

NEW ZEALAND'S VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	1
THE NEW ZEALAND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM	2
TERTIARY EDUCATION	4
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	4
<i>New Zealand's System of Vocational Pathways</i>	5
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR	6
DESIGN AND DELIVERY	8
NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF SKILLS AND TECHNOLOGY (TE PŪKENGA).....	8
PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS (PTE).....	8
WĀNANGA	8
CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE	8
WORKFORCE PLANNING	9
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS	9
POLICY AND COORDINATION	10
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.....	10
MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND EMPLOYMENT	10
REGIONAL SKILLS LEADERSHIP GROUPS	10
FUNDING	11
TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION (TEC).....	11
INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTIONS.....	11
REGULATION	12
THE NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (NZQA).....	12
THE NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK	13
INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION.....	14
QUALITY ASSURANCE	15

THE NEW ZEALAND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM



New Zealand has a highly integrated vocational education system – involving public and private providers and employers. Blended, online, off-job and on-job learning models are used flexibly.

Education is a critical factor in developing the skills and innovation required for New Zealand to compete globally, and it plays a significant role in New Zealand's relationships internationally, including as a major export earner.

New Zealand's education system strives to balance academic achievements with skills to produce creative, flexible thinkers who are competent at both practical and theoretical levels.

Education in New Zealand aims to be life-long and learner-centred. It is focused on supporting students to problem-solve, process information, work with others, create and innovate. Each student can develop their potential along a number of possible pathways, academic and/or vocational, and move seamlessly from one to the other. It follows a student-centred pathway that provides continuous learning progression and choice, so that students progress every year. Their learning at one level sets the foundation for the next steps along a chosen pathway.

New Zealand's education system has three levels – early childhood education, school education, and vocational/tertiary education – across which students can follow a variety of flexible pathways. Our system is designed to recognise different abilities, religious beliefs, ethnic groups, income levels, ideas about teaching and learning, and allows education providers to develop their own cultures and distinctive contributions.

National policies and frameworks for regulation and guidance, requirements and funding arrangements are set by central government and administered through its agencies. Administrative authority for most education service provision is devolved to education institutions, which are generally governed by individual Boards or Councils.

New Zealand operates external quality assurance systems which ensure consistent, high-quality education across all levels of the education system, both public and private. These are regulated by a number of key Government agencies.

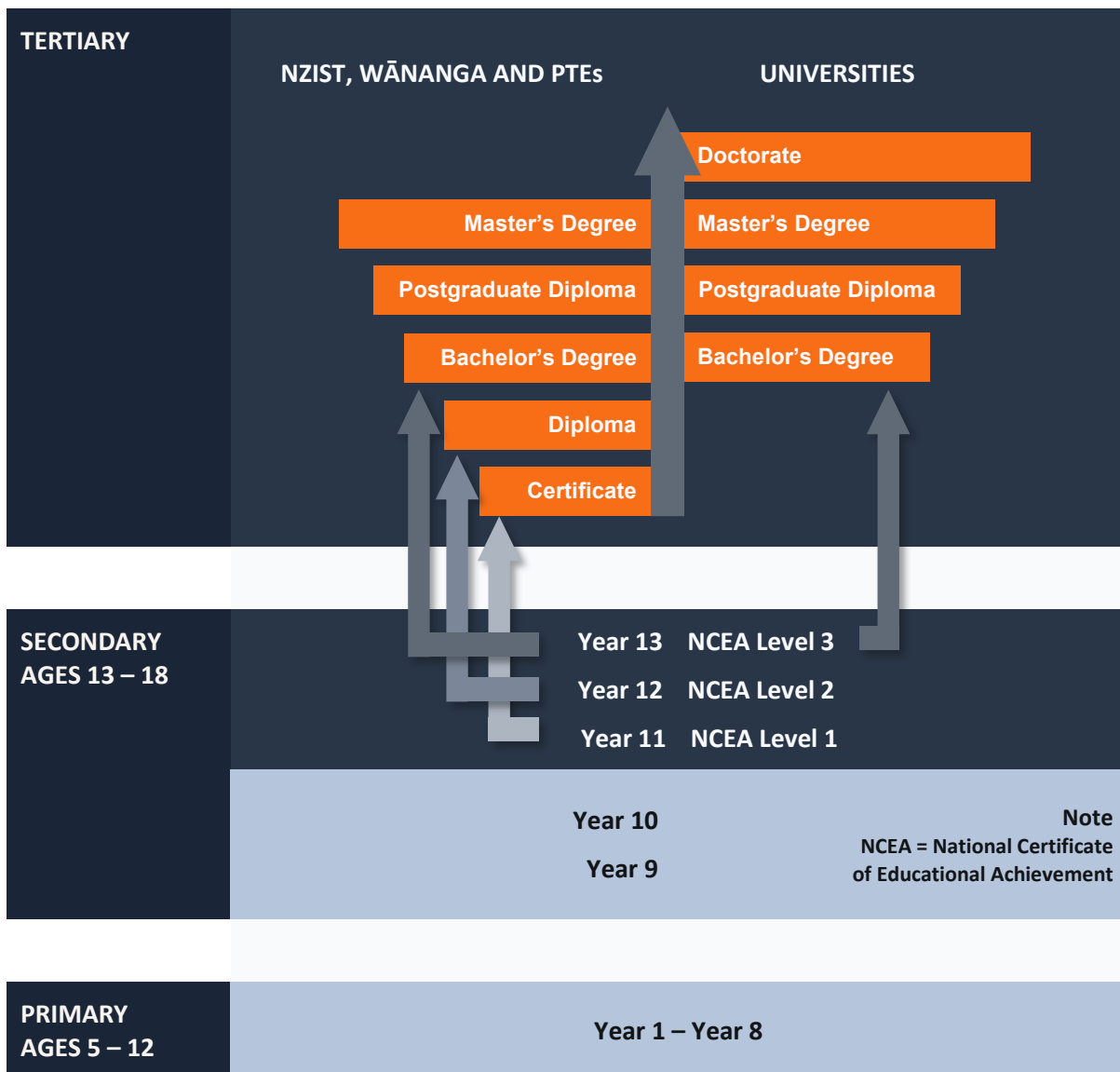


Figure 1: The New Zealand Education System showing Academic and Vocational Pathways

TERTIARY EDUCATION



Tertiary education includes all post-secondary education including higher and vocational education. It is delivered by both state and privately-owned institutions, and by employers through the industry training and apprenticeship system.

Tertiary education providers offer courses which range from transition (school to work) programmes, through to postgraduate study and research.

Government part-subsidises tertiary providers. Students contribute about 30 per cent of the cost of their courses through fees. New Zealand students can take out a student loan from the government to pay for their courses until they are earning.

The Government states its priorities for tertiary education in its Tertiary Education Strategy, which sets out the Government's long-term strategic direction for tertiary education.

The current strategy highlights the need to focus on world class inclusive public education that is trusted and sustainable internationally. The strategy focuses on ensuring New Zealand has an accessible and learner centred tertiary education system, with barrier free access, quality teaching and leadership, and that is trusted by learners, industry, and community.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



Vocational Education and Training (VET) begins at school and with schools' arrangements with tertiary providers. Tertiary VET is currently offered across the country at New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (Te Pūkenga), Wānanga, Private Training Establishments (PTEs) and in the workplace.

Some programmes are also available in government training establishments and several universities.

At the upper secondary school level students can follow a system of [vocational pathways](#) connected to the main secondary school qualifications, and access a range of transition models to begin to specialise in vocational learning or may integrate some vocational courses into a more general programmes.

New Zealand's System of Vocational Pathways



Social & Community Services

Ratonga Pāpori,
Ratonga Hapori



Construction & Infrastructure

Te Mahi Hanga me te
Pūtoi Hanganga



Manufacturing & Technology

Te Whakanao me te
Hangarau



Primary Industries (Food & Fibre)

Ahumahi
Matua



Service Industries

Ahumahi
Ratonga



Creative Industries

Ahumahi
Auaha

While such activity is growing, vocational pathways and vocational options face deep perception and parity of esteem issues. They are too often presented as 'second choice' options within schools and towards young people, or believed to be that by their influencers.

Education bodies have worked to address these issues through research and public relations efforts highlighting the success and strong outcomes for young people following the 'earn and learn' model. National campaigns such as Got a Trade? Got It Made! have been important to this strategy.

In late 2019, the Government announced a package of interventions designed to improve the profile, perception, and participation in vocational education. This includes a national promotional campaign, resourcing to support events bringing together schools and employers, and regionally-based brokerage services between local schools and employers.

This was followed by the Government's launch of the Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund (TTAF) in July 2020. The TTAF covers all fees for learners and employers, making apprenticeships free in New Zealand. While initially slated to end in 2022, its success in encouraging apprenticeship enrolments has led to its extension until the end of 2023.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR

New Zealand's vocational education system is shaped by a number of bodies responsible for five key roles. These roles are:

- **DESIGN AND DELIVERY:** To develop and provide vocational educational courses for study throughout New Zealand.
- **WORKFORCE PLANNING:** To determine the skills needs of employers and industries.
- **POLICY AND COORDINATION:** To set the education system, and national and regional skills priorities for New Zealand.
- **FUNDING:** To support investment in vocational education, informed by industry need and national and regional skill priorities.
- **REGULATION:** To ensure the quality of New Zealand qualifications, programmes, and providers.

Together, the successful implementation of these roles ensures the quality of vocational education in New Zealand.



Figure 2: Key Roles in New Zealand's Vocational Education System

A number of bodies are responsible for these roles. Their relationships are summarised in the diagram below, followed by explanations of their specific functions.

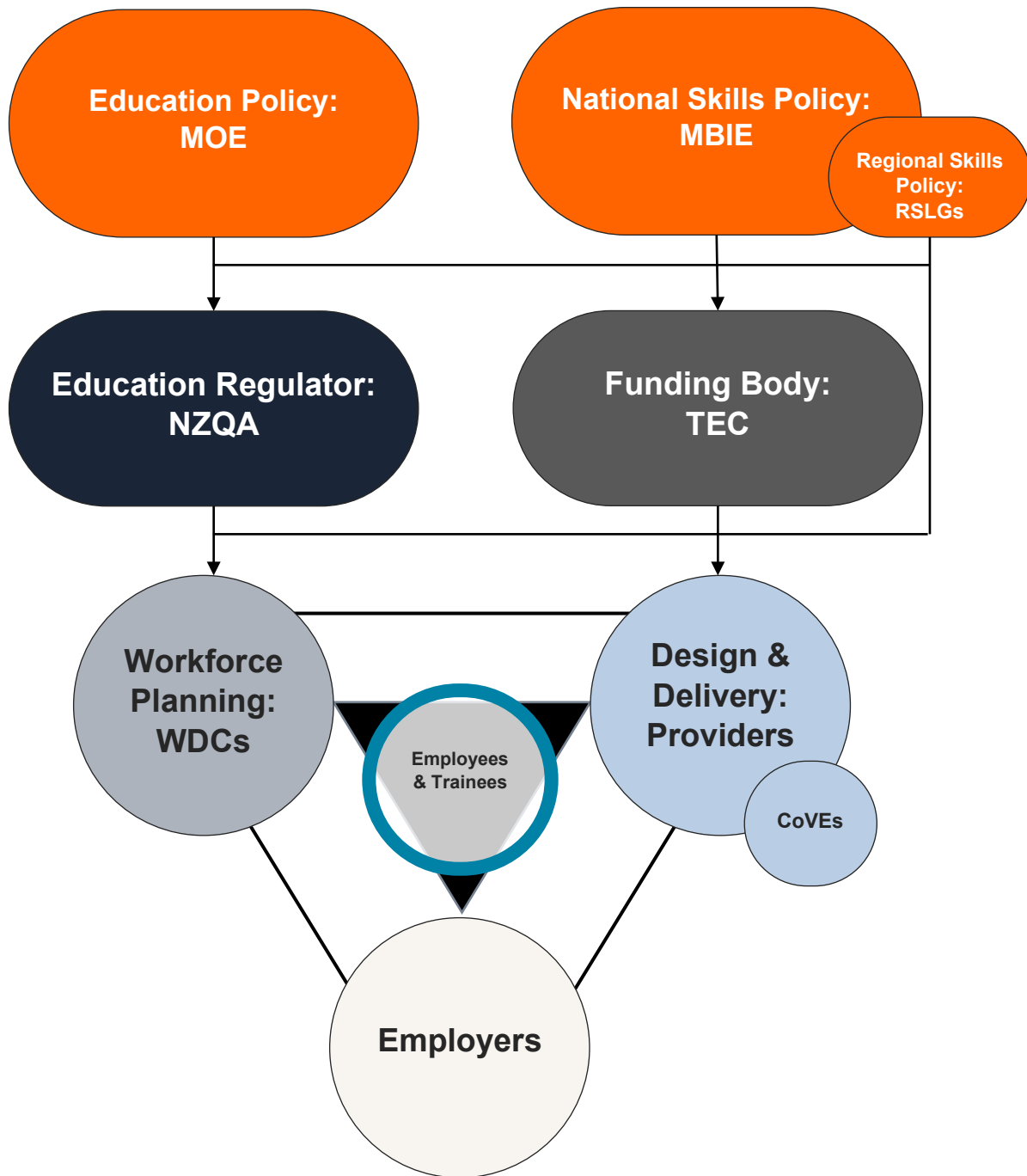


Figure 3: Stakeholder interactions in New Zealand's Vocational Education model.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY

NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF SKILLS AND TECHNOLOGY (TE PŪKENGA/NZIST)

New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (Te Pūkenga) is New Zealand's largest tertiary education provider, offering courses and training throughout the country. The state-owned institution amalgamated and replaced various institutes of technology, polytechnics, and industry training organisations into one national body.

NZIST provides professional and vocational education and training on a wide range of subjects from introductory studies through to full degree programmes. Programmes are at all levels: community interest courses, English language training, foundation programmes, certificates, diplomas, degrees and some postgraduate qualifications. The most common qualifications NZIST awards are certificates and diplomas, encouraging students to build from lower qualifications to higher ones. Courses emphasise practical experience and application to work situations such as studios, workshops, laboratories, hospitals and other workplaces.

PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS (PTEs)

Many of New Zealand's Private Training Establishments (PTEs) offer specific vocational niches at certificate and diploma level for occupations. For example, travel and tourism, design, computer training in certificate, diploma programmes and English language learning, and more. There are over 400 registered Private Training Establishments (PTEs), including registered private English language schools, but less than 200 of these receive Government training or tuition subsidies.

WĀNANGA

Aotearoa/New Zealand also has three indigenous institutions, Wānanga, which offer tertiary education in and through a Māori worldview. Two of the Wānanga are higher education and research-focused, but the third and largest, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, has its origins in vocational education and trades training. It offers substantial vocational provision.

CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Te Pūkenga and Wānanga also host Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). CoVEs are sector-focused and aim to be on the front line of innovation for vocational education in their sectors. They will support the growth of excellent vocational education with a focus on teaching, learning and research and the development and sharing of high-quality curriculum and programme design. Two are being piloted over the next two years, for the construction and primary sectors.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS (WDCs)



OHU MAHI
Workforce
Development
Councils

There are six WDCs in New Zealand. The WDCs are responsible for setting standards, developing qualifications and credentials and developing training packages.

The WDCs are Crown bodies but industry governed. A key role for them is to provide investment advice to TEC on the balance of training to meet the skills need of their industries, and TEC must have regard to this advice.

The six WDCs are arranged largely in parallel to the system of six vocational pathways, which are used by secondary schools to help navigate between educational choices and employment and study possibilities. They support coherent programme design and allow employers to recognise when a student has strengths and achievements in areas relating to their sectors or recommended for their sectors.

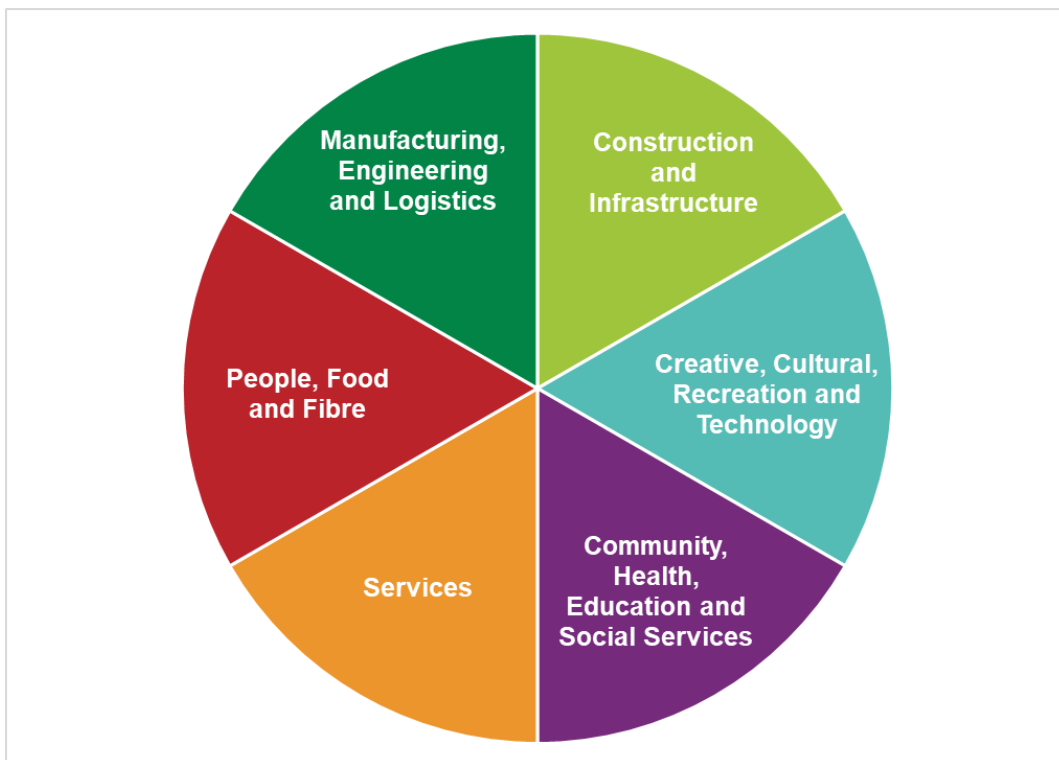


Figure 4: Industry groupings for the Workforce Development Councils (WDCs).

POLICY AND COORDINATION

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



The Ministry of Education has a system stewardship role and is responsible for national education policy

It holds responsibility for leading the development of education policy, including for vocational education and training. It ensures that the policy and funding settings are appropriate and fit for purpose.

MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND EMPLOYMENT



The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment is responsible for national skills policy in New Zealand.

Its key document is the Employment Strategy. This presents the Government's vision for the labour market and the changes it is implementing to improve employment outcomes for all New Zealanders. The Employment Strategy provides direction to TEC on funding priorities for education.

REGIONAL SKILLS LEADERSHIP GROUPS



There are 15 Regional Skills Leadership Groups that provide regional skills advice throughout the country by setting out regional skills-need priorities.

These independent advisory groups identify and support better ways of meeting future regional skills and workforce needs across Aotearoa.

Their role is to develop regionally-based skills plans using regional economic discussions and data, and facilitate dialogue between the education system and employers. The information developed by these groups also supports the work of Workforce Development Councils and the Tertiary Education Commission to inform them of skills and training investments.

FUNDING

TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION (TEC)



TEC is the Government funding body for all formal tertiary education in New Zealand, from foundation level and community education, vocational education and training and higher education.

TEC's Board of Commissioners allocates tuition and training subsidies based on agreed investment plans, submitted by public and private tertiary education institutions and organisations every two to three years. Overall allocations are managed through the Government's Budget process and funding instructions to the TEC from the Minister of Education.

TEC also administers a range of other purpose-based training funds, and is also now the Government's official careers agency, providing careers information, advice and guidance for an audience "from seven [years of age] to 70".

Tuition and Training subsidies partially fund post-school education. Generally speaking, for provider-based education, TEC funds 70 percent of the provision and the remaining 30 percent is sought from students, who also have access to student support through loans and allowance schemes.

INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTIONS

In the industry training sector, training subsidy rates are lower, reflecting the different cost structures of workplace-based training. However, 30 percent of industry training must be funded through industry cash contributions. This financial contribution is additional to the time and in-kind contributions by employers offering on-job training. It also provides a critical check and balance for Government that industry training is being supported by its industry.

FEES FREE

Since 2018, the New Zealand Government has also offered the Fees Free programme to incentivise enrolment in tertiary education. For provider-based education, this generally covers learners' course costs for the first year of study. For industry training, this is extended to cover training and assessment costs for both the learner and employer for the first two years of the training programme.

REGULATION

THE NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (NZQA)



NZQA's role in the education sector is to ensure that New Zealand qualifications are regarded as credible and robust, nationally and internationally, in order to help learners succeed in their chosen endeavours and to contribute to New Zealand society.

NZQA's services span the secondary and tertiary education sectors. NZQA administers the NCEAs for secondary school students and is responsible for the quality assurance of non-university tertiary training providers. NZQA's priority is to support a diverse range of clients by providing effective and efficient services, within a statutory mandate, that meet specific needs.

Key responsibilities include services to:

- Administer the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF), which is the definitive source for accurate information about all quality assured qualifications, covering senior secondary and tertiary education qualifications, and including all qualifications open to international students.
- Manage the external assessment of secondary school students and moderate secondary schools' internal assessment activities and processes.
- Quality assure non-university tertiary education organisations and their courses, and moderate assessment activities and processes for national qualifications for NZQA-owned unit standards.
- Maintain effective liaison with overseas certifying and validating bodies to recognise overseas educational and vocational qualifications in New Zealand and achieve recognition of New Zealand qualifications overseas.
- Act as a standard-setting body for some specified unit standards.

THE NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK



The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) has 10 qualification levels to meet a range of learners' needs. Levels are based on complexity, with level one the least complex and level 10 the most complex.

The level descriptors are broadly defined in terms of what a graduate is expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.

- **Levels one to three** are broadly comparable to senior secondary education. For example, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and basic trades training.
- **Levels four to six** generally cover advanced trades as well as technical and business qualifications.
- **Levels seven to 10** generally cover degrees, graduate, and postgraduate qualifications. There are no fixed divisions between the types of courses offered by different types of provider.

LEVEL	NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATION TYPES
10	Doctoral Degree
9	Master's Degree
8	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelor Honours Degree
7	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Diplomas and Certificates
6	Diplomas
5	
4	Certificates
3	
2	
1	

Figure 5: New Zealand Qualification Framework Levels

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

New Zealand qualifications are recognised globally, including by the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. New Zealand's qualification system is well regarded internationally, with New Zealand part of international recognition agreements, and contributing to the ASEAN Qualification Referencing project.

- New Zealand has signed agreements with groups of European and Asia-Pacific countries, committing to recognising each other's qualifications. These agreements are legal frameworks created to make it easier and more efficient for countries to understand and recognise (give credit for) each other's higher education qualifications and periods of study. Agreements include the Lisbon Recognition Convention with Europe, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention (APRC) with Asia-Pacific countries¹.
- The Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (2000) between Australia and New Zealand has declared mutual recognition of vocational education and training qualifications.
- New Zealand's **single qualification framework** – the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) - ensures a nation-wide consistency and cohesiveness, while providing students with the flexibility to move between academia and vocational pathways with ease.

Courses and qualifications are shaped by industry and employers to ensure their relevance.

NZQA liaises with overseas certifying and validating bodies to recognise overseas educational and vocational qualifications in New Zealand and achieve recognition of New Zealand qualifications overseas.

New Zealand Bachelor's Degrees are recognised for enrolment in postgraduate programmes at universities throughout the world, subject to the normal grade and subject specialisation requirements.

The Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (2000) between Australia and New Zealand has declared mutual recognition of vocational education and training qualifications.

New Zealand is a member of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. This means that New Zealand qualifications are more easily recognised in each of the 50 Lisbon convention countries. The Lisbon Recognition Convention is recognised as setting international best practice for assessing and comparing qualifications from around the world. Along with New Zealand, signatories to the Lisbon Recognition Convention include 50 European countries, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Israel and Kazakhstan.

There is strong interest from other nations in our education system. New Zealanders work internationally to share, advise and give practical help to those nations wishing to develop their education systems. This work ranges from teaching and curriculum development to national education strategies, building system capability and capacity, implementing reforms or establishing new institutions and projects.

New Zealand fosters international education partnerships, delivering customised solutions that contribute to transforming foreign economies and businesses. International interest stems both from our systems, for example evaluative quality assurance, workplace assessment and school to work transitions.

¹ For full details on international recognition of New Zealand qualifications see the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/international/recognition-arrangements/>

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The New Zealand government has processes to ensure the quality of education as it closely monitors the quality of learning outcomes and the systems and processes that education organisations use to achieve learning outcomes. WDCs establish and maintain systems for managing consistency of assessment in on and off job situations, and these processes are in turn externally quality assured by NZQA.

As well as quality assurance of learning and assessment, all tertiary organisations, excluding universities, are subject to evaluative quality assurance processes involving self-assessment and regular external evaluation by NZQA.

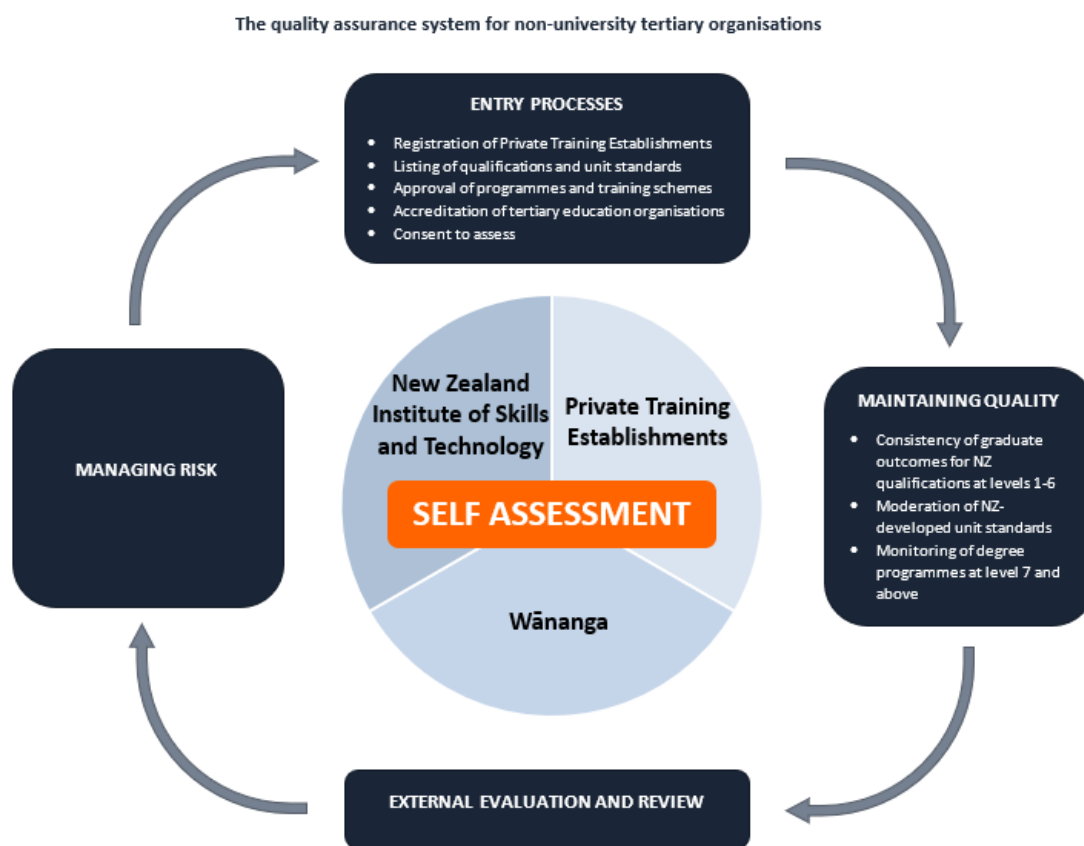


Figure 6: The quality assurance system for non-university tertiary education organisations.

ABOUT SKILLS CONSULTING GROUP

Skills Consulting Group is a full-service consultancy working with businesses, industry bodies and governmental agencies to build success by upskilling their workforce. It's based in New Zealand but works all over the globe.

The businesses within Skills Consulting Group are experts in workplace capability, people development and employee wellbeing. Its brands include: Skills, IMNZ, E-tec, David Forman, SoftEd and Ignite. Through Skills Consulting Group's network of specialist services and brands, it works with businesses, non-profits and Government departments to tailor solutions that meet the unique needs of their organisation and people.

Find out how we can help unleash the potential within your organisation.

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