



Accreditation Panel Member Guidelines

***Information for ITP Quality panellists
(below degree level and for NQF Scopes)***

Introduction to ITP Quality

ITP Quality is a Committee of ITP New Zealand. ITP Quality operates the authority delegated to ITP New Zealand by NZQA under Section 260 of the Education Act 1989. ITP Quality was established in 1991 and has been operating the delegation since January 1993. ITP Quality is responsible for approving ITP programmes up to and including degree level, and accreditation of ITPs to deliver approved programmes and programmes based on unit standards registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

ITP Quality has also been granted the authority from NZQA to audit ITPs and regularly audits all of the ITPs for compliance and effectiveness against 12 academic standards.

External (ITP Quality) approval of ITP programmes is not compulsory however there are circumstances for which ITPs need to demonstrate that a programme has been through an external quality assurance process. The Ministry of Education (MOE) requires ITPs to seek ITP Quality approval for programmes under certain cost classifications. There is also a requirement for approval for programmes where foreign students are enrolled. Mostly, however, ITPs seek approval and accreditation because it is a benefit to both students and the Institute to go through an external quality assurance process.

ITPs are also required to seek accreditation for nationally approved programmes and to assess against unit standards registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Much of the accreditation activity of ITP Quality is to evaluate the capability of ITPs to deliver programmes based on national standards. The development and registration of national standards is a separate quality assurance process co-ordinated by NZQA with Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and National Standards Bodies (NSBs).

ITP Quality process for approval/accreditation

The ITP Quality process for approval/accreditation is briefly as follows:

- the ITP applies to ITP Quality for a scope of accreditation;
- ITP Quality may assemble a panel of relevant subject experts to visit the ITP facilitated by an ITP Quality contracted panel chairperson;
- the panel spends at least a day at the ITP and writes a report with a recommendation to ITP Quality;
- if a visit to the ITP is considered unnecessary then the panel will evaluate the application based on the documentation only, but may seek further evidence before writing a report with a recommendation to ITP Quality;
- ITP Quality makes a final decision based on the panel report.

The panels talk with the ITP's management, staff, students and stakeholders to determine the capability of the ITP to deliver a quality programme. If there are matters of concern the ITP is asked to respond in writing within a given period (usually three months) detailing how the matters are being addressed. In some cases approval/accreditation is not awarded or deferred until matters have been adequately addressed.

The ITP Quality Board comprises a total of 12 members: 8 external members with experience in industry and education and not directly involved with ITPs; and 4 ITP nominations at CEO level. The Chairperson of the Board is appointed independently

and may not be an employee of an ITP. In this sense the Board is largely an external body responsible for ensuring quality delivery within the ITP sector.

ITP Quality is also involved in encouraging ITP quality improvement and best practice. ITP Quality is mindful that quality improvement comes at a price and this is often transferred to students, however costs are kept to a minimum and there is a benefit to all stakeholders in a robust quality assurance process.

Accreditation and Moderation Action Plans

For accreditation to assess against registered unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), national standards setting bodies (NSBs or SSBs) may have specific requirements which need to be addressed by providers seeking accreditation. These requirements are outlined in the registered *Accreditation and Moderation Action Plan* (AMAP) for that SSB. If the AMAP is registered it will be included in information to panellists.

Panel composition on accreditation evaluations

Panel composition generally follows the structure below, however factors such as the length and level of programme (for programme approval applications) and external confidence in the institution may alter the panel membership.

- ITP Quality panel chairperson; and
- industry or professional representative (nominated by the national body if NQF); and/or
- external academic representative in the same field;
- internal ITP representative from a department external to the one seeking accreditation (optional).

The final panel composition will depend on such factors as the accreditation option on a registered AMAP (for NQF applications) or the type/level of programme (for local programme approval).

The internal ITP representative (if required) must be a senior academic, possess knowledge and understanding of standards-based assessment, be familiar with the quality systems of the ITP, and be objective and impartial. Staff members from the Department or Faculty applying for approval/accreditation are not considered appropriate.

Panel nominees should not be involved either in the preparation of the application or as a member of the advisory committee. This, however, is not intended to exclude Academic or Quality Managers/Advisers.

Visit evaluations-prior to the visit

ITP Quality will send documentation to panellists at least 2 weeks prior to the accreditation visit. With this documentation is a cover letter which confirms panel appointment, the date of the visit, the scope of the application and the panel composition. Also enclosed are the criteria for programme approval (if programme approval has been applied for) and the criteria for accreditation; a copy of the registered AMAP (if applicable), an expenses claim form, a code of ethics for panellists and a panel response form. This response form is designed so that panellists may identify issues under the criteria for which further information is required prior to the visit. Panellists are requested to send any comments to the panel chairperson at least one

week prior to the visit, to give the ITP an opportunity to respond or to gather requested documentation together.

Typical agenda for an accreditation visit

- a. Brief welcome (*allow 15 minutes*);
- b. Panel meeting (*45 minutes*);
- c. Panel meet with Directorate and quality managers (*60 minutes*);
- d. Panel meet with HOD, programme supervisor and tutors (*60 minutes*);
- e. Panel meet with Advisory Committee (*60 minutes - working lunch*);
- f. Panel tour facilities (*30 minutes*);
- g. Panel meet with students (*30 -45 minutes*);
- h. Second meeting with HOD and staff (*30 minutes*);
- i. Panel meet alone to discuss recommendations and outline of report (*75 minutes*);
- j. Panel gives verbal report to Directorate, senior management and staff (*30 minutes*).

Sequence and time-frames may be negotiated between ITP Quality and the ITP within this general framework. Special arrangements may be necessary to accommodate panellists' airline flights, for instance.

Return of accreditation documentation

At the conclusion of the accreditation visit, panellists are asked to ensure that the application documentation is left with the polytechnic.

Non-visit evaluations

Many of the accreditation evaluations now undertaken by ITP Quality do not involve visiting the ITP. The rest of the process is still followed, however often with a smaller panel. The decision to visit or not may be made by the panel in an initial evaluation of the documentation and is based on factors such as track record, external confidence in the polytechnic and the scope and level of the application. Document evaluations may necessitate seeking further information from the polytechnic or evidence of compliance with systems. This evidence gathering will be co-ordinated by the panel chairperson in consultation with panel members.

Panel report

After the panel has visited the polytechnic or completed the document evaluation, the ITP Quality panel chairperson will compile a report summarising the panel's findings and their recommendations to ITP Quality. The report is circulated to the other panel members for their further comment or endorsement.

ITP Quality requests that panellists respond to this request as soon as possible so that a final report may be agreed.

Once it has been endorsed by all panel members as an accurate account of the findings and recommendations, the report is presented to ITP Quality for approval.

The panel will recommend that ITP Quality either:

approve the programme and **accredit** the polytechnic to deliver the programme
accredit the polytechnic to deliver within the NQF scope or

not approve/accredit - specifying the issues which must be addressed by the polytechnic before the application will be reconsidered. A letter notifying the polytechnic of this decision will be sent with the panel report. If the application proceeds the issues must be fully addressed by the applicant polytechnic. In some cases ITP Quality may require the panel to be reconvened.

The primary collective purpose of each panel is to present informed recommendations concerning the polytechnic's application for approval and/or accreditation to ITP Quality for its consideration.

ITP Quality, with the advantage of a national perspective on polytechnic standards and consistency, makes the accreditation decision based on the recommendations of the panel.

The accreditation report will often include one or more *matters of concern requiring a response from the polytechnic*. The formal letter sent from ITP Quality to the ITP CEO advising of the accreditation decision will request a response to all or some of the matters of concern within a specified time-frame - usually 3 months. This response will be sent to the panel chairperson who may consult with members of the panel on the adequacy of the response. The panel may also make *suggestions for consideration* which are suggestions made which may be beneficial to the delivery of programme.

Accreditation, when awarded is permanent but may be subject to periodic review. The ITP Quality audit process has effectively replaced individual external reviews.

Timelines

The standard timeline for ITP Quality to process applications is 3 months from receipt of documentation to final decision.

The fees and expenses incurred during the accreditation exercise (with the exception of accommodation which is arranged directly by the polytechnic, if required) will be paid by ITP Quality and then recovered from the ITP by invoice as soon as all panellists' claims have been received. For this reason it is important that panellists send in expense claim forms as soon as possible after the accreditation evaluation is complete.

Thank you for your involvement in the above process. ITP Quality appreciates your contribution to assuring quality delivery of ITP programmes.