

## Aide-Memoire: changes to the vocational qualifications system

<b>To:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
<b>From:</b>	Dr Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive
<b>Date:</b>	24 June 2020
<b>Reference:</b>	CR20772

### Purpose

1. Feedback from NZQA's workshop with stakeholders on the 12 March 2020 indicated that the vocational qualification system needs to be simpler and more responsive to employers' needs. We have developed a proposal which we would like to discuss with you to ensure that the qualification system meets your needs and aspirations for the vocational education system as a whole.
2. This paper, with the attached appendices, provides further detail on our proposals as preparation for either a strategic session on 1 July or a discussion at an agency meeting.

### Situation

3. The proposal has been informed by the above workshop, attended by employers, qualification developers, representatives from the tertiary sector and government agencies. This workshop identified a strong desire for an agile and simple qualification system, supported by a quality assurance framework that enables and supports high quality outcomes (appendix one).

#### ***A simpler and more agile qualification system***

4. We propose a qualification system with fewer components, with qualifications, skill standards and micro-credentials as the main products (appendices two and three).
5. Whilst the core responsibilities of WDCs and providers are clear, there is a middle area where the actors in the system need to engage collaboratively in order to best meet learner and employer needs.
6. For core vocational qualifications at levels three to six, it is proposed to move away from a single New Zealand Qualification with multiple TEO programmes. If the WDCs develop New Zealand qualifications with an embedded national curriculum (in collaboration with NZIST and other providers), there would be no need for separate programmes to be developed. WDC would then not have a programme endorsement function.
7. We see skill standards as providing the skill specification and the level of performance in the skill, including both learning and assessment outcomes. We propose that skill standards are more holistic and less atomised than the current unit standards, which do not always provide

sufficient evidence that the learner can undertake the specific sequences of tasks and actions required in the workplace.

8. We continue to see a place for capstone assessments, specified in the qualification, where it is practical and meaningful to undertake such an assessment. They can provide useful evidence to an employer that the learner 'can do the job'.

#### **... supported by a robust but simplified evaluative quality assurance system**

9. The quality assurance system can also be simplified, reducing the 'speed to market' for WDCs and providers (see appendices four and five).
10. The quality assurance system provides assurance to stakeholders that the qualification system is robust and that qualifications are valid. It sets the expectations and operating context for stakeholders. It needs to be designed from the outset to maximise efficiency and agility as well as providing the new actors (NZIST and the WDCs) with the right incentives to collaborate and ensure high quality outcomes for learners and employers.
11. You have already endorsed the interim approach to undertaking External Evaluation and Reviews (EERs) for the NZIST subsidiaries. We have previously signalled that the current EER process needs to be reviewed to ensure that it is appropriate for the new entities (NZIST and the WDCs). We intend to start this work next year, in partnership with these organisations.

#### **... and enabled by changes in the NZQF**

12. The proposed changes to the NZQF also directly support RoVE and the post-Covid economic recovery measures (appendix six). For example, we have previously consulted on a broader qualifications and credentials framework, to enable the listing of other credentials (such as micro-credentials). This proposal was widely supported. Cabinet has previously noted that this proposal would require further legislative amendments and we would like to progress this work.
13. We have now revised the level descriptors (which describe the level of knowledge and skills expected at each level of the NZQF) to incorporate strengthened transferable skills (communication, collaboration and critical thinking) and to explicitly include applied skills and knowledge (to better reflect and advance vocational education).
14. We would now like to discuss the number of levels on the framework with you. The majority of established qualification frameworks globally tend to have eight levels, and such a move here could strengthen the framework and make it easier for end users to understand and navigate.

#### **This work will impact on NZQA's systems and processes**

15. NZQA's core education organisation and qualification management systems need to be changed to reflect and support the roles and functions of the WDCs and NZIST (appendix five).
16. The roles and functions of these new organisations are also an opportunity to consider the evaluative quality assurance framework (as indicated above) and the associated business processes.

#### **Next steps**

17. If you consider that the proposals support your aims for the vocational education system, we will engage with the sector (particularly NZIST and the WDC design groups), industry and other key stakeholders to refine the proposals prior to public consultation. As part of this next stage, we will continue to work closely with the Ministry and TEC. We would anticipate six weeks public consultation from August 2020. Some of the proposals could require further legislative change, whilst others could, if supported, be realised through NZQA rule changes later this year.

## Recommendations

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18. It is recommended that you:
- a. **note** the contents of this paper
  - b. **agree** to releasing this paper when we have finalised the proposal for public engagement and consultation.



**Dr Grant Klinkum**  
Chief Executive  
24 June 2020



**Hon Chris Hipkins**  
Minister of Education

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Agree  disagree