits, classification, purpose and outcome statement, any standards, and the review period, is recorded on the NZQCF and published on the NZQA website:

↶ [Register of NZQA-approved Micro-credentials](#)

Application types

These guidelines cover the criteria and requirements for listing, approval, and accreditation separately but in most cases the evaluation will be done concurrently. For example:

Micro-credential listing and approval

Micro-credential listing, approval, and accreditation

Micro-credential accreditation-only.

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi is a whare ako framework and methodology NZQA uses for quality assurance in the non-university sector.

If your organisation uses kaupapa Māori and teaches mātauranga Māori, Te Hono o Te Kahurangi lets you engage with NZQA using Māori approaches and values. The framework also contains practices that will add to learner success by assuring national consistency.

To have your application of Māori content evaluated under Te Hono o Te Kahurangi approach, choose **Evaluate under QA Māori** in the application portal.

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi guidelines for evaluative quality assurance

These guidelines inform tertiary education organisations about how NZQA quality assures educational outcomes. They also show how NZQA prioritises mātauranga Māori and the acceleration of Māori learner success in the tertiary education context.

↶ [Guidelines for Te Hono o Te Kahurangi evaluative quality assurance](#)

Who can apply for micro-credential listing and approval?

NZQA will accept applications from:

- Workforce Development Councils
- Te Pūkenga - New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology
- wānanga
- NZQA registered private training establishments (PTEs)
- government training establishments
- secondary schools and kura
- Ngā Poutoko Aromatawai Māori (NZQA Māori Qualification Services and NZQA National Qualification Services)
- other bodies – such as a regulatory, professional or industry body – where appropriate and recognised by NZQA as capable of meeting the responsibilities of a developer.

Who can apply for micro-credential accreditation?

NZQA will accept applications from:

- Te Pūkenga - New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology
- wānanga
- PTEs
- secondary schools and kura
- government training establishments.

Secondary schools and kura

Under section 524 of the Education and Training Act 2020, secondary schools and kura are required to apply to NZQA for approval for new classes, courses or programmes where they are intended exclusively or mainly for international students. Otherwise, secondary schools and kura are encouraged to apply for micro-credential accreditation only.

↩ [Course Approval for International Student Classes, Courses or Programmes](#)

For more information, schools and kura should contact their School Relationship Manager.

Universities

A university can apply to Universities New Zealand for listing, approval and accreditation to deliver a micro-credential.

2. Use of te reo Māori

The rules allow for micro-credentials to be submitted and approved in te reo Māori.

A micro-credential may be listed in te reo Māori instead of or in addition to English, where the listing in te reo Māori is consistent with rule 6.

The use of te reo Māori in listed micro-credentials must be consistent with aspirations for mātauranga Māori.

Where micro-credentials are listed in te reo Māori, the listing details in rule 6.1(d)(iii) (knowledge, skills, and attributes that learners will be able to demonstrate) will contain an English description.

Listing rules 7.2, 7.3, 7.4

Education organisations applying for listing, approval and/or accreditation of micro-credentials written in te reo Māori can have them evaluated under the Te Hono o Te Kahurangi approach.

In addition to providing the relevant information required under NZQCF Listing Rules 4 to 7, applicants must provide the information that Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance framework requires.

↪ [Guidelines for Te Hono o Te Kahurangi evaluative quality assurance](#)

Applicants with micro-credentials that are written in te reo Māori should contact NZQA: email tehono@nzqa.govt.nz

3. NZQCF Listing

↩ [Micro-credential Listing and Operational Rules 2022](#)

3.1 Title

The title must be suitable.

The title must not include:

(a) any of the words “New Zealand”, “national”, “diploma”, “degree”, “bachelor”, “master”, “doctor”, “under-graduate” or “post-graduate” where it may cause confusion with a qualification on the NZQCF; or

(b) the name of a person, organisation, or product unless the applicant satisfies NZQA that there is a sound justification for the inclusion.

Listing rule 6.1 (a) and 6.2

The title should clearly and accurately reflect the subject area of the micro-credential.

The title listed on the NZQCF will appear on the learner’s New Zealand Record of Achievement (NZRoA) and must be used for certification.

↩ [Issue of New Zealand qualification and micro-credentials achievement certificates](#)

Titles should be different to a qualification title on the NZQCF.

It is permissible to use ‘Certificate’ in the title (but not “New Zealand”).

Unlike qualifications, the micro-credential listing rules do not allow for strands.

3.2 Level and credits

NZQA will not list a micro-credential that has a credit value of more than 40 credits and either -

(a) is substantially similar to a qualification on the NZQCF; or

(b) has outcomes that are more suited to being listed as a qualification on the NZQCF.

Listing rule 12.3

Level

A micro-credential can be at any level on the NZQCF.

The micro-credential must be assigned one of the levels on the NZQCF. The level assigned must provide a best match between the level descriptors and the outcomes of the micro-credential.

Micro-credentials may contain components that are lower or higher than the micro-credential’s over-all level (e.g., level 3 or level 5 components in a level 4 micro-credential). In general, the majority of credits must be at the level at which the micro-credential is proposed to be. The outcomes of the micro-credential should be viewed

holistically, and the notion of best fit applied in determining the level.

Credits

The micro-credential must be assigned a credit value that reflects the notional learning time it is expected to take the learner to meet all of the outcomes of the micro-credential. One credit represents a notional 10 hours of learning time. Notional learning includes all directed learning, self-directed learning, practice and assessment time.

Micro-credentials of more than 40 credits will not be listed unless there is a sound justification for why the micro-credential's outcomes would not be suited to a qualification on the NZQCF.

3.3 Classification

The assigned six-digit code from the New Zealand Standard of Classification of Education (NZSCED) system.

Listing rule 6.1 (c)

Select a classification that reflects the outcomes and purpose and aligns with any standards.

The NZSCED can be browsed on the Education Counts website:

↩ [NZSCED Detailed Fields of Study](#)

An example of an NZSCED is: 110103 Food, Hospitality and Personal Services > Food and Hospitality > Food and Beverage Service

3.4 Purpose and outcome statement

A purpose and outcome statement that:

- (i) states the use of the micro-credential in New Zealand or one or more other countries:
- (ii) describes the relevance of the micro-credential to students, whānau, hapū, iwi, hāpori Māori, industry, employers, professions, or community groups, as appropriate:
- (iii) describes the knowledge, skills, and attributes that the learner will be able to demonstrate upon achieving the micro-credential:
- (iv) identifies the education pathways to qualifications or other credentials, if any:
- (v) identifies a cultural or employment pathway or any contribution to the community, whānau, hapū, iwi, or hāpori Māori

Listing rule 6.1 (d)

Purpose

The purpose of the micro-credential identifies the skill needs it meets including who needs these skills (i.e., the target learners). The purpose should address use, relevance,

and target learner group/s and establish the community or workforce need for a new micro-credential.

The purpose should identify the roles undertaken in the relevant community or industry and the skill sets those roles require; and the potential employment opportunities for a learner who has completed the micro-credential. The purpose should include, if appropriate, the relevance of the micro-credential for Māori and Pasifika people, and suitability for people who may have physical or mental barriers to learning.

Outcome

The micro-credential's outcome is the overall statement of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes a learner will be able to demonstrate upon achieving the micro-credential. The outcome statement should also identify educational, cultural, and employment/vocational pathways.


The outcome statement should start with:

On successful completion of this micro-credential, learners/ākonga will be able to: ...

Outcome statements may be written as holistic statements of learner achievement where the specific statements of knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes are best detailed in the component learning outcomes. For small or one-component micro-credentials, the listed outcome/s and the learning outcomes in the approval may reflect the same level of detail. Go to [Learning outcomes](#).

Where several micro-credentials are developed together or a programme is developed alongside them, the relationship between them should be signalled. Go to [Stacking micro-credentials](#).

Applicants (other than WDCs) are required to provide supporting documents, such as

 evidence of stakeholder needs analysis identifying the use, relevance, and target learner group/s; potential employment opportunities; social and cultural consideration of Māori and Pasifika people and people who may have physical or mental barriers to learning.

3.5 Standards

The details for all micro-credentials to be listed on the NZQCF (include)... any standards that are used.

Where there are suitable skill standards on the Directory that fit with the listed purpose and outcome statement required by rule 6.1(d), those skill standards must be set out in the listing details for the purposes of rule 6.1(f).

Listing rules 6.1 (f) and 12.4

Skill standards

WDCs and other standard setting bodies are developing skill standards for listing on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards (the Directory).

Skill standards on the Directory are intended to be the building blocks of vocational qualifications, which all providers will use to support portability of learning and consistent outcomes. Skill standards can be used as a component of a qualification or a micro-credential. Once suitable skill standards are available for a micro-credential, they must be used.

Over time, skill standards will replace unit standards and micro-credentials that include unit standards must be reviewed and updated.

For more information on skills standards development read:

↩ [Consultation Documents](#)

↩ [Guidelines for approval and listing of skill standards](#)

Unit standards

If there are no skill standards that can be used, it is not mandatory for micro-credential developers to select unit standards. However, as unit standards provide portability in a learning pathway, their use is encouraged.

If unit standards are used, they must be detailed in the micro-credential listing. Providers must use and report them in delivery.

Micro-credentials do not have to include skill standards or unit standards if suitable standards do not exist.

3.6 Review period

The period for ongoing review is usually 1-3 years.

In listing an approved micro-credential NZQA will assign different review periods to those set out in rule 6.1(g) where NZQA believes that different review periods are needed.

Listing rule 6.1 (g) and 14.3 (c)

Every micro-credential requires a listed review date, such as June 2026. This means that the micro-credential developer needs to begin a formal review process before that date.

The review date is at the discretion of the developer and should reflect the needs of stakeholders, for example keeping the micro-credential up to date with legislation that changes frequently, or to accommodate planned provider trials.

NZQA will consult applicants if a different review period is recommended.

Go to Section 6 [Maintaining micro-credentials](#)

4. Approval

↩ [Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022](#)

4.1 Learning outcomes

The micro-credential has an appropriate title and appropriate learning outcomes.

Where standards are specified in the micro-credential listing details, they are included in the micro-credential.

MAA Rule 4.1, Criterion 1

Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes should describe the specific knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes a learner will achieve on completion of the micro-credential or through each component of the micro-credential if there is more than one.

Learning outcomes should

- include an action verb, content and context
- be measurable and achievable
- be presented in a logical, progressive way.

The size of a micro-credential will determine how learning outcomes need to be described.

- Smaller micro-credentials may comprise only one component with learning outcomes, level, and credit etc. The learning outcomes may be the same as the listed outcome statement.
- Larger micro-credentials may include several components each with specific learning outcomes that are summarised in the outcome statement.

In either case, learning outcomes should provide a basis for the design of learning activities and assessment.

NZQA has guidance for writing learning outcomes.

↩ [Writing learning outcomes: structure, considerations, and examples.](#)

Standards

If skill standards or unit standards are in the listing, they must be used in delivery.

Skill standards will specify learning outcomes that can be used in the content of a micro-credential.

The outcomes specified in unit standards may or may not be suitable for learning outcomes in a micro-credential.

Unit standards on the Directory serve a wide range of educational, cultural, and vocational purpose. Some are published with the standard format of a learning outcome (action verb, content and context) for example *Carry out electrofusion jointing on*

polyethylene pipes for water networks, while others may be designed for use in different contexts, for example *Write a report*.

Usually, task specific unit standards like *Write a report* are used in a package to assess learning outcomes.

Supporting documents:

📁 The learning outcomes should be clearly set out in a component descriptor or similar document.

4.2 Need and acceptability

There is evidence of the need for the micro-credential.

It is supported by stakeholders and, where appropriate, the relevant WDC.

MAA Rule 4.1, Criterion 2

The application must show how the content meets learner, industry, and/or community need, and has support.

The application must include evidence of engagement, feedback and support from the education organisation itself, relevant industry, employer, community, professional bodies or other interested groups.

Considerations:

Have stakeholders been meaningfully involved in the design of the content?

How does the content reflect the micro-credential's listed purpose and the specific needs of target learners?

If other similar micro-credentials exist, why is this one needed?

Is there evidence of, for example:

- relevance to learners, industry and communities
- cultural and social aspirations of Māori, Pasifika and other communities.

Workforce Development Councils (WDCs)

WDCs work collaboratively with industry, providers and other partners to lead the development of industry qualifications and micro-credentials, set standards, endorse programmes, and advise in relation to their specified industries.

WDC subject areas and industries they are responsible for are on each website:

↗ <https://www.hangaarorau.nz/>

↗ <https://www.mukatangata.nz/>

↗ <https://www.ringahora.nz/>

↗ <https://www.toimai.nz/>

↗ <https://www.toitutewaiora.nz/>

↩ <https://www.waihangaararau.nz/>

an overview of WDC coverage is on the TEC website:

↩ [Workforce Development Councils \(WDCs\)](#)

The micro-credential rules allow WDCs and other standard setting bodies to develop micro-credentials, for providers to deliver.

It is expected that WDCs will apply for listing and approval of micro-credentials that comprise skill standards, and that providers will design delivery for them. The Rules state that where there are suitable skill standards on the Directory, that fit with the listed purpose and outcome statement of a micro-credential, they must be listed 12.4.

Developers will be expected to review their micro-credential when suitable skills standards are available, and either update their micro-credential or seek accreditation for a micro-credential that does include the skills standards.

The WDC support process

Micro-credentials developers must gain WDC support if the micro-credential is in an area where a WDC is the standard setting body.

Seeking WDC support for a micro-credential is similar to seeking programme endorsement. WDCs will develop formal criteria and considerations to ensure the process for giving support to micro-credential developers is consistent and has value.

Providers that do not hold consent to assess for standards in the micro-credential should apply for micro-credential support at the same time as requesting support for consent to assess. The WDC will confirm if the provider has successfully met the relevant Consent and Moderation Requirements (CMR), many of which cover the micro-credential accreditation criteria. Read each WDC's website for more information on consent to assess.

Please note for consent to assess there may be more than one WDC, or Ngā Poutoko Aromatawai Māori (NZQA Māori Qualification Services and NZQA National Qualification Services), to consult.

If a WDC has concerns about the micro-credential outcomes or content, it will work with the provider to resolve those concerns where possible.

Suggestions for supporting documents for 'Need and acceptability':

- 📁 A list of external advisors / stakeholders and notes of meetings
- 📁 Letters of support from stakeholders
- 📁 Support from the (non-WDC) developer of the micro-credential if applicable
- 📁 WDC support (required) Application information is available from each WDCs website.

4.3 Requirements

Requirements for admission, credit recognition and transfer, recognition of prior learning, length and structure, assessment methods, and completion are clearly set out.

MAA Rule 4.1, Criterion 3

Requirements should be set out to inform the design of delivery, as required.

If no specific requirements are stated provider policies will apply and will be checked at accreditation.

Admission

Entry requirements should not pose any unreasonable barriers to entry and must be appropriate to the type and level of study.

It is recommended that entry requirements specify the level of language proficiency or literacy needed. For work-based learning micro-credentials, they should indicate if learners need to be employed.

Credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning

Credit recognition and transfer provisions, if required, may cover

- cross-crediting (from the same provider)
- credit transfer (from another provider)
- recognition of prior learning (informal or uncertificated learning).

For more information read:

↩ [Guidelines for the recognition and award of credit for learning](#)

Length and structure

A description of the learners' journey through the approved micro-credential content is required. It should indicate the sequence of the component/s if applicable, the indicative time required, and the type of components, (eg practical or theory) if required.

Assessment methods

A methodology should be selected that meets the principles of good assessment, aligns with purpose, outcomes and level of the listed micro-credentials, and has sufficient detail to inform delivery.

Requirements must state whether assessment is based on achieved/not achieved (competency) or graded (achievement) criteria, and may include, if required:

- rules for re-assessment or re-submission
- assessment intervals and/or reporting requirements.

The specific assessment tool and activities will be set out in the accreditation. Go to [Assessment](#).

Completion

The expected or normal progress through the micro-credential should be described.

Only mandatory requirements should be stated.

Supporting documents:

📁 The requirements of the micro-credential that apply should be clearly set out in the application document, the component descriptor, timetable or similar document/s.

Components

📁 The application forms for micro-credentials provide a component template.

The application should show the coherence of the component(s) of the micro-credential (including standards, if applicable) as an individual learning package. A component may be a course, module, paper, project, or practicum.

Each component should have:

- title
- aim
- level
- credits
- learning outcomes
- topics (indicative content)

Other component details will relate to delivery. Go to Section [5.3 Delivery](#).

Stacking micro-credentials

Stacking means combining standalone micro-credentials within a programme which NZQA formally recognises.

Micro-credentials can form part of programmes that lead to qualifications if:

- the micro-credential aligns with and contributes to the qualification's outcomes and strategic purpose
- the overall design of the programme is coherent.

Micro-credential and programme components must have the same title, level, credit, learning outcomes, indicative content, assessment method(s), unit or skill standard(s) and requirements.

If several micro-credentials are developed together or a programme is developed alongside them, the relationship between them should be stated.

Approval of a micro-credential does not guarantee that a programme composed of the micro-credential will be approved. Similarly, approved programme components are not always suitable as micro-credentials. For more information read:

🔗 [Stacking Micro-credentials \(Coming soon!\)](#)

Supporting documents for stacking:

- 📁 Map of the relationship between the micro-credential/s and the programme that shows alignment of learning outcomes, components, and assessment requirements.
- 📁 Information that relates to student journey, completion, qualification and/or education pathway.

4.4 Review process

There is an effective process for regular review of the micro-credential that assesses its currency and content and updates it accordingly.

MAA Rule 4.1, Criterion 4

The planned review process should align with the review period in the listed micro-credential.

An effective review process:

- updates the micro-credential to include skill standards developed since the last review
- measures and monitors the quality of outcomes for learners and stakeholders, including Māori and Pasifika
- ensures that structure and content is current and reflects the needs of stakeholders
- addresses industry, employment and/or education pathway changes.

Supporting documents:

- 📁 A referenced section of a Quality Management System (QMS) or another document.

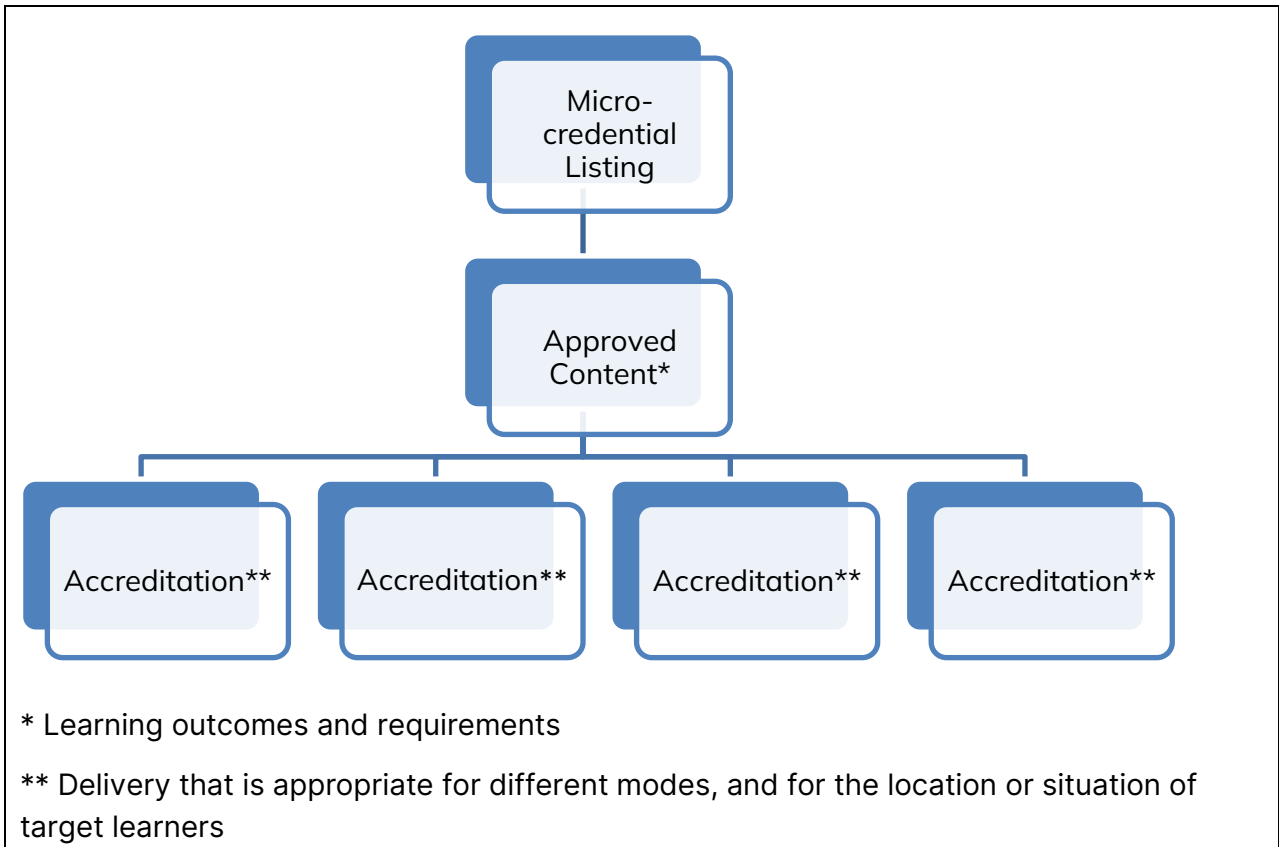
5. Accreditation

↩ [Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022](#)

5.1 Applications for accreditation only

Listed and approved micro-credentials are available for other providers to deliver.

Go to [Who can apply for micro-credential accreditation?](#)



Clarification of the approved content

Before applying for accreditation applicants should consult with the developer with respect to:

- requirements for entry, sequence, or integration of practical work and theory components
- acceptable delivery modes and/or methods, and assessment methods
- learning or assessment materials available for use, recommended, or other guidance for the development and design of resources.

WDC developed Micro-credentials

The micro-credential listing details are on the [Register](#).

Full details of the requirements for delivery of the WDC micro-credential (approval

information) is available from NZQA or the WDC on request.

A letter of WDC support is not required for an accreditation application to deliver a WDC developed micro-credential but the WDC should be consulted and the micro-credential's requirements clarified.

SSB developed micro-credentials

If the application is for accreditation for delivery of a micro-credential listed and approved for a SSB (that is not a WDC), or for another provider's micro-credential, the SSB or provider responsible for listing and approval should be consulted and the micro-credential's requirements clarified.

Provider developed micro-credentials

Not all provider developed micro-credentials are automatically available for applications for accreditation and delivery by other providers. Micro-credentials approved for niche provision and/or for bodies of knowledge like field Māori may not be available, and micro-credentials that were approved under the Training Scheme Rules may require updating.

5.2 Applications where Consent to assess is also required

If the micro-credential includes standards, and the applicant does not hold consent, the applicant must also provide evidence of their ability to meet the CMR for those standards (MAA Rule 7.2) and how the proposed delivery will meet the CMR. When NZQA grants micro-credential accreditation, the related consent to assess is also granted.

↩ [Consent to assess for tertiary providers](#)

Note: where support for consent to assess is required from a WDC, contact them before applying for accreditation. Go to [The WDC support process](#).

5.3 Delivery

The delivery approach is adequate and appropriate given the stated learning outcomes for the micro-credential and the needs of intended learners. Delivery is appropriate for the delivery modes, and for the location or situation of the intended learners.

MAA Rule 6.1, Criterion 1

Mode and approach

Providers should indicate the delivery mode of the micro-credential and explain how the delivery methods will support the target learner groups to achieve.

A description of the teaching and learning approaches is required. Will the micro-credential be delivered:

- face-to-face (in person/ in a traditional classroom setting)
- distance (online)
- blended (in the workplace with an LMS, or other combination of in person and

online)

A micro-credential may have more than one mode, if different learner groups require a different learning pathway through the micro-credential.

Providers should offer flexibility in approach, allowing the learner the option to study or train via whichever means of delivery is best suited to when, where, and what students or trainees are learning and their personal circumstances.

If a micro-credential has a variable duration e.g. part-time or fulltime options, or is designed for individual learning plans, explain the different options using learning hours:

- Learning hours per week
- Total learning hours
- Total duration (weeks)

A note on delivery modes:

NZQA currently records delivery mode for accreditation as follows:¹

1. **Face to face** – most of the study or training is proximate, in-person.
2. **Distance** – most delivery is distant from the provider-based or work-based settings. This may be asynchronous learning working through online activities, or synchronous online interaction attended by a facilitator and a number of participants.
3. **Blended** – delivery includes significant amounts of time attending both in person classes or work and learning at a distance from the educator or trainer.

These modes are used by NZQA to distinguish distance (usually online) learning, from learning where being in the same physical space, at least some of the time, is part of teaching and learning.

Although remote videoconferencing involves face to face interaction, it is considered 'distance' for the purposes of these definitions. Also, note that 'blended' learning is sometimes used to describe delivery that uses more than one learning context, for example off-shore and on-shore or employer-led and provider-delivered. In the NZQA definitions 'blended' only refers to the blend of in-person and at a distance.

Delivery methods and learning activities

The micro-credentials' component/s should provide a description of the key learning activities that make up the learning hours. They include:

- coaching
- tutorials
- lectures

¹ NZQA is reviewing delivery mode 'types' as part of updating its internal systems and will update programme and micro-credentials guidance in due course.

- on-job instruction
- work-based activity
- conferences
- research
- guest speakers
- group work
- field trips
- noho marae
- self-directed learning activities.
- online in real time classes or self-paced.

The application should show how any self-directed learning contributes to each component and how it will be assessed.

Work-based learning

Work-based learning may include the following approaches:²

- **Fully integrated workplace learning** in which most of the learning takes place on-job and is supported by learning materials from the workplace and the provider. Learners are supported by their employers and by provider staff. This approach includes *work-based training* as defined in the Education and Training Act 2020.
- **Learning practicums** where students – such as teachers, nurses, social workers, or counsellors – are placed in workplaces for ongoing blocks of learning during their time of study. These are variously referred to as practicums, placements and field-based education.
- **Work integrated learning** where students work on a project basis for short periods of time. This includes internships.
- **Simulated learning** situations where learners are fully located within an education provider but participate in replicated workplace learning situations.

↩ [Guide for work-based training](#)

Online delivery (including offshore)

Under the 2022 Rules, micro-credentials and programmes that have been developed for 100% online delivery can also be delivered offshore without special approval.

If the micro-credential is designed for both on and offshore online delivery, providers must include evidence of suitability for both domestic students and students in the target country. Providers must identify the target learners, describe the teaching and learning approaches and explain how the online methods will support the learners to achieve. For

² Ako Aotearoa, [Learning in and for work: highlights from Ako Aotearoa research](#), October 2014

more information read:

↩ [Distance online delivery](#)

Offshore delivery with a partner

Applications must provide information on the partnership arrangements for delivering offshore. It is expected that information will be provided similar to programmes. Read the guidance for Criterion 3 - Formal agreement with offshore partner:

↩ [Guidelines to the Offshore Delivery Programme Rules](#) (being updated)

Other resources for 5.3 Delivery - supporting learner groups

↩ [Seven principles to effectively support Māori students as Māori](#)

↩ [Four strategies to effectively support Pasifika students](#)

↩ [Supporting disabled tertiary learners in an online environment](#)

↩ [Specific Learning Disability Definitions](#)

Suggestions for supporting documents:

📁 Micro-credential document, timetable, or delivery schedule

📁 Student handbook

📁 CVs of current staff or position descriptions.

5.4 Assessment and moderation

The institution has the capability and capacity to ensure assessment materials and decisions are fair, valid, consistent, and appropriate for the level, given the stated learning outcomes.

MAA Rule 6.1, Criterion 2

Assessment

Assessment tools and activities must be specified for each component, and:

- focus on the learning outcomes
- enable accurate decisions to be made about learner achievement
- specify the standard of expected performance and criteria to be used
- consider the overall workload for learners.

The application should also provide/refer to the regulations for assessment, eg

- the learners' ability to repeat parts if required
- how, and when, learners will get results
- the process for re-assessments, re-submission, and appeals.

NZQA has a document offering guidance and support to kaiako and assessors developing quality assessment:

↩ [Aromatawai and the Principles of Assessment](#)

Information on standards-based assessment:

↩ [Assessment tools and approaches](#)

↩ [Assessment of standards](#)

Information on assessment in an online (distance) delivery mode:

↩ [Online assessment: guidance for providers](#)

↩ [Getting it right: Guidelines for Online Assessment](#)

Although primarily intended for secondary teachers, the following resource may also be a useful reference for tertiary teacher and trainers:

↩ [Innovative internal assessment case studies](#)

Suggestions for supporting documents:

- 📁 Component details for assessment tool and activities
- 📁 An indicative assessment timetable
- 📁 Work placement/work-based learning assessment requirements
- 📁 QMS excerpts (for provider regulations for assessment).

Moderation

The application should outline how external and internal moderation will be managed. This includes moderation of materials before they are used for assessment, moderation of assessment decisions before results are released to learners (if applicable), and moderation of assessor decisions post – assessment for self-assessment.

Guidance for standards-based moderation:

↩ [National external moderation for tertiary education organisations \(Standards-based\)](#)

Supporting documents:

- 📁 A referenced section of a Quality Management System (QMS) or other document.

5.5 Resources

The institution has the capability and capacity to deliver the micro-credential, including suitably qualified or experienced staff, facilities, educational and physical resources, and student support services.

MAA Rule 6.1, Criterion 3

Staff

The education organisation should have staff on appropriate employment agreements to deliver the micro-credential in a sustainable manner. Collectively, the teaching staff must be adequate in numbers, have appropriate qualifications and, where relevant, New

Zealand experience to ensure and maintain high standards.

The qualification held by tutoring/teaching staff should be in a relevant discipline to the micro-credential being taught and must be at least one level higher than the micro-credential being awarded.

It is strongly recommended that teaching/tutorial staff hold, or be working towards, a tertiary teaching qualification, such as the New Zealand Certificate in Adult and Tertiary Teaching (Level 4) or the New Zealand Certificate in Adult and Tertiary Teaching (Level 5), or equivalent.

Staff must meet the requirements in the relevant CMR if the micro-credential is assessed against standards from the Directory.

For staff or workplace personnel responsible for undertaking assessment of learners (for example where training is all on on-job) an option is the New Zealand Certificate in Assessment Practice (Level 4) [2752].

If the micro-credential is level 8 or above or can be stacked towards a degree or post-graduate programme, the application needs to include evidence that it will be taught mainly by people engaged in research and that there will be teaching staff available with supervisory experience for micro-credentials with research components.

Facilities

A list of the key physical, teaching and learning resources to support delivery is required. Consider, for example, the quality and size of classrooms for numbers, spaces for group work, laboratory, or practical activities.

Educational and physical resources

Educational resources should suit the delivery mode and approaches.

Consider:

- what Learning Management System (LMS) has been selected and how will it support delivery of content?
- do learners have access to relevant online resources such as e-journals, conference databases, etc.?
- do learners have access to relevant materials, for example laboratory equipment and consumables?
- do learners have access to textbooks, library and/or WiFi?

CMR requirements may specify specialised equipment required for both learning and assessment against specific standards. Applicants may need to include details of arrangements for access to specialised equipment. This may include evidence of purchase and maintenance, memoranda of understanding with an owner, employer capability systems, or other suitable arrangements.

Student support services

Learner guidance should describe the general support and guidance services offered to

learners, for example in a student handbook.

Consider:

- how learners will receive feedback on their progress
- student handbook / online manual, including an outline of the learning journey and activities
- support to assist learners to progress, including access to it technology
- the requirements of the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 (The Code).

Work-based learning

The micro-credential must be clear how the provider's engagement with the learner will be maintained and monitored throughout the delivery. The requirements for this should be captured in the policy and procedure.

There must be a formal three-way agreement, setting out the parameters, roles, and responsibilities of the provider, the learner, and the employer. This should include health and safety at work, induction, materials and amenities, ACC and Insurance, drug testing or other workplace requirements and policies, expectations for additional support and ensuring the opportunities to learn and be assessed.

Suggestions for supporting documents:

- 📁 Evidence from the organisation's senior management about the availability of resources including staff, finance and any special requirements for the ongoing viability/sustainability of delivery
- 📁 Curriculum vitae of current staff or position descriptions
- 📁 Examples of information provided to learners.

5.6 Review

There must be adequate and effective review of the delivery of the micro-credential (including outcomes for students) and the institution's capability to provide the micro-credential.

MAA Rule 6.1, Criterion 4

Applicants for accreditation should focus on how organisational *capability* will be reviewed, to ensure the micro-credential is delivered as designed.

The review plan should include:

- what outcomes learners are achieving and how well
- the value and currency of the outcomes to stakeholders
- how processes will identify strengths and weaknesses in organisational capability
- how processes contribute to improvement strategies.

Suggestions for supporting documents:

- 📁 Capability review plan
- 📁 Plans for meetings with external advisors and other stakeholders including learners.
- 📁 Student experience survey templates (and other tools for student achievement data and feedback)

6. Maintaining micro-credentials

6.1 Lapse of accreditation to provide approved micro-credential

Under Section 447 (1) of the Act, an accreditation to provide an approved micro-credential lapses when—

- (a) 12 months have passed since the accreditation was granted and the institution has not during that time provided the micro-credential to which the accreditation relates; or
- (b) 12 months have passed since the institution last provided the micro-credential to which the accreditation relates.

Education organisations can contact Approvals and Accreditation to request an extension to accreditation. Please contact: qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

6.2 Micro-credential review (listing)

Micro-credential developers are responsible to:

- (a) review micro-credential they develop within the specified review period in accordance with guidelines published on the NZQA website
- (b) actively participate and cooperate in the process of NZQA initiated wider reviews of individual micro-credential or suites of micro-credentials.

Listing Rule 13.1

The micro-credential developer will review the micro-credential with relevant stakeholders including WDCs and providers as required. The review will assess the micro-credential for currency and content, including if the relevant industry, employers or community still need it.

Following the review, if the need the micro-credential met is no longer required or the purpose or outcomes change, the micro-credential should be discontinued.

The micro-credential should be updated according to any findings or recommendations from the review.

6.3 Status of micro-credentials on the NZQCF

Micro-credentials listed on the NZQCF will be assigned one of three kinds of status by NZQA: current, expiring, or discontinued.

Micro-credentials with current status are those in current use and may be offered and provided to students in accordance with the Act and with Rule 7 made under section 452 of the Act.

Micro-credentials with expiring status are those: (a) which are being replaced with a new micro-credential; or (b) for which a decision has been made for them to be discontinued in the future.

Micro-credentials with expiring status: (a) may continue to be available to students

enrolled in an approved expiring micro-credential, but no new students may be enrolled in that micro-credential from the time the micro-credential is assigned expiring status by NZQA; and (b) will have a time limit for the expiry period, following which they will be assigned discontinued status.

Micro-credentials with discontinued status: (a) may no longer be awarded unless all requirements were completed prior to its discontinuation; and (b) discontinued micro-credentials must not be offered or provided.

Listing Rule 8

Micro-credentials are currently published on the NZQA website with some of their approved content:

↗ <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nzqf/search/microcredentials.do>

Systems are being put in place to include micro-credentials via the NZQCF search page, later in 2024, when full details will be published.

6.4 Making changes

When applying for a change to a micro-credential, education organisations are required to submit the following information:

- A summary that details the changes to the micro-credential, demonstrating that it continues to meet all relevant requirements
- Evidence of the education organisation's internal review and approval of the proposed changes.

NZQA must approve the changes before the education organisation implements them.

The application process is detailed in Section 8 How to apply.

Te reo Māori and Mātauranga Māori

If the micro-credential your organisation seeks to change is listed and/or approved in te reo Māori instead of or in addition to English, or is based on Mātauranga Māori kaupapa and tikanga, please request that Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance is used for assessment of the application.

6.5 Training schemes and micro-credentials approved before January 2023

What to do if you have a training scheme (a deemed micro-credential) or a micro-credential approved prior to January 2023.

- Check the Register for SSB developed micro-credentials that may already exist as a suitable replacement (and apply for accreditation to deliver).
- Consult with the SSB responsible for the subject area concerned, to check if the SSB has plans to list a micro-credential in that area that that may be a suitable

replacement.

- If the SSB has no plans for a micro-credential in the subject area concerned, you can update it to meet the new rules for listing, approval, and accreditation. Use application Form 2.

↩ [Form 2- Micro-credential Listing, Approval and Accreditation](#)

Please note: if your micro-credential / training scheme includes expired or expiring standards, you must update it.

If you have questions about moving from training schemes to micro-credentials, please contact us. [Email the micro-credentials team](#)

7. Agreements between organisations

7.1 Sub-contracting

An accredited education organisation can arrange for another organisation to provide all or part of an approved micro-credential on their behalf. NZQA considers this a sub-contracting arrangement.

NZQA approval for subcontracting arrangements is required if the third-party (the subcontractor) is delivering or assessing:

- off-job study or training (such as block courses or night-classes) delivered by a third-party
- specialised courses (e.g., first aid, flight simulation) within an NZQA accredited micro-credential, delivered by specialist providers with niche expertise
- employer delivered on-job training on behalf of a TEO to trainees and apprentices that are not the employer's own employees.

There are different requirements when an education organisation engages a sub-contractor. These requirements depend on whether the sub-contractor involved has accreditation for the micro-credential or not.

Sub-contractor has accreditation:

- the education organisation engaging the sub-contractor must notify NZQA of the arrangement and provide a copy of the signed agreement.

Sub-contractor doesn't have accreditation:

- the education organisation must apply to NZQA for approval to engage the sub-contractor and provide the required information including a copy of the signed agreement.

Requirements for sub-contracting notification:

(a) a copy of the sub-contracting agreement which must outline the responsibilities and obligations of the parties:

(b) the duration of the arrangement:

(c) the reasons for the arrangement:

(d) confirmation that any advertising and other information provided to prospective students clearly shows that the study or training involved is provided under a sub-contracting arrangement.

Requirements for sub-contracting applications:

(a) the name of the sub-contractor:

(b) identification of the micro-credential(s) or part(s) to be provided under the arrangement:

- (c) the rationale for the proposed sub-contracting arrangement:
- (d) a copy of the sub-contracting arrangement between the institution and the sub-contractor:
- (e) evidence of internal quality assurance approval by the institution.
- (f) process for review of delivery
- (g) process for resolution of disputes

NZQA will grant approval where it is satisfied that:

- (a) the institution remains responsible for the sub-contractor meeting all of the institution's obligations that are relevant for the accreditation:
- (b) the sub-contractor will meet all relevant obligations in the Act and in rules made under section 452 of the Act in relation to the provision of the micro-credential:
- (c) there is a formal documented arrangement between the holder and the sub-contractor that includes provisions to ensure that NZQA is able to exercise its quality assurance and enforcement powers and functions in respect of the acts or omissions of the sub-contractor relating to the provision of the micro-credential:
- (d) the information and advertising for the study or training clearly states that it is provided through a sub-contracting arrangement:
- (e) all student enrolments are through the institution, and the institution maintains all student enrolment and academic information.

What is not subcontracting

If an education organisation arranges for an individual (i.e., not the person's business or company) to deliver and/or assess all or part of a micro-credential on its behalf via an individual contract for services agreement, then the contracted person is considered an employee, and this is not considered subcontracting.

For more information on the requirements for sub-contracting, please contact Approvals and Accreditation: qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

8. How to apply

Use the following forms when applying for a new micro-credential **or** a micro-credential change:

- ↖ [Form 1 - Micro-credential listing and approval](#)
- ↖ [Form 2 - Micro-credential listing, approval, and accreditation](#)
- ↖ [Form 3 - Micro-credential accreditation-only](#)

Apply via the application portal

Applications must be made as an 'Other' application through the NZQA online application portal.

Application instructions are set out on the NZQA website:

- ↖ [Online TEO applications](#)
- ↖ [Online School Instructions](#)

When the application is received, an email quoting an NZQA case number will be emailed to the applicant. This number stays with the application through to its outcome.

The application will be assigned to the Approvals and Accreditation team or Quality Assurance Māori team. Another email will advise the applicant of the Evaluator's name and contact details.

The Evaluator will commence evaluation and will contact the applicant if the submission lacks sufficient evidence for the evaluation to be carried out.

Supporting documents

This guide offers suggestions for supporting documents. On the application form, indicate how any submitted documents support the application and meet the rules and criteria if it is not obvious.

How the application is evaluated

Evaluation

NZQA's decision to list, approve and/or accredit an education organisation to deliver a micro-credential is based on the quality and sufficiency of evidence provided.

The Evaluator will assess the application against the criteria in the NZQA Rules and will be clear about the information and evidence on which decisions have been made. An evaluation decision of *approved*, *not approved*, or *request for information (RFI)* will be provided.

Request for information (RFI)

The intention of an RFI is to address minor gaps in the evidence provided, or to clarify design and/or delivery, and may lead to an approved or not approved outcome. Where

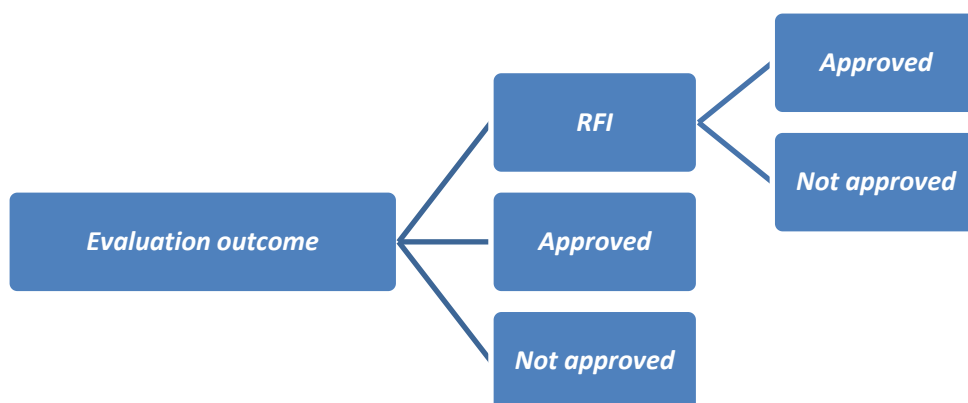
possible, suggestions will be made to assist the applicant.

Outcome

Applications will be approved or not approved.

If the application is not approved, the reasons will be set out in a report linked to the criteria in the NZQA Rules. The Evaluator will be available for a phone call or meeting, or will provide clarification via email, in response to the outcome letter and report.

If applications are approved the education organisation will receive an approval letter.



What will it cost?

The service fees for applications are \$190 per hour plus GST.

↩ [NZQA Fees](#)

Fees may depend on the type of education organisation applying.