

NCEA | Taumata Mātauranga ā-Motu Kua Taea

NCEA Review 2018

Quality assurance in NCEA

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NZQA requires each qualification registered on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework to be regularly reviewed so that the qualification remains useful and relevant and continues to meet the needs of the learners, industry and stakeholders for which it was developed. NCEA is scheduled to be reviewed by December 2018.

This paper describes the process of quality assurance used to ensure the validity of NCEA | Taumata Mātauranga ā-Motu Kua Taea¹ and discusses its effectiveness.

Focusing question

Does the current quality assurance system effectively ensure the validity of the NCEA qualification?

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority is responsible for ensuring the validity of NCEA qualifications. The two types of assessment standards that count towards NCEA are achievement standards and unit standards.

The Ministry of Education develops the achievement standards, which are based on the achievement objectives of the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. Schools, kura and Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) must be granted consent to assess by NZQA before they can assess against the standards in the Directory of Assessment Standards. Achievement standards are assessed internally (by teachers) or externally, usually through an examination.

Industry Training Organisations or NZQA develop unit standards. Unit standards recognise capabilities and competencies in realistic settings in mainly vocational areas of learning. All unit standards are internally assessed.

¹ Taumata Mātauranga ā-Motu Kua Taea is the Māori name for NCEA. "NCEA" is inclusive of both Māori and English medium.



Why are some standards assessed internally and some assessed externally?

1

Internal assessment (all unit standards and some achievement standards):

- is a reliable way to assess particular skills and knowledge, for example, if students are required to make a speech, carry out an historical investigation or conduct a science investigation
- provides an authentic way to assess students in realistic situations
- enables students to work in familiar surroundings, with an appropriate amount of time to show what they can achieve
- has support and guidance from NZQA to help teachers design and conduct internal assessment
- is flexible – teachers can design assessment tasks that are appropriate for the standard; assessment can take place close to the teaching and schools/kura can consider other activities that are occurring at the school/kura in deciding when to assess
- enables relevant content and contexts.

2

External assessment (some achievement standards):

- is independent, as the assessment is set and marked by NZQA
- has inter-school reliability because all students are assessed using the same resources, under the same conditions and at the same time
- is monitored to ensure consistency within a year
- supports the development of assessment skills in schools/kura by training up to 2,500 teachers as examination developers and markers.

How does NZQA ensure that results are valid and reliable?

Checking internal assessment decisions for national consistency

Schools/kura are required to have a robust internal moderation process to ensure that the grades awarded have been checked against the standard. A subject expert verifies a sample of marked work to confirm that the teacher's judgements are consistent. Schools/kura must undertake moderation before they report the results to NZQA.

NZQA uses an external moderation process to monitor the accuracy and consistency of schools' internal assessment. The moderators quality assure schools' internal assessment decisions.

NZQA reviews secondary schools' assessment systems at least once every four years to ensure that assessment is valid, fair, reliable, accurate, consistent and in accordance with The Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess (6.3). NZQA can withdraw a school's consent to assess if it is not confident in its process. Tertiary Education Organisations that have consent to assess learners entering internal or external achievement standards must follow a similar set of rules.



Ensuring valid results from external assessment

NZQA uses a rigorous process for developing valid examinations, which takes about 18 months. Examiners and materials developers write examinations and produce draft assessment schedules. Materials critiquers, independent checkers and subject matter checkers evaluate the examinations. NZQA national assessment facilitators and editors also review and manage various aspects of the examination.

The marking process includes checks and balances to ensure all examination results are accurate and fair. The panel leader and a senior marker (check marker) mark student examination scripts from the current year and compare them with student scripts from the previous year(s) to benchmark the examination. The assessment schedule is then approved for marking. The panel leader trains the panel markers on how to use the assessment schedule, to ensure that all scripts are marked consistently.

The panel leader uses the profile of expected performance (PEP) – a guide that helps ensure the results are consistent from year to year, by using historical, statistical and professional information.

All aspects of marking are verified to make sure that all examination scripts are marked in the same way and that the scores have been correctly totalled. The panel leader and check marker view a percentage of all marked scripts and provide feedback to individual markers during this process. Marking is monitored daily by NZQA national assessment facilitators.

NZQA returns marked examination scripts to students, who can apply to NZQA for a review (check or recount) or a reconsideration (full re-mark) if they believe the results are not correct. There is a fee for reconsiderations, which is refunded if the grade changes.