

# Right touch, right size regulation | Quality assurance with purpose

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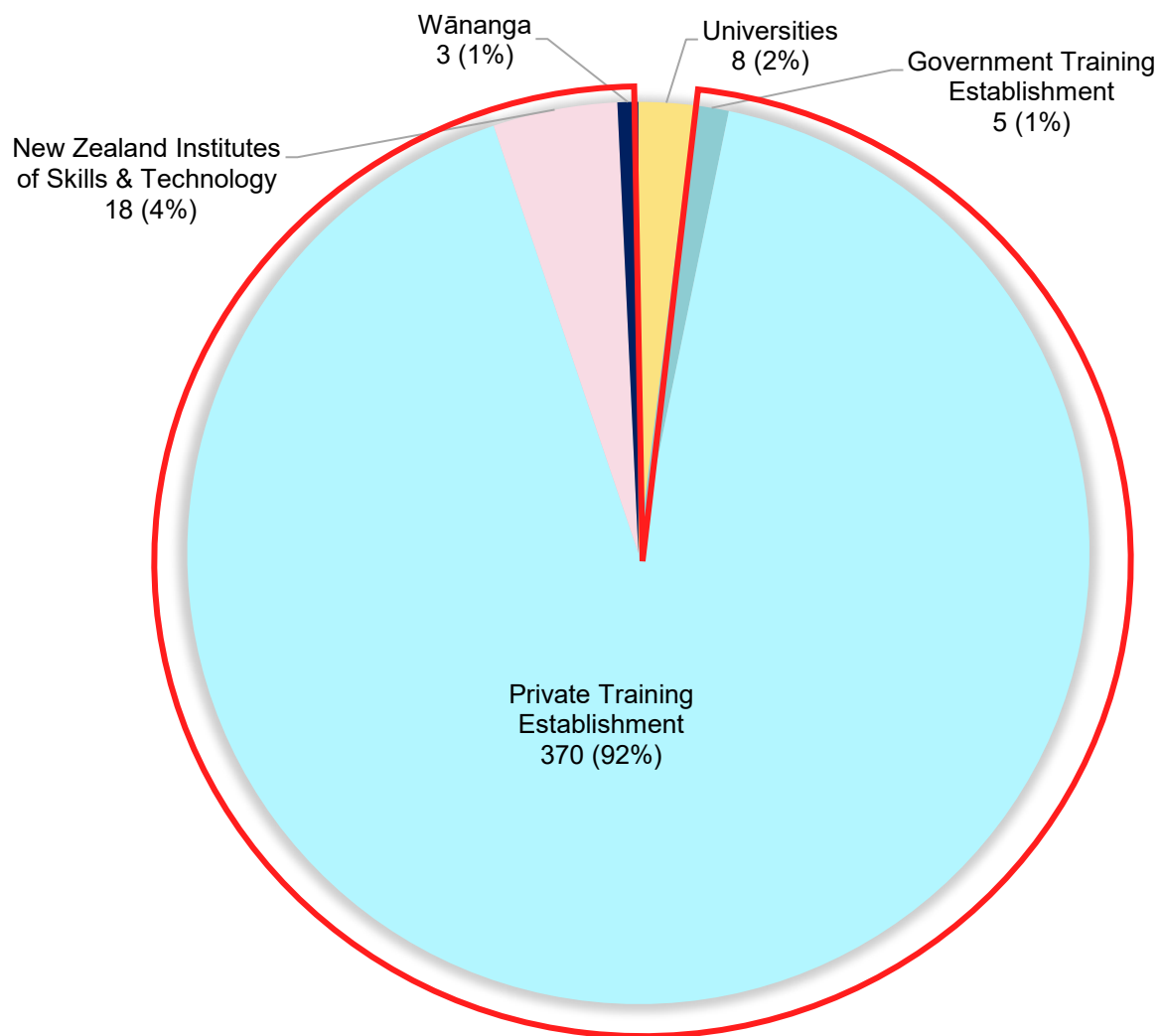
Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

# Today's contents

- New Zealand's education in numbers
- Right touch, right size regulation
- NZQA's regulatory framework
- Quality assurance with purpose
  - Aviation and pilot training
  - Construction
  - Pacific Qualifications Framework

# **New Zealand's Education in Numbers**





(as at 31 June 2025)

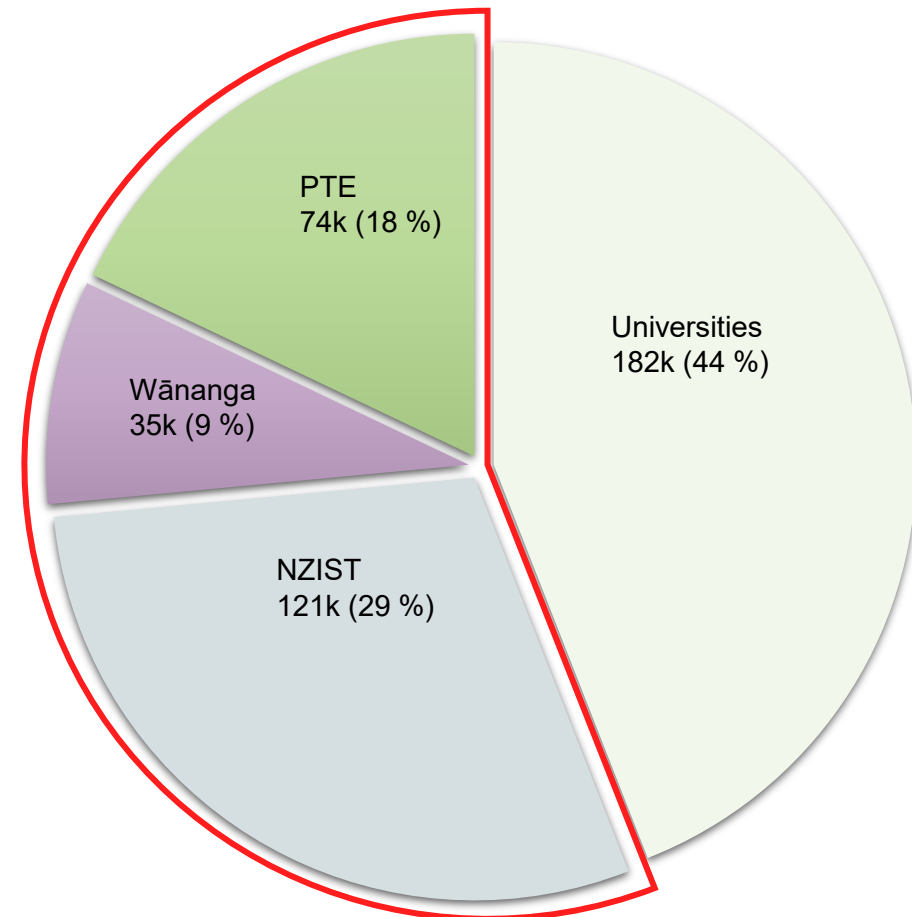
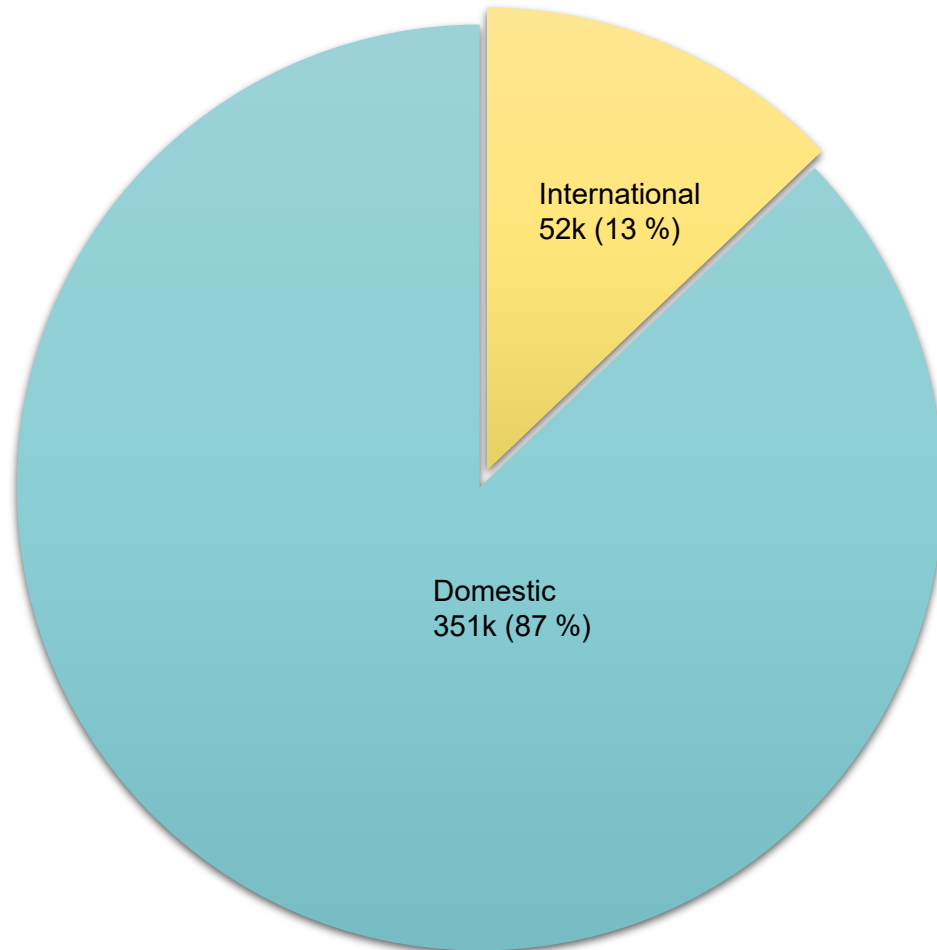


# Tertiary education learner enrolments

Page 5



Learner enrolment numbers in 2024  
Total of over 400,000 learners enrolled in tertiary education providers



(Data source: 2024 enrolment numbers - [Education Count - tertiary participation](#))

# **Right touch, right size regulation**





# NZQA is a regulator responsible for:

- Quality assurance matters in the tertiary and vocational education and training (except universities)
- Maintaining the ***New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework*** and the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards
- Ensuring that New Zealand's tertiary and vocational qualifications maintain international comparability
- Maintaining effective liaison with overseas bodies to recognise overseas qualifications in New Zealand and to achieve overseas recognition of New Zealand qualifications

## We do this by:

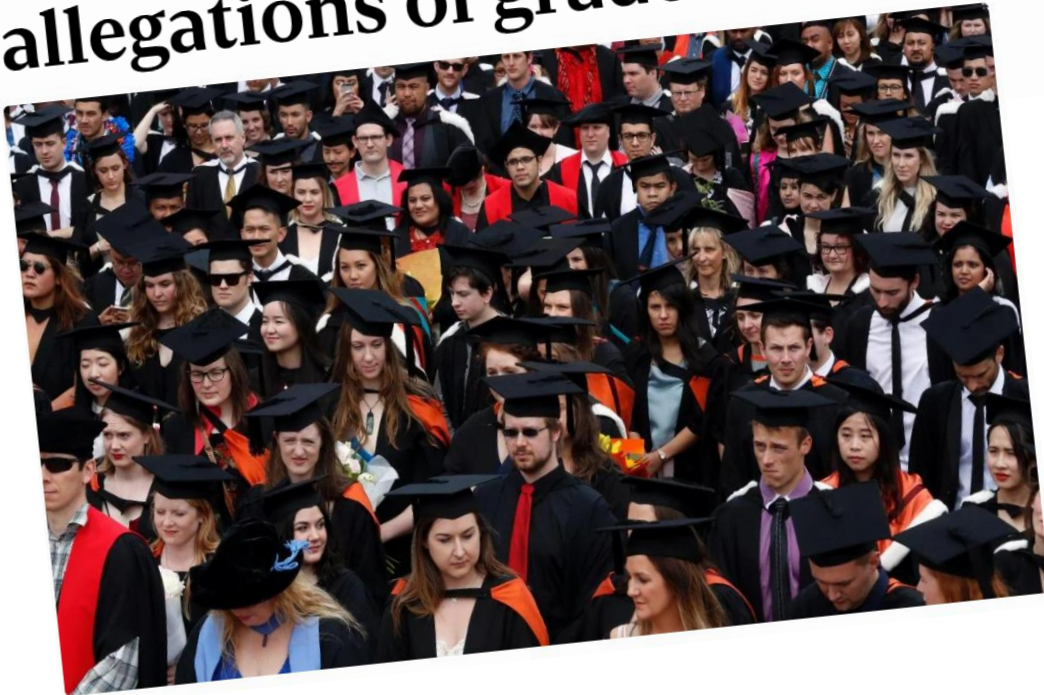
- Registering private training establishments
- Approving qualifications, programmes, micro-credentials and standards
- Quality assuring the provision of education and training
- Reviewing and updating our National Qualifications Framework (NZQCF)
- Liaising with overseas recognition bodies



# How do we regulate?

- Rules, norms and sanctions (regulation) shapes the lives of everyday New Zealanders through rules, norms and sanctions
- In our case – *education businesses and organisations, learners and communities*
- Good regulation protects rights and interests – on clear, fair and efficient terms
- **BUT** regulation can also impose costs, limit freedoms, stifle innovation and have unintended consequences...

## NZQA calls for whistleblowers on allegations of grade manipulation

[Copy Link](#)

## Australia's NUHEPs: shonks and crooks – or an invaluable cradle of innovation?

# Crackdown on dodgy education providers leads to fewer international students

# **NZQA's regulatory framework**



✓ We want our regulation to be applied at the right time and with the right touch, balancing the rules with learner and provider needs.

✓ We do this by using our three regulatory principles to guide our regulatory approach and decisions.

✓ They help us to act with purpose, focus and flexibility.

## Regulatory principles



### Impact-led

We focus on outcomes that matter

We apply this principle when we design new rules, evaluate qualifications, or assess whether an intervention is needed.

## What we do:

- We use regulation to help create better outcomes.
- We define the learner, provider or system outcomes we aim to improve before we regulate.
- We share insights and examples of innovative practice to help others lift performance and improve outcomes.
- We work with learners, whānau, iwi, Māori, providers and employers to understand their needs.
- We monitor the effects of our actions and adjust if they create unnecessary burdens or unintended consequences.

## What we consider as we design regulatory levers and make decisions:

- Is this regulation improving things for learners and providers?
- Are the benefits worth the compliance costs?
- Could another approach work better?
- Is this the right time to intervene, or is the provider already improving on their own?
- Have we considered meaningful consultation at the right level to make informed decisions?



### Anticipatory

We spot trends, risks and warning signs early and support others to respond in time.

We apply this principle when early indicators like declining assessment quality or learner complaints suggest issues may arise.

- We use data and evidence to identify emerging risks and areas of concern.
- We share our insights so providers can act early.
- We use tools like our risk framework and classification system to guide decisions.
- We work with other agencies using tools like MOU's to share intelligence and coordinate responses.

- Are there signs of a potential problem we can act on now?
- How can we help others prevent issues before they escalate?
- Are we being proactive or reactive?
- Are we seeing early signs of pressure that could result in harm?



### Adaptable

We adjust our actions based on risk, performance and changes in the environment.

We apply this principle when a provider's track record shows they can self-correct or when innovation calls for flexibility. We also use it when working with new or at-risk providers who may need more support or scrutiny.

- We assess readiness, capability and risk before deciding how to act.
- We give high-performing providers the space to innovate, only stepping in where needed.
- We embed Te Ao Māori perspectives.
- We review and improve our approaches based on what works.

- Does this situation call for a light touch or strong oversight?
- Are we supporting improvement or creating red tape?
- Are we keeping up with change?
- Is this a case where the standard approach won't work?
- Can we adjust our response to reflect the provider's performance and risk profile?



## Our Foundation

We keep our approach **simple, fair, equitable, clear, consistent, efficient, effective and proportionate.**



# Redesigning the quality assurance framework

The current evaluative quality assurance framework (**EQAF**) is over 16 years old:

- was initially based on two processes - entry controls, and external evaluation and review (every 4 years)
- additional activities have been added over time to account for qualification system changes and to respond to risks and issues
- the tertiary and vocational education sectors move very quickly (think industry needs, new markets, or global pandemic) and the 4-year review timeframe has meant our regulatory findings have fallen behind actual practice

# Productivity Commission recommendations

2017

**NZQA's quality assurance system for the tertiary education system should perform three main functions:**

- ensuring *all* providers meet acceptable standards
- *risk-based monitoring* of providers to confirm they do not breach acceptable standards, and
- ensuring providers have their own processes to assess and improve performance for their learners.

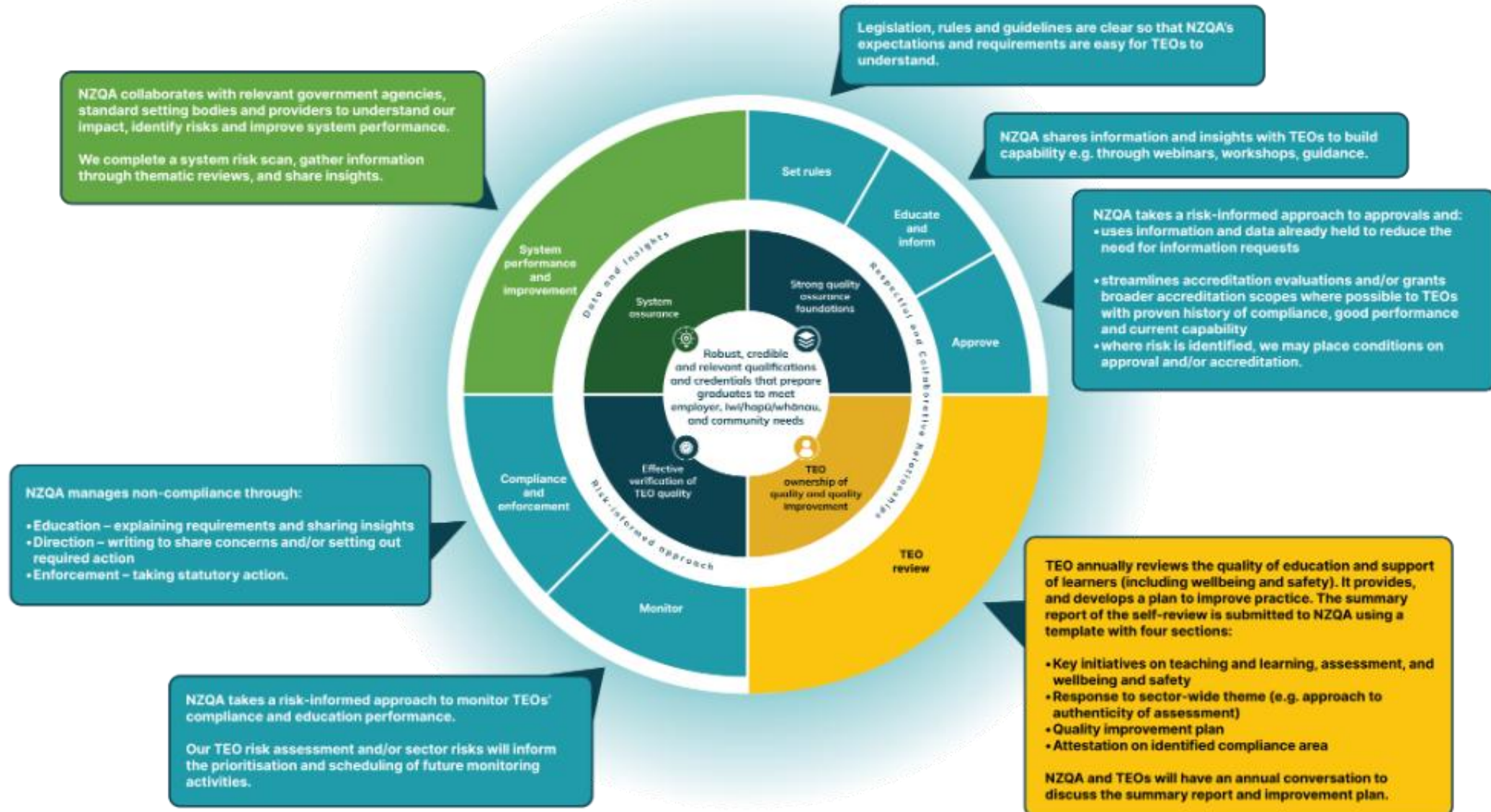


New models of  
tertiary education

Issue paper  
February 2015



# Integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF)







# Right touch, right size regulation

**'Virtue means doing the right thing, in relation to the right person, at the right time, to the right extent, in the right manner, and for the right purpose...'**

Aristotle

# **Quality assurance with purpose**



# Example: Aviation and pilot training

Working with other regulators in the system (eg. Civil Aviation Authority, Ministry of Transport)

## **Regulatory intervention by NZQA in one provider currently (July 2025)**

- Improve quality management systems
- Improve learner ratios
- Individual training plans for learners
- No new enrolments

***Aviation Action Plan*** (September 2025)



# Example: Construction

**Two providers with statutory conditions imposed by NZQA currently (April and Nov 2025)**

Regulatory interventions, such as:

- No more enrolments until confidence in assessment improves
- External verification of assessments (re-assessments)
- Appointing a moderation partner
- Transferring learners to be taught out

## ***VET reforms***

- Work-based learning may be offered by any provider that meets quality and funding requirements
- New ISBs will set training standards, endorse programmes and moderate assessments from 2026
- Work-based learning divisions can also apply to transition from the ISBs to PTEs to deliver training (with regulatory approval - NZQA and TEC)



# Example: Pacific Qualifications Framework



**Last week, referencing reports for 10 national qualifications frameworks across the Pacific endorsed for approval**

- Qualifications frameworks across the region are reviewed regularly as fit-for-purpose
- Opportunities for improvement in design and operation of quality assurance activities
- Pacific learners know their qualifications recognised in one Pacific country will be recognised by regulators and employers in other countries
- For New Zealand, ***referenced against the NZQCF***

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Kia ora | vinaka vaka levu | fa'afetai | malo 'aupito | thank you



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