

## Consultation summary: *Proposed changes to NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018*

### Introduction

NZQA consulted on proposed changes to Rule 18 of the *NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018* from 11 December 2018 to 11 February 2019.

The proposals aimed to strengthen the settings for when international students may use prior schooling where English was the language of instruction to meet the English language proficiency entry requirements for study at non-university tertiary education organisations.

The following is a summary of submissions received and NZQA’s response to points raised during the consultation.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Number of submissions

NZQA received **28** submissions to the consultation:

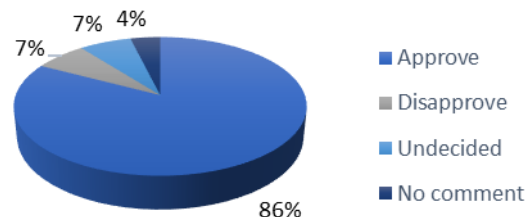
Submission author type	Number of responses
Peak body	1
Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs)	10
Industry Training Organisations (ITOs)	2
Private Training Establishments (PTEs)	10
Other stakeholders	2
Individuals	3
<b>Total:</b>	<b>28</b>

### 2. Summary of feedback

The following sections summarise submissions received for each question.

#### 2.1 Do you agree with the removal of the student visa decline rate from Rule 18 of the *NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018*?

NZQA proposed removing the student visa decline rate (SVDR) from Rule 18 as a measure for determining which evidence may be accepted for assuring English proficiency. The majority of submissions (86 per cent) supported this proposal.



<sup>1</sup> Where a submission included a N/A response, this has been included under “No comment”.

## Submission comments

Feedback in support of removing the SVDR from Rule 18 noted that it would make the entry requirements fairer and more transparent. Respondents noted that an immigration tool was not sufficiently refined to act as a measure for determining when prior schooling offers acceptable assurance of English language proficiency. It was felt that the removal of the SVDR would minimise opportunities for fraudulent activity.

Among those respondents who disagreed with the removal of the SVDR, the primary concerns related to the impact on students who would no longer be able to use prior schooling in English to meet the entry requirements. There were concerns that, if its removal was implemented together with the other proposed changes, the recruitment abilities of non-university TEOs would be significantly restricted while unfair barriers to student enrolment would remain.

## NZQA response

NZQA is aware that this change will impact student enrolment from countries that currently have a SVDR of less than 20 per cent and are not included on the proposed list of countries discussed at 2.2. Under the new settings, non-university TEOs will no longer be able to accept prior English language schooling when enrolling students from these countries.

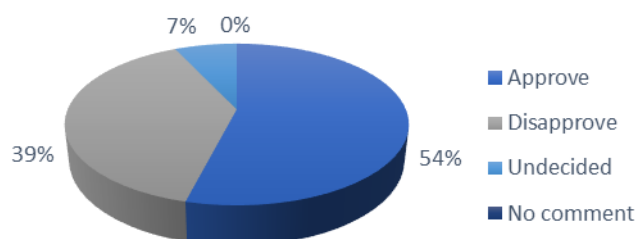
However, NZQA considers that the SVDR is no longer an appropriate measure for assuring the English language proficiency of international students for the reasons set out in the consultation document.

Based on the strong support indicated during consultation, NZQA intends to remove the SVDR from Rule 18 of the *NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules*.

## 2.2 Do you agree with the proposals for when an international student can meet the English language entry requirements using prior schooling where English was the language of instruction?

NZQA proposed that prior schooling where English was the language of instruction would continue to be accepted under Rule 18 where that schooling was completed in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and South Africa.

Over half of respondents (54 per cent) agreed with the proposed countries, although some of these suggested that the list could be expanded without compromising the strength of the new settings. Those that disagreed with the list considered it too limited or biased.



## Submission comments

Those who agreed with the proposed changes commented that the settings would increase assurance of English language proficiency and enable providers to easily assess eligibility under this provision. The retention of prior schooling as a way of evidencing English language proficiency for these countries was supported.

Respondents who did not agree with the proposed settings were concerned that the list was too limited and that the omission of key international student markets would unfairly impact their ability to recruit. Some felt there was no reason prior education in English from any country could not be accepted, unless there was a significant lapse in time or experience in using English since that education.

European countries such as Sweden, Norway and Germany were noted as having traditionally high English language proficiency, while Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong have multiple schools with instruction in English. The omission of Pacific Island countries was also raised given New Zealand's commitments to development in the Pacific region.

Some respondents noted that the current settings already created situations where prospective students had to be informed that their English language education could not be recognised for enrolment in New Zealand. It was felt that the proposed settings would aggravate this sense of unfairness and extend the already uneven playing field, in terms of recruitment, between non-university TEOs and universities (which can set their own English language proficiency entry requirements).

### **NZQA response**

The introduction of the SVDR in 2015 followed an analysis of INZ data which showed that occurrences of dishonest or fraudulent enrolments were more likely if either prior schooling or internal English language testing was used to meet the Rule 18 requirements.<sup>2</sup> We continue to see situations where international students have been enrolled into programmes for which their English proficiency is insufficient.

The countries proposed for when prior English-medium schooling may continue to be accepted are consistent with the countries listed in Rule 18 from which degree qualifications taught in English may be accepted as evidence of English language proficiency. The proposed settings offer high levels of assurance that students using this provision will have the required level of English language proficiency.

There are other countries that have English as an official language, the language of instruction in some schools, or have students that have studied English as a subject at secondary school. While prior education in English will of course provide some level of English language proficiency, those levels can vary significantly, particularly where a large proportion of the population do not have English as their first language.

It is important that any proposed alternative to the SVDR benchmark balances the need for assuring high levels of English language proficiency without disadvantaging international students from predominantly English-speaking countries. NZQA is satisfied that the proposed settings for this provision strike that balance.

NZQA recognises the importance of the prior schooling provision for Pacific students coming to study on a New Zealand Short Term Training Scholarship (NZSTTS) funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).<sup>3</sup> A provision has been added to enable these students to continue to use prior schooling where English was the language of instruction to meet the requirements of Rule 18 for enrolment.

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<sup>2</sup> NZQA removed internal English language proficiency assessment from the Rules in July 2018 due to concerns over the quality of these assessments. Prior schooling is the only remaining provision subject to the SVDR.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/new-zealand-government-scholarships/new-zealand-government-scholarships-on-offer/new-zealand-short-term-training-scholarships-for-pacific-citizens/>

This consultation concerned the provision for prior schooling at schools *where the student was taught using English as the language of instruction*. At this time, the proposed list of countries will not be expanded to include countries that do not have English as the usual language of educational instruction in schools.

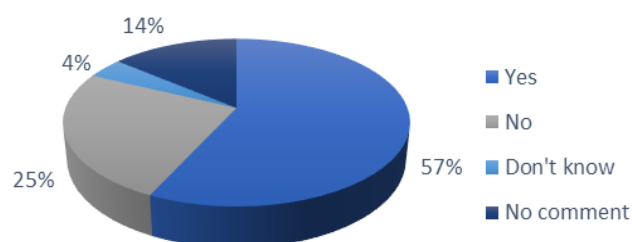
NZQA notes the support for increasing the range of ways for non-university TEOs to verify English language proficiency. NZQA will be conducting further work to explore other acceptable options for evidence of English language proficiency. This will include consideration of suggestions made during consultation, such as study of English as a subject and international English language proficiency statistics (e.g. the Education First English Proficiency Index).

NZQA will introduce the proposed list of countries from which prior schooling with English as the language of instruction may be accepted as evidence under Rule 18. These countries are New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the United States of America, Canada and South Africa.

NZQA proposes to add an additional provision allowing prior schooling with English as the language of instruction to be accepted for Pacific students granted a New Zealand Short Term Training Scholarship (NZSTTS) funded by MFAT to support New Zealand's commitments and development efforts in the Pacific.

### 2.3 Is the proposed structure of Rule 18 easy to understand?

NZQA proposed to simplify the structure of Rule 18. The majority of respondents (57 per cent) felt that the proposed changes made Rule 18 easier to understand. NZQA has incorporated some of the suggestions for improvement.



#### Comments

Those who did not find the proposed structure of Rule 18 easy to understand referred to the legal-style wording and made a range of suggestions including separating out the evidence types related to the list of countries proposed (see 2.2). Clarification of the required periods of schooling was also requested.

#### NZQA response

NZQA supports the grouping of the evidence types related to the list of countries (see 2.2) and has incorporated this into the new Rule. The required periods of schooling where English was the language of instruction have not changed from the previous Rules and can be seen in the amended versions.

### 2.4 Are there any other internationally recognised secondary school leaving qualifications taught and assessed in English that you would like to see included in Rule 18?

NZQA noted that any secondary school qualifications suggested should be able to be verified by the awarding body as additional assurance against fraud. NZQA received 15 responses that included suggestions for other secondary school qualifications.

## Comments

The suggestions received were primarily for secondary school qualifications which, while not generally delivered in English, are commonly accepted by New Zealand universities if certain grades in English are achieved. Suggestions also included other English language tests such as the German DAAD test.<sup>4</sup>

Some respondents felt that any secondary school qualification taught in English was acceptable and that this should not be restricted to countries listed in Rule 18.

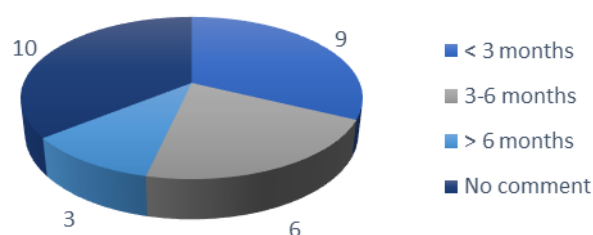
## NZQA response

As noted at 2.2, the scope of this consultation was limited to the provision for prior schooling where English was the language of instruction. As such, NZQA will not be including secondary school qualifications that are not generally delivered in English at this time. The suggestions received will be included in NZQA's work to explore other types of evidence that may be used for assuring English language proficiency.

The International Baccalaureate and Cambridge A level qualifications taught and assessed in English will be included as acceptable evidence under Rule 18. Any additions to the list of accepted qualifications will be considered case by case.

## 2.5 Please comment on what your organisation would need to do to adapt your business processes and how much time it would need to make these changes.

This question was to help establish an appropriate transition period should the proposed changes be made. NZQA grouped feedback into timeframes based on respondents' comments as to how significant or complex the changes would be for their organisations to implement.



## Comments

Over half of respondents indicated that the changes required to adjust their business processes could be completed within three to six months. However, nearly all respondents indicated that the changes should not impact current students or those in the process of enrolling. Some indicated the changes could not be implemented before 2020.

## NZQA response

The changes to Rule 18 will take effect from 1 August 2019, a transition period of approximately three months, to enable TEOs to make the necessary changes prior to the commencement of the 2020 academic year.

TEOs will have until 31 July 2019 to finalise pending enrolments using the current settings. From 1 August 2019, enrolments must be in line with the new requirements.

<sup>4</sup> An example of the type of qualification suggested is the Danish Upper Secondary School Diploma with a minimum GPA of 6 in A-level English. The DAAD English as a foreign language test was developed by the German Academic Exchange Service <https://www.daad.de/ausland/en/>