

Quality assurance guidelines for the overseas delivery and awarding of approved courses and registered qualifications

**Notes on the preparation and evaluation of applications**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. These notes have been prepared to assist staff and evaluators of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and its delegated agents, ITP Quality and CEAC, as they consider applications for approval and/or accreditation involving overseas delivery. These notes and the accompanying guidelines [“Guidelines for the application of Gazetted Course Approval and Accreditation Criteria to proposals for overseas delivery”] and attachments are a working draft to be piloted and reviewed, and will be available to applicants.
- 1.2. The notes and the accompanying guidelines consolidate the practices of the three quality assurance bodies in implementing the “Gazetted Criteria” for course approval and accreditation.

**2. Background**

- 2.1. Accreditation to offer any course or qualification approved or registered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority [or its delegated agents, ITP Quality and CEAC] is site-specific<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2. Any overseas delivery or awarding of an approved course or registered qualification, or any part thereof, either as a stand-alone or collaborative venture, requires separate, site-specific accreditation.
- 2.3. The overseas delivery and/or awarding of approved courses or registered qualifications will be monitored, if required, and audited by the

---

<sup>1</sup> This is either in terms of specific accreditations or, for some institutions, in terms of New Zealand sites specified in the institution’s approved quality management system.

Qualifications Authority<sup>2</sup>. Auditing of overseas delivery will usually take place as part of the normal audit cycle of the provider.

- 2.4. The Qualifications Authority is concerned for the reputation of New Zealand educational courses and qualifications to be maintained, regardless of whether they are delivered in New Zealand or overseas.
- 2.5. All stakeholders in the New Zealand qualifications system need assurance that specific approved courses and registered qualifications are equivalent no matter where they are delivered or where they are assessed.
- 2.6. Students, whether they are in New Zealand or overseas, also need assurance that the approved courses meet appropriate standards in terms of their design and delivery.
- 2.7. The Qualifications Authority believes that it has a responsibility to support the interests of host countries by ensuring that the delivery or awarding of approved courses and registered qualifications is acceptable to the relevant authorities in the host country.
- 2.8. The Qualifications Authority also considers that in many circumstances a visible engagement by providers with New Zealand and host country quality assurance agencies and processes supports the development of overseas education arrangements.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1. Quality Assurance of overseas delivery and/or awarding of approved courses or registered qualifications will cover:
  - overseas delivery of approved courses concurrently delivered in New Zealand;
  - overseas delivery of components of approved courses;
  - overseas delivery of required components or support courses for New Zealand distance or mixed media education programmes;
  - overseas delivery of courses not delivered in New Zealand but seeking approval and overseas accreditation for other reasons;
  - assessment against unit standards to learners assessed overseas in the context of an approved course; and

---

<sup>2</sup> Future references in this paper to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority are intended to be inclusive of the agencies carrying out quality assurance activities under delegation, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality and Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee.

- the awarding of registered qualifications to learners assessed overseas.

by:

- Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics;
- Colleges of Education;
- Wananga;
- NZQA-registered Private Training Establishments; and
- New Zealand Government Training Establishments.

3.2. Overseas delivery covers a range of organisational arrangements including (but not limited to):

- Delivery or assessment as part of a collaborative venture with another educational institution;
- Delivery or assessment as part of a collaborative venture (or under contract to) an organisation other than an educational institution;
- Independent delivery or assessment through a formally established branch/campus in another country; and
- Independent delivery or assessment in rented or leased premises.

3.3. Overseas delivery does not cover distance or internet-based education courses that have no compulsory attendance requirements at any overseas support programme.

3.4. There are currently no procedures to allow the direct accreditation of overseas organisations to offer New Zealand approved courses or qualifications. Such organisations would need to be in partnership with a New Zealand tertiary education institution or private training establishment.

#### **4. Accreditation requirements for course delivery**

4.1. Accreditation for overseas delivery is subject to the “Gazetted Criteria” for course approval and accreditation and the associated requirements specified in the Qualifications Authority publications “Course approval and accreditation 2003” and “Approval and accreditation of courses leading to degrees and related qualifications 2003”.

4.2. These publications indicate the need for a provider to establish a formal memorandum of agreement with any overseas partner. Revised requirements for the coverage expected of memoranda of understanding or agreement have recently been issued. These are detailed in Attachment Two to the Guidelines.

- 4.3. Selected aspects of any earlier course approval and accreditation need to be reviewed and confirmed during this process to ensure that the course as delivered is relevant to the needs of students in the host country.
- 4.4. The Guidelines give guidance on issues to be considered in interpreting the “Gazetted Criteria” when evaluating applications for accreditation to deliver a course overseas.

## 5. Accreditation requirements for assessment against unit standards

- 5.1. Applications for National Qualifications Framework accreditation to assess against unit standards should only be considered for overseas delivery if this is as part of an approved course.
- 5.2. Applications for overseas delivery of courses which include unit standards from the National Qualifications Framework need to be endorsed by any relevant Industry Training Organisations or National Standards Bodies for the unit standards included in the scope of accreditation requested.
- 5.3. If this endorsement is not included with the application, these bodies should be approached during the evaluation process.

## 6. Accreditation process

- 6.1. An application may be submitted either
  - a) as part of an initial application for approval and/or accreditation, or
  - b) as part of a proposal for a change to an existing approval and accreditation in order to establish a new delivery site.
- 6.2. In either case, the information provided should be considered in terms of the notes and questions identified in the Guidelines.
- 6.3. Attachment One to the Guidelines indicates how these notes should be related to an application which is submitted following the format of applications for “Approval of Changes to an Approved Course”.
- 6.4. Evaluation should be seen as a two-stage process.
- 6.5. The first stage (**pre-visit evaluation**) should consider all information that can appropriately be provided and considered within New Zealand.
- 6.6. In view of the diversity of possible host countries and infrastructural arrangements for overseas delivery, a definitive list of what can be considered within New Zealand and what should be considered in the host country has not been established. This should be a matter for discussion between the evaluator and the applicant.
- 6.7. Applicants should be encouraged to provide as much information as possible for evaluation before an overseas accreditation visit is made.

This increases the likelihood that the visit will lead to a positive outcome and be a cost-effective investment for the applicant.

- 6.8. This first stage should be completed when the evaluator recommends and gains approval from the appropriate level (GM AAA/Director ITPQ/Exec Director CCEA) for the second stage.
- 6.9. The second stage (**evaluation visit**) will normally involve a visit to the host country to confirm the accuracy of information provided during the first stage of accreditation. In most instances it is expected that the key focus of the visit will be meeting and confirming the support of host country stakeholders and the level of quality assurance of the course and delivery site provided by host country quality assurance authorities.
- 6.10. The timing and nature of this visit will vary according to the information provided to the Authority and its initial evaluation of this. The visit will normally be made by a single evaluator however on occasions more than one may be required.
- 6.11. Where the Qualifications Authority has, or can establish, the support of appropriate host country Quality Assurance Agencies (or in-country representatives of New Zealand agencies), the visit may be made in conjunction with these agencies or delegated to them. AAA, ITPQ and CEAC will co-operate in the identification of appropriate agencies or representatives who could carry out this task.
- 6.12. In exceptional circumstances, the first stage of evaluation may have identified sufficient reasons to recommend that the evaluation visit be waived (see 7.1 below).
- 6.13. It may be considered appropriate, if this is requested by the applicant, for a visit to take place before all local issues are resolved, in which case the purpose of the visit will be to establish any requirements for accreditation in such a way that a further visit would not be necessary.

## **7. Accreditation evaluation visits**

7.1. While a visit to the proposed overseas delivery site will normally be part of the accreditation process, at its discretion the Qualifications Authority may waive the requirement for a site-visit. In assessing the need for a site-visit the Qualifications Authority will take into account factors such as:

- the level of experience of the New Zealand provider in overseas delivery;
- the level of experience of the New Zealand provider in managing multi-site delivery;

- the level of experience of the New Zealand provider in delivering the course;
- the audit history of the provider;
- the level of responsibility (and exposure) of the New Zealand partner in any collaborative venture;
- the level of identification of a venture or course as being of New Zealand origin;
- the nature and status of any sponsor or collaborative venture partner (eg World Bank, MFAT, target country government agency, state controlled education institution);
- the level of experience of any overseas partner in delivering courses in conjunction with New Zealand providers;
- the level of relationship between NZQA (and delegated agencies) and quality assurance agencies in target countries;
- the existence and relevance of any intergovernmental memoranda of cooperation; and
- the level of potential economic and political risk attached to the proposal.

7.2. Evaluation visits should be made by the smallest possible team (frequently an individual) consistent with the ability to provide an effective evaluation.

7.3. Evaluation procedures should acknowledge and make use of local Quality Assurance agencies or processes wherever possible. Attempts should be made to coordinate an accreditation visit to be made in conjunction with a local QA agency if this is possible.

7.4. A provider may nevertheless see a visit as adding value to the initiative by providing a visible signal to the host country of New Zealand's commitment to providing high quality educational programmes.

7.5. The QA agencies will establish a network of experienced evaluators and educators to whom reference can be made in considering applications and the best way to structure visits where necessary.

## **8. Monitoring and audit requirements**

8.1. The Qualifications Authority considers that it will usually be desirable to monitor the overseas delivery or awarding of approved courses or registered qualifications.

8.2. All providers will be required to submit an annual report on the overseas delivery of the course.

- 8.3. Degree courses and others that are subject to external monitoring requirements for delivery in New Zealand will be subject to similar monitoring requirements for the overseas delivery.
- 8.4. Monitoring arrangements for other courses will be established at the conclusion of the evaluation process.
- 8.5. Monitoring requirements may be modified on a case-by-case basis as a result of the initial accreditation process and subject to the involvement or requirements of any relevant overseas accreditation body.
- 8.6. Where courses are delivered in conjunction with an overseas partner, the monitoring process will include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the collaborative arrangements.
- 8.7. Overseas delivery will be subject to quality audits as part of the normal quality audit cycles. The Qualifications Authority also reserves the right to conduct a special purpose audit at an overseas site should it become aware of issues arising in relation to the overseas delivery of a course.
- 8.8. The Qualifications Authority may establish an annual series of regional audit cycles to establish a cost-effective way of conducting audits of all providers operating in a particular country, or group of countries.

## **9. Overseas Accreditation Authorities**

- 9.1. The Qualifications Authority is building relationships with overseas accreditation bodies in order to assist New Zealand providers understand the requirements of these bodies during the first stage of any application and facilitate communications between providers and the appropriate bodies.

## **10. Costs**

- 10.1. Attachment Three provides an indication of likely costs of evaluation and monitoring.

**Guidelines for the application of Gazetted Course Approval and Accreditation Criteria to proposals for overseas delivery**

The Gazetted Criteria for course approval and accreditation apply to any proposal to offer a course overseas.

In evaluating an application for accreditation to deliver an approved course overseas, (or an application for a site extension), the following issues will be considered.

Supporting evidence should be provided where indicated or requested.

<b>1</b>	<b>The adequacy and appropriateness of the title, aims, stated learning outcomes and coherence of the whole course</b>
----------	--

Do the aims, learning outcomes or structure of the course need amendment in order to ensure the course meets the needs and interests of the target audience (students and host country)?

Is it clear where graduates of the course are likely to seek employment or to apply their learning? (This might influence an understanding of their needs.)

Do any changes still enable the course (or resulting qualification) to be recognised as the same as the NZ-delivered course/qualification or do they result in a new course/qualification for which a separate approval is required?

If significant changes are required, have these been documented and processed at the appropriate level (eg institutional Academic Board, NZQA)? (Supporting evidence required.)

<b>2</b>	<b>The adequacy and appropriateness of delivery and learning methods, for all modes of delivery, given the stated learning outcomes</b>
----------	---

Has the delivery methodology been reviewed and adapted where appropriate to respond to the learning styles of target students? Will it remain consistent with the nature of the course?

Has the language of delivery and assessment been identified (and any issues reflected in other aspects of the application)?

<b>3</b>	<b>Assessment: The adequacy of the means of ensuring that assessment procedures are fair, valid, consistent and appropriate, given the stated learning outcomes</b>
----------	---

What changes will be made to the assessment methodology to take account of any cultural issues experienced by students?

How will assessment and moderation processes be managed?

How will the authenticity of student work and security of assessment processes be ensured?

How will assessors and administrators located in host countries be supported to maintain the integrity of the assessment methods?

<b>4</b>	<b>The acceptability of the proposed course to the relevant academic, industrial, professional and other communities, in terms of its stated aims and learning outcomes, nomenclature, content and structure</b>
----------	--

Stakeholders in the host country could include:

- partner institutions;
- local and national professional bodies;
- professional registration bodies; and
- local and national educational authorities.

(Supporting evidence of support or approval will be required where relevant.)

NZ stakeholders in the overseas operations are likely to include:

- The applicant's advisory committees,
- professional registration boards,
- national advisory committees (for national or New Zealand qualifications),
- The Tertiary Education Commission (If the provider has a charter and profile lodged with TEC, do these documents cover the proposed development?),
- Maori (If the proposal includes changes to the course which significantly affect any component of particular interest to Maori, is this supported by the applicant's Maori stakeholders?).

(Supporting evidence will be required where relevant.)

<b>5</b>	<b>The adequacy and appropriateness of the regulations that specify requirements for admission, credit for previous study, recognition of prior learning, course length and structure, integration of practical/work-based components, assessment procedures, and normal progression within a course</b>
----------	--

Amendments may be required to the regulations to enable the course to operate (with particular attention to entry requirements, credit transfer and RPL requirements and progression conditions).

<b>6</b>	<b>The capacity of the organisation to support sustained delivery of the course, in all delivery modes, with regard to appropriate academic staffing, teaching facilities, physical resources and support services.</b>
----------	---

[NB These notes are based on an expectation that providers will be able to provide evidence of sound and stable delivery of the course [or courses in the discipline] within New Zealand for at least two cycles of the course. Deeper evaluation may be required for applications from providers who cannot meet this expectation.]

The applicant will be asked for evidence that it has sought appropriate advice on the legal requirements to operate in the host country and complies with these.

Capacity should be evaluated in the context of the estimated number of students to be involved over the first three years of delivery. This information should be provided with the application.

### **Staffing**

How will the venture be managed and staffed?

If staff are from the NZ institution, do they have appropriate qualifications and do they have training or experience to prepare them to operate in the host country? Will their employment conditions enable them to provide appropriate course delivery and management? Will they be effectively and appropriately supported?

If staff are recruited locally, do they have appropriate qualifications and conditions of employment? Are there appropriate mechanisms to integrate them into the broader culture of delivery of a New Zealand course? What support mechanisms will be provided by the New Zealand institution?

## **Facilities**

Will teaching and administrative facilities (including library and specialist resources) be appropriate to the course needs?

Do these comply with local requirements (Supporting evidence required.)

Do any copyright or on-line subscription licenses cover use of resources in the host country. (Supporting evidence required.)

What contracts and agreements exist to ensure the stability of delivery (premises, staffing). This may include a Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement with a local partner. (Supporting evidence required.)

## **Learner support**

Will facilities and services available to support students in their learning and while they are enrolled in the course be appropriate to the needs of students in the host country?

## **Collaborative arrangements**

Any proposal that involves collaboration with an overseas educational or business partner should include:

Descriptive information about the partner and the quality management regime under which it operates.

Evidence of the legal, financial and educational *bona fides* of any partners in any collaborative venture.

Details of any quality assurance processes applying to the overseas provider, where appropriate, with respect to the approval, accreditation and monitoring of the particular qualification under consideration.

A formal Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement between the New Zealand provider and the overseas partner(s) covering issues as specified in Attachment Two.

## **Financial Management**

An appropriate level of financial management may be confirmed by evidence such as:

- Tertiary institutions having at least a C risk rating from TAMU.

- Private training establishments having a positive financial risk analysis from TEC or NZQA.

All providers need to provide an indicative budget for the first three years of the venture.

The budget should be realistic in terms of set-up costs and likely shortfalls in the initial years. Confirmation that the applicant has sufficient financial resources sustain these costs may be necessary.

### **Risk Management**

A risk management strategy, including dispute resolution and exit strategies that protect both the interests of students and the broader interests of New Zealand and the New Zealand education sector. (This should include a detailed outline of processes for the management and award of the qualification for students, including the provisions for the management of students and student results should the proposed arrangement cease to operate.)

Applicants should, at a minimum, identify and comply with any local regulations applying to student fee-protection. (Supporting evidence required.)

### **Quality management**

An overview should be requested of how the overseas delivery will be covered by the provider's quality management system and of any changes being made to the QMS to address this.

Providers should have a positive quality audit history:

- Private Training Establishments will be on a minimum of a one-year audit cycle.
- Tertiary institutions will have had their quality management system approved by the relevant quality assurance body.

The applicant should identify any aspects of the proposal for which quality assurance is the responsibility of an overseas partner.

The applicant should have identified any quality assurance processes within the host country that will be applied to the provider, the course or the qualification.

<b>7</b>	<b>Evaluation and review: The adequacy and effectiveness of the provision for evaluation and review of courses: for monitoring the on going relevance of learning outcomes, course delivery and course standards; for reviewing course regulations and content; for monitoring improvement following evaluation and review; and for determining whether the course shall continue to be offered</b>
----------	---

Additional monitoring and reporting measures may be required to enable institutional monitoring of the course and timely reporting to the Qualifications Authority of any issues of significance (including monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of any collaborative arrangements).

<b>8</b>	<b>Research: The adequacy of provision of research facilities and support of staff involved in research, the levels of research activity of staff involved in the course and of ways by which the research-teaching links are made in the curriculum.</b>
----------	---

The applicant should identify what mechanisms and resources will be established to ensure that staff involved in degree delivery overseas will be active in their engagement in research and that research-teaching links are consistent with those made in the course as delivered in New Zealand.

## **Attachment One**

### **Applications for approval of a change**

Applications formatted as an Application for approval of a change are expected to include the following and could be expected to address the items identified in the Guidelines as follows:

#### **Overview of proposed changes:**

- Rationale for the changes (Criterion 4)
- Internal and external consultation and support for the changes (Criterion 4)
- Internal formal approval (Academic Board) for the change (Criterion 4)
- Details of the changes (Criteria 1, 2 and 3)

#### **Proposed Implementation of changes:**

- Resource implications (Criterion 6)
- Staffing implications (Criterion 6)
- Systems implications (Criteria 6 and 7)
- Changes to regulations (Criterion 5)
- Transition arrangements
- Resulting changes to the organisation's quality management system (Criteria 6 and 7)

Applications are expected to include sufficient detail to enable the Authority to confirm that the criteria for approval and accreditation will continue to be met following implementation of the changes.

## **Attachment Two:**

### **Memoranda of Understanding or Agreement**

In addition to documentation identified for approval and/or accreditation, the provider and any partners involved in any collaborative venture must provide a formal memorandum of understanding or memorandum of agreement which identifies the division of responsibilities for all relevant aspects of the course and its management and/or delivery (see below).

The purposes of the memorandum are to define the means by which the standards of the course and/or qualification will be maintained, to ensure that collaborative arrangements are clearly set out and operate smoothly, and that clear channels of authority, accountability and executive action are identified.

The memorandum of understanding or memorandum of agreement is an agreement between parties which share responsibility for different aspects or elements of the quality of a degree course. It must be signed by the legally recognised signatories of the parties to the agreement and must specify, as appropriate to the application:

#### **Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement.**

##### **Parties to Agreements**

The formal written agreements need to specify the:

- names and parties to the agreement
- name of the qualification and/or unit standards
- parties that will appear on certificates
- ownership of any intellectual property covered by the collaboration
- term of the agreement.

Furthermore, the responsibilities of each party with respect to the following procedures and responsibilities, must also be specified.

##### **Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

- the allocation of responsibility for the management of quality systems to oversee and maintain academic standards
- liaison with industry bodies as appropriate
- QABs in international jurisdictions and other legal requirements of registration
- the provision and implementation of changes to the programme/course
- procedures and responsibilities for verifying the accredited provider

- procedures and responsibilities for the management of the standards delivered and procedures for on-going monitoring
- evidence from parties regarding internal and external audit processes.

### **Learner Entry and Support**

- advertising/course promotion
- decisions on student entry
- the enrolment process and the collection of student fees
- the provision of learner welfare services (including student associations)
- the provision of information to learners on the requirements of the programme, including those arising out of its collaborative nature
- meeting the culturally-specific needs of learners (and staff) in terms of academic practice
- dealing with learner concerns, complaints, grievances
- appeals
- health and safety requirements
- protection of learners should the arrangement terminate.

### **Programme Delivery, Assessment and Reporting**

- delivery of the programme
- location of the delivery of the programme
- ensuring that teaching is delivered by qualified and experienced staff
- learner assessment
- moderation of assessment
- recording of and storage of learner records and results
- reporting of learner results
- pastoral care and decisions relating to progress through the course.

### **Resources**

- ensuring the financial viability and sustainability of the parties with respect to the programme
- procedures for agreeing on all necessary financial arrangements and the provision of resources, both physical and human
- the provision of professional and technical support
- the provision of appropriate library, laboratory equipment and other resources for learners and staff
- agreement on all necessary financial arrangements including the provision of physical resources.

### **Review of Agreement**

- regular monitoring and review of the collaborative arrangement
- procedures for resolving any differences which might arise between the parties to this agreement

- the protection of learners and their results should the arrangement terminate
- term of the agreement
- general cancellation clause if the agreement is inactive
- sunset clause if one partner breaks the agreement
- the legal jurisdiction in which any disputes or issues relating to the arrangement will be determined.

## Attachment Three:

### Costs

To assist institutions with budgetary planning, the following indicative costs have been identified as likely to apply to the evaluation of any application for accreditation to deliver courses overseas or for any monitoring:

<b>Within New Zealand</b>		
On-shore meetings and evaluation of documentation	At the current rate for the relevant QA body	This will include travel and accommodation for any visits to the institution.
<b>Overseas</b>		
Overseas visits	\$750 per day per person	
Overseas travel and local transport	Organized and paid by the applicant	Air travel should be in business class for any journey over 10 hours.
Overseas accommodation and meals	Organized and paid by the applicant	
<b>Annual monitoring</b>	Costs as above	