

The Te Kaitiaki logo is a stylized white silhouette of a tree with many branches, each ending in a small, feathery or flame-like shape. It is positioned on the right side of the cover, partially overlapping the dark brown and light beige vertical bands.

# Self-review Report for the 2020 External Review of the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities

*Te Pokapū Kōunga Mātauranga  
mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa*

AQA  
March 2020

AQA

Academic  
**Quality**Agency  
For New Zealand Universities

# Self-review Report for the 2020 External Review of the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities

March 2020

*Most of the supporting documents in this self-review are publicly available.  
However, if you encounter a link that does not work, please contact  
director@aqa.ac.nz to discuss access.*

## Foreword

*Nau mai, haere mai ki tēnei 2020 arotakenga o Te Pokapū Kouna Mātauranga mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa. Kei te arotakengia ngā whare wānanga e Te Pokapū Kouna Mātauranga. Nō reira, ko te tikanga ka marama tātou ki te kouna o Te Pokapū Kouna Mātauranga. Ka harikoa Te Pokapū Kouna Mātauranga ki te ako i ngā whakaaro o ngā kaiarotake.*

*Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.*

Welcome to this 2020 self-review report for the 2020 external review of the Academic Quality Agency for the New Zealand universities (AQA). AQA undertakes quality assurance reviews of New Zealand universities and quality enhancement activities that support universities. It is important that AQA also periodically examines its own activities for assurance of quality and opportunities to improve in order to remain an internationally credible quality assurance body.

This review takes place almost midway through the sixth Cycle 6 of academic audits for New Zealand universities. The review period covers the end of Cycle 5 academic audit and summary analyses of Cycle 5, plus the development and enhancement phase of Cycle 6.

Cycle 6 academic audit differs from previous cycles in that it is a composite cycle with an enhancement phase and an audit phase. As a composite cycle it is longer than previous cycles with seven to eight years between audits for individual universities. A ‘mid-cycle’ report to the AQA Board from universities was introduced in response to the lengthening of the period between audits.

During the enhancement phase, universities have been undertaking an enhancement theme that addresses “Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students”. Universities have developed and reported on enhancement theme plans and initiatives, and shared approaches and initiatives at Steering Group meetings and at two enhancement theme symposia. Two frameworks were developed to guide enhancement theme activities and a website has been developed to share and curate initiatives and practices.

The audit phase of the cycle builds on previous audit frameworks but differs in the level of explicit attention it pays to universities demonstrating that academic quality is embedded and systemic. Universities are also expected to show how their responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the interdependence of research and teaching and universities’ roles as critic and conscience of society are reflected in academic quality.

This self-review has been written over the last months of the enhancement phase and by the time the Panel meets, the first universities in the cycle will be engaged in their self-review activities.

AQA appreciates the scrutiny that the external panel will give to its activities and the design of Cycle 6. The panel’s advice and recommendations for enhancement will be valuable as AQA enters the audit phase of the Cycle.

Emeritus Professor Pat Walsh  
Chair, AQA Board

Emeritus Professor Sheelagh Matear  
Executive Director

## Summary

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand universities (AQA) is a quality assurance body established by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors to give effect to their responsibilities for quality assurance matters in universities under the New Zealand Education Act (1989). AQA undergoes an external review every five years. The objective of the review is to assess how effectively AQA assists the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) to discharge its responsibilities for quality assurance matters in universities through:

- delivering on its purpose in line with its terms of reference
- meeting or exceeding INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice
- transacting core business processes efficiently and effectively.

AQA's purpose, as set out in its Constitution, is to contribute to the advancement of New Zealand university education by:

- engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of academic quality,
- applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities in improving student engagement, academic experience and learning outcomes, and
- supporting confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities.

This review takes place part-way through Cycle 6 academic audit. Cycle 6 differs from previous cycles in that it is a composite cycle with two main phases – an enhancement phase and an audit phase. From 2017 – 2020 New Zealand universities have been undertaking an enhancement theme on the topic of “Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students”. The final meeting of an Enhancement Theme Steering Group was held on 12 March 2020. The enhancement theme has been led and undertaken by universities and supported by AQA.

During the enhancement phase, AQA has also been preparing for the audit phase of the Cycle. An audit framework of 30 guideline statements in five sections has been developed, auditor recruitment is underway and AQA has been working with students' associations to develop students, or recent graduates, as auditors. Cycle 6 audit panels will include a student or recent graduate. The Cycle 6 audit framework has built on the Cycle 5 framework which was considered to work well. However, the audit framework for Cycle 6 differs in that it uses more outcomes-oriented language for the guideline statements and is explicit in its expectations that universities will present evidence that demonstrates how guideline statements are met for “all students, all delivery and all staff who undertake or support teaching or supervision”. The individual context of a university will continue to be important and universities will be expected to set this out in the introduction sections of their self-reviews.

AQA's purpose statement provides the overall structure for this self-review. The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) Guidelines of Good Practice (GGP) have been 'mapped' to the components of AQA's purpose and business processes. Mapping enables this review to examine AQA's purpose, the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and the extent to which it meets the GGP.

This self-review is set out in eight sections:

- Introduction and context for the review (Section A)
- Leadership and advocacy (Section B)
- Quality assurance (Section C)
- Quality enhancement (Section D)

- Contributes to confidence (Section E)
- Efficiency and effectiveness (Section F)
- International and other activities (Section G)
- Conclusions and recommendations (Section H).

AQA presents evidence that it meets the GGP in sections B-G. Areas where AQA has assessed that it could enhance its practice are identified as enhancement initiatives.

In terms of leadership and advocacy, AQA's self-assessment is that it operates with transparency, maintains currency with international developments and publishes reports on the outcomes of quality assurance activities. AQA also provides comment on academic quality matters when asked but does not seek a proactive role as commentator. AQA has identified a review of its publication strategy as an enhancement initiative.

Quality assurance is a major component of AQA's activities. Given the timing of this review, it is not yet possible to provide evidence of how some of the quality assurance aspects of Cycle 6 have performed. However, given that Cycle 6 clearly builds on Cycle 5 and that changes are informed by feedback on Cycle 5, AQA has a strong expectation that its quality assurance activities will continue to meet good practice guidelines. AQA will undertake an interim review of audit processes in Cycle 6 to ensure that the framework and processes are working as anticipated.

AQA has assessed that it may have a stronger enhancement orientation than many external quality assurance agencies (EQAAs). Support for quality enhancement activities were a significant part of AQA's activities between 2017 and 2020. An enhancement theme has been the main activity over this period although AQA has also undertaken other enhancement-oriented events and activities.

AQA helps support confidence in New Zealand universities by being a well-performing EQAA with demonstrated good practices and governance of its own activities. AQA's self-assessment is that it does perform well and has identified strengthening feedback processes and increasing visibility of its policies and activities, especially for the wider public, as potential areas for enhancement.

In terms of the efficiency and effectiveness objective of this review, AQA concludes that it is an efficient and effective EQAA. Its business processes are fit for purpose and commensurate with the size of the organisation.

International and other activities are included as part of using the INQAAHE GGP to review AQA. AQA's self-assessment is that this section has been useful in prompting AQA to consider whether it should be more involved in international activities. AQA's current assessment is that it does not seek to extend its activities in this direction.

AQA has used INQAAHE's GGP to undertake its self-review. These have provided a comprehensive framework for AQA to assess the activities it undertakes to deliver on its purpose. AQA is confident that it can demonstrate it is meeting the GGP. AQA recognises that for some GGP, full evidence of effectiveness in Cycle 6 is not available until the cycle is complete. However, evidence does exist that AQA met these guideline statements in Cycle 5 and is highly likely to continue to do so in Cycle 6.

AQA's strengths over this review period have been the development of a novel composite model for Cycle 6 academic audit, increased attention to quality enhancement and support for student voice(s) in academic quality. The reflection undertaken as part of this self-review has identified eight potential areas for enhancement.

The Panel's report on its external review of AQA will be available on the AQA website.

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## Glossary: Key terms, acronyms and abbreviations

APQN	Asia Pacific Quality Network
AQA	Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities, Te Pokapū Kōunga Mātauranga mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa
C5	Cycle 5 Academic Audit
C6	Cycle 6 Academic Audit
CUAP	Committee on University Academic Programmes
EQA	external quality assurance
EQAA	external quality assurance agency
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
ETSG	Enhancement Theme Steering Group
GGP	(INQAAHE) Guidelines of Good Practice
GS	Guideline statement
HESF	(Australian) Higher Education Standards Framework
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IQA	Internal quality assurance
MoU/A/C	Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement/Cooperation
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZUAAU	New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit
NZUSA	New Zealand Union of Students' Associations
NZVCC	New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee
QAA-Scotland	Quality Assurance Agency - Scotland
QAB	Quality assurance body
Sparqs	student partnerships in quality Scotland
SPE	Statement of performance expectations
SQA	Samoan Qualifications Authority
TEQSA	(The Australian Government) Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
ToR	Term of Reference (the GGP provide detailed ToR for this review)
UniversitiesNZ	Te Pūkai Tara, Universities New Zealand
UNZ	Te Pūkai Tara, Universities New Zealand





## A. Introduction and context

AQA is a quality assurance body established by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors (in the form of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee or NZVCC) to give effect to their responsibilities for quality assurance matters in universities under the New Zealand Education Act (1989).<sup>1</sup>

New Zealand universities are autonomous, publicly funded institutions. According to Universities New Zealand (UNZ), universities are defined in the Education Act (1989) as being:

*"... characterised by a wide diversity of teaching and research, especially at a higher level, that maintains, advances, disseminates, and assists the application of, knowledge, develops intellectual independence, and promotes community learning...". "...universities have all the following characteristics:*

- they are primarily concerned with more advanced learning, the principal aim being to develop intellectual independence:*
- their research and teaching are closely interdependent and most of their teaching is done by people who are active in advancing knowledge:*
- they meet international standards of research and teaching:*
- they are a repository of knowledge and expertise:*
- they accept a role as critic and conscience of society."*

AQA's operational independence from the NZVCC (and the NZVCCs' operational form of Universities New Zealand – Te Pōkai Tara (UNZ)) and individual Vice-Chancellors is established in the AQA Constitution. The Constitution is the foundation document for all AQA activities and is reviewed at least every five years with the most recent review in 2018.

AQA is recognised by the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) as being aligned with their Guidelines of Good Practice (GGP). This recognition is effective until 1 December 2020 and renewal of this status will be sought following the completion of this external review.

AQA undergoes an external review every five years. The review is commissioned by the Vice-Chancellors and managed by UNZ. The objective of this review is to assess how effectively AQA assists the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee to discharge its responsibilities for quality assurance matters in universities through:

- delivering on its purpose in line with its terms of reference
- meeting or exceeding INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice
- transacting core business processes efficiently and effectively.

AQA's purpose as set out in its Constitution is to contribute to the advancement of New Zealand university education by:

- engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of academic quality,

[UNZ – About the university sector](#)

[AQA Constitution](#)  
[KD-A1]

[Recognition of alignment with INQAAHE GGP](#)

[AQA Constitution](#)  
[KD-A1]

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Education Action 1989 (Reprint as at 14 May 2019), Section 159AD

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities in improving student engagement, academic experience and learning outcomes, and</li> <li>• supporting confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities.</li> </ul> <p>According to its terms of reference, AQA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledge the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi</li> <li>• maintain consistency with international expectations, standards and developments in external quality assurance</li> <li>• advise the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee and Universities New Zealand on quality assurance matters</li> <li>• reflect areas of importance to universities with respect to their teaching, learning, student experience and student outcomes activities</li> <li>• undertake quality assurance reviews (currently in the form of an academic audit) that are robust, fair and perceptive and that assist universities and their students</li> <li>• acknowledge and respect the individual contexts of universities in undertaking quality assurance reviews</li> <li>• make provision for appeals regarding the content of a quality assurance review</li> <li>• publish quality assurance reviews of universities</li> <li>• identify and promote good practice in quality assurance and enhancement</li> <li>• support the contribution of an effective student voice in quality assurance and enhancement</li> <li>• recognise other accountabilities and responsibilities of universities</li> <li>• maintain a constructive relationship with the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) that recognises the responsibilities of CUAP and AQA</li> <li>• contribute to the development of quality assurance in New Zealand and internationally</li> <li>• undertake contract work as is compatible with its purpose and terms of reference.</li> </ul>	
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## A1. Review framework and terms of reference

<p>Expanding on the objective above, this external review of AQA will evaluate whether and how AQA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates leadership and advocacy in the development of academic quality (Section B)</li> <li>• undertakes quality assurance processes that assist universities (C)</li> <li>• AQA supports quality enhancement processes that assist universities (D)</li> <li>• contributes to confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities (E)</li> <li>• transacts its core business efficiently and effectively (F)</li> <li>• undertakes appropriate international and other activities (G).</li> </ul> <p>Evaluating the extent to which AQA delivers on its purpose, meets or exceeds the INQAAHE GGP, and transacts its core business efficiently and effectively are</p>	<p><a href="#">INQAAHE GGP</a></p>
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inter-related. For AQA to meet the needs of the Vice-Chancellors it should operate a model of external quality assurance that is internationally recognised. AQA considers that INQAAHE offers the most widely recognised international framework for recognition of quality assurance agencies through its Guidelines of Good Practice (GGP).

A detailed set of Terms of Reference for this 2020 review (Appendix 1) has been developed by 'mapping' the GGP to AQA's purpose statements and efficiency and effectiveness of operations. International activities have also been included as, while these are fairly small scale for AQA, they are considered important by INQAAHE and as such should be included in a comprehensive review of an external quality assurance agency (EQAA).

Three caveats should be noted regarding how these terms of reference have been developed:

1. The GGP have been mapped to a structure for the review that allows AQA to assess critically whether it is meeting its purpose statement and operating effectively and efficiently. The GGP are therefore not addressed in the same sequence or structure as published by INQAAHE. Inevitably some of AQA's activities relate to more than one term of reference in this review. While repetition has been minimised as far as possible, it does occur where it enhances readability.
2. Some GGP are not relevant to AQA when its remit does not include the activities a specific GGP addresses. However, all GGP have been included in the terms of reference for this review for the sake of completeness and for AQA to critically evaluate whether its scope is adequate.
3. Conversely, AQA considered that the GGP did not adequately capture its quality enhancement purpose and activities adequately. ToR for Section D have either been drawn from other frameworks or have been adapted from GGP to refer to quality enhancement.

### Timing

The timing of this review has implications which should be noted at the outset. It is five years since AQA's last external review, and a review is therefore appropriate. However, the review occurs before some aspects of Cycle 6 have started, and well before any measurement of their effectiveness, because of the change to the length of the audit cycle and the period between audits for individual universities. The last external review of AQA in 2015 also occurred during an audit cycle, but—in that case—evidence of all aspects of the audit cycle was available, although a complete assessment of the cycle was not. The review period for this 2020 review covers the end of Cycle 5 and whole-of-cycle assessments can be made for Cycle 5 and the start of Cycle 6. Evaluations of effectiveness of quality assurance activities are based on the completed Cycle 5 and planned activities in Cycle 6. Cycle 6 is due to conclude in 2024 with 2024 being a year of review and development. It would also be useful to undertake the next external review of AQA in 2024.

### 2020 Self-review and report

The self-review for the 2020 review has been undertaken by the current Executive Director for AQA, with oversight and input from the AQA Board. The AQA Board worked through the terms of reference at their November 2019

*Appendix 1  
Terms of  
Reference for  
the 2020  
External Review  
of AQA*

meeting. The former Director of AQA provided a critical review of drafts of this self-review report.

Evidence in support of AQA meeting the ToR for this review is presented to the right of the text. Where possible this is presented as a hyperlink. Key documents are labelled [KD-section number] and are provided in hard copy with this self-review report. Supporting documents that are not publicly available are labelled [sd – section number] and have been collated in a Onedrive folder. Documents are labelled the first time they are referred to and this reference is used subsequently. Links to supporting evidence available on publicly accessible websites are not numbered. All supporting evidence is listed in Appendix 2.

No specific data were developed as part of this self-review, as AQA:

- seeks feedback on activities at the time they are undertaken or as part of regular reviews
- consults formally with universities on significant developments
- maintains active and regular communications with universities and other stakeholders and gains informal feedback on its activities.

Further, it is anticipated that the external review panel will seek the independent views of those who interact with AQA and solicit their feedback on AQA.

Before addressing the review framework and terms of reference, this self-review report first sets out a brief history of AQA, its operating environment, organisational arrangements, significant changes since the last review and AQA's response to recommendations in the 2015 external review. Sections B to G then address the components of the review framework with conclusions and recommendations for improvement in Section H.

[Minute of 19 November 2019 meeting of the AQA Board, Item 13](#)  
[sd-A1]

[Onedrive folder supporting documents](#)

## A2. History and development of AQA

AQA was established in 1993 and began operating in 1994 as the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU). The establishment Director and Board set out a model for a series of audit cycles that included a review of the Unit following each audit cycle. Over time, the timing of the external reviews has become separated from the timing of the audit cycles. Table 1 summarises the dates of previous cycles and external reviews of NZUAAU and AQA.

Table 1 Audit cycles and external reviews

Cycle	Timeframe	Scope of audit for universities	External Review of NZUAAU/AQA	
1	1995-1998	All of institution	1997	
2	2000-2001	Focus on research policy and management, postgraduate students and research-teaching link plus university-selected theme	2001	
3	2002-2007	Teaching quality, programme delivery, and the achievement of learning outcomes	2009 (deferred from 2006)	
4	2008-2012	Whole of institution		<a href="#">Cycle 4 Audit Manual (2007)</a>
5	2013-2016	Teaching, learning and student support, including postgraduate study	2015	<a href="#">Cycle 5 Handbook</a>
6	2017-2024	Teaching, learning, support and outcomes for students	2020	[KD-A2]

The name of the agency was changed from NZUAAU to the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand universities (AQA) in 2013. A 2018 publication to mark 25 years of AQA noted that, despite considerable change over the 25 years, there remained a high-level of continuity and “the basic form and function of AQA’s activities would still be recognisable to its founders ...” (p2).

[AQA 25 Years](#)

In addition to its academic audits of New Zealand universities, AQA has also undertaken a small number of reviews and audits for overseas institutions and targeted reviews of New Zealand universities. Since the 2015 review it has undertaken a programme review for Macao Polytechnic Institute (2016), a review of CUAP (2017) and is currently undertaking a programme review for Fiji National University.

[MPI Review](#)

[sd-A2]

[Review of CUAP \(2017\)](#)

The Agency has also published a series of reviews, good practice guides and other reports as part of its quality enhancement activities. AQA also delivers a series of workshops, other meetings and events. These are discussed further in Section D (p42).

As a small organisation, relationships with other organisations are important to AQA. AQA maintains good relationships with Universities New Zealand, CUAP and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). AQA, CUAP and NZQA are all members of a Joint Consultative Group (JCG is discussed further in ToR B3, p18). Internationally, AQA is a member of INQAAHE and the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and maintains relationships with other external quality assurance bodies.

### A3. Operating environment

AQA is one of two quality assurance bodies established by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors. The other body is the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), which is a sub-committee of the NZVCC with responsibility for academic programme approval, accreditation and moderation

AQA and CUAP maintain a good working relationship and have jointly agreed principles which underpin quality assurance. These are that quality assurance acknowledges the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and is:

- developed by the universities
- evidence-based
- enhancement-led
- founded on self-review
- assured by peer review
- collective and collegial
- individually binding
- internationally benchmarked
- independently operated
- publicly accountable
- in partnership with students.

[Academic Quality Assurance of New Zealand universities](#)  
*Redevelopment of publication underway*

### A4. AQA organisational arrangements

AQA comprises an eight-person Board, a secretariat and a Register of Auditors and Reviewers.

Seven Board members are appointed by the Vice-Chancellors for a three-year term. These Board members may not serve more than two consecutive terms. The AQA Executive Director is a member of the Board and is appointed by the AQA Board. The current Executive Director started in the role in February 2016.

The AQA secretariat is provided by the Executive Director and other staff. There is provision for a support role, but not at this point for a second professional member of staff. The support role is part-time and retaining someone able to work across all aspects of the role has been challenging. Therefore, AQA also maintains relationships with and utilises the services of a series of specialist business service providers (HR, web, finance) and former staff. Staffing arrangements are reviewed annually.

Auditors and reviewers are appointed to a Register of Auditors and Reviewers by the AQA Board. Registers are specific to an audit cycle and auditors and reviewers must apply to join a Register for a specific audit cycle. The AQA Board then appoints auditors from the Register to specific panels for university audits.

AQA's policy and planning frameworks and reporting are discussed in ToR E4 (p49).

*See E5 (p50) for governance structure*

*See Section F (p57) for more detail on efficiency and effectiveness of core business*

## A5. Key developments or changes since the last review

Since the 2015 review of AQA, the following major changes or events have occurred that now shape AQA's activities:

- Cycle 5 Academic Audit concluded in 2016 and Cycle 6 has commenced
- AQA has signed an MoU (2017) with the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA)
- increased emphasis on acknowledging Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- explicit attention paid to Pasifika
- change in staffing
- New Zealand Government education reforms.

### Cycle 6 Academic Audit

Cycle 6 Academic Audit builds on previous cycles but differs in several important aspects. In particular, Cycle 6 has introduced an enhancement theme and the period between audits has increased from between just over four to five years to between seven to eight years for individual universities.

The sixth cycle of academic audit for New Zealand universities is a composite model with 10 components operating over three phases of the cycle.

Cycle 6:

- A. maintains an internationally referenced, cyclical, peer-review model of external quality assurance
- B. maintains a high-trust, enabling relationship between the universities and AQA that recognises and respects universities' responsibility and accountability for quality as well as AQA's Terms of Reference and independence
- C. maintains the scope of academic audit on teaching, learning, support and outcomes for students
- D. builds on and refreshes the Cycle 5 academic audit framework (guideline statements) and further emphasises outcomes and the use of evidence.
- E. incorporates a thematic enhancement topic agreed by all universities that is both a strategic priority for universities and of national importance. The enhancement theme topic for Cycle 6 is *Access, outcomes and opportunity for Māori students and for Pasifika students*.
- F. audits universities 7-8 years after their Cycle 5 audit
- G. includes students or recent graduates in audit panels
- H. amends the audit delivery method so that panels spend more time together initially and that time spent at the university is more targeted and requires meeting with fewer individuals
- I. develops audit reports to comment on outcomes and enhancement initiatives, as well as processes
- J. includes a public report on a university's response to recommendations. A mid-cycle follow-up report on Cycle 5 recommendations has been introduced.

These components are delivered over three main phases of the Cycle. The phases are:

1. enhancement (2017 – 2019)
2. audit (2020 – 2023)

*This section is an extract from the [Guide to Cycle 6](#), pp 3-4. [KD-A3]*



### 3. review, evaluation and planning (2024).

Although there are different components and phases in the cycle, they are mutually reinforcing and are not expected to operate in isolation from one another. The phases may be more appropriately viewed as emphases rather than discrete components. For example, during the enhancement phase, universities continue to progress recommendations and affirmations from Cycle 5 academic audits. They are also developing mid-cycle reports from Cycle 5 academic audits.

As the quality culture of New Zealand universities is mature and audit is part of ongoing quality assurance activities, it is expected that self-review activities will also carry on during the enhancement phase. Work to develop students or recent graduates as auditors also occurs in the enhancement phase. Reciprocally, during the audit phase, universities will continue to progress enhancement initiatives and the enhancement theme itself gives rise to specific guideline statements and will re-frame others.

The development of Cycle 6 was summarised in a conference paper by Matear (2018c) as follows:

[Matear \(2018c\)  
Evolving Quality](#)  
[KD-A4]

*“Cycle 6 academic audit for New Zealand universities very clearly builds on Cycle 5. It has learnt from Cycle 5 and sought to retain aspects that were considered to work well and respond to aspects where opportunities for improvement were identified. It has utilised the Cycle 5 audit framework as a basis for developing the audit framework for Cycle 6 and it retains longstanding features of self-review and peer review as key elements of the audit process, and academic audit itself as its quality assurance tool.*

*Cycle 6 has also responded to the 2015 External review of AQA (Crawford et al., 2015) and incorporated elements from other jurisdictions. The major reflection of this is the inclusion of an enhancement theme and enhancement phase in Cycle 6. However, the more outcomes-oriented framing of guideline statements, seeking to gain a systemic view of quality in a university, the inclusion of students, or recent graduates, as auditors and increased public reporting all reflect developments in other jurisdictions.*

*In developing Cycle 6, AQA has learnt from jurisdictions which are more similar to it and those which are very different. In all cases however, it has appreciated how the context of those jurisdictions has shaped the quality system that has developed. This is also the case for New Zealand and the context for New Zealand universities, particularly their level of maturity, established quality, and size of the sector, has shaped the sixth Cycle of Academic Audit for New Zealand universities.*

*The composite model for Cycle 6 Academic Audit of New Zealand models reflects both continuity and change. None of*



*the elements of the model are new in themselves, although some are new to New Zealand. However, together they are a novel configuration for Cycle 6.”*

Further detail on Cycle 6 and its development is available on the AQA website and in the Cycle 6 guides. In addition to the above conference paper, other conference papers have examined aspects of Cycle 6. Matear, *et al.* (2018) looked at sustainability of the student voice and Matear (2019) reconsidered evidence in academic quality. The development of Cycle 6 has been included in a 2019 compilation of “Good Practices of External Quality Assurance Agencies across the Globe” published by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of India and the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN). This provides evidence that the development of Cycle 6 reflects good international practice.

### Student voice

The 2017 MoU with NZUSA represents a significant development in AQA’s activities. It was in part a response to recommendations in the 2015 review but has broader implications. It has contributed to or facilitated:

- the inclusion of a student voice principle in the principles that underpin quality assurance
- the decision that audit panels will include a student member
- an annual Student Voice Summit that supports capability building for incoming student administrations and knowledge transfer between outgoing and incoming student administrations
- relationships with other national student bodies
- engagement in national discussions about the development of a national centre for tertiary student voice
- international engagement on the development of student voice in Australia and best practice in Scotland
- a regular ‘student voice’ column in the quarterly AQA newsletter
- student engagement with and contribution to enhancement theme activities.

### Te Tiriti o Waitangi

AQA (including when it was called NZUAAU) has had a long-standing commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. There has been a Māori member of AQA’s Board for most of its history (apart from between 2007 and 2012 when it seems there was no Māori member of the Board).

The first cycle of academic audits (1995-1998) included expectations that universities set out how they were giving effect to their intentions in relation to the Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities (Jennings, 2004, p6). Despite this early attention and intention, across the university sector metrics such as rates of Māori students’ access to university, achievement, progression and number of Māori staff, have improved slowly. Not all reasons originate solely within the university system or its quality assurance arrangements and there are, of course, examples of excellent and highly successful programmes and initiatives.

Nonetheless, neither equity nor parity in access and achievement for Māori students has yet been achieved (UNZ, 2018), and there is still scope for

[AQA website](#)  
[Matear et al. \(2018\)](#)  
[Matear \(2019\)](#)  
 [sd-A3]  
[NAAC/APQN Good Practices](#)  
 (pp. 57-62)

[MoU between AQA and NZUSA](#)

*Principle in amended hard copy.*

[Student Voice Summit 2019](#)

[AQA Submission to TSV](#)  
 [sd-A4]

[AQA newsletters](#)

[Jennings \(2004\)](#)

considerable improvement. It is reasonable to expect that quality assurance (and enhancement) arrangements should contribute to that improvement. Over time, quality assurance arrangements may need to change because of the changing proportion of the New Zealand population under 25 who are Māori, Te Tiriti settlements, and evolving understanding of what it means to be a university in Aotearoa in the twenty-first century.

Since its last review, AQA has further considered how its activities could better support Māori students in universities and how to engage with Māori in quality assurance. None of this has happened or will happen without guidance from Māori.

AQA recognises that, while it has previously sought to acknowledge Te Tiriti, it is at an early stage in its development as an organisation that changes how it operates to better reflect what success and quality look like for Māori and the achievement of Māori learners. However, AQA has made the following changes:

- made it clearer, as part of amendments to its Constitution, that AQA will acknowledge the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- agreed with CUAP to include a principle that “quality assurance activities acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles of partnership, protection and participation” in the principles underpinning quality assurance. This principle was agreed with Te Kāhui Amokura (TKA, Universities New Zealand’s sub-committee on Māori) before being submitted to CUAP.

The above are foundational steps and AQA continues to consider what they mean in practice. Practical initiatives to date include:

- support for the Cycle 6 enhancement theme of “Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori learners and for Pasifika learners”
- seeking Māori members of audit panels
- support for tikanga and use of te reo Māori in meetings and other activities.

The enhancement theme is led and undertaken by the universities and the universities determined the topic of the theme, having taken advice from Te Kāhui Amokura and after engagement with senior Pasifika members of universities (subsequently Komiti Pasifika).

Cycle 6 audit panels should include at least one member of the panel able to bring a Māori perspective. AQA has previously sought to appoint Māori auditors. This has been challenging due to relatively low numbers of senior Māori staff with experience of academic quality and the high level of demands on such staff. The steps AQA has and is taking to try to overcome these challenges for Cycle 6, in addition to initiatives above, include:

- identifying potential auditors through enhancement theme and other activities
- monitoring by the AQA Board of the number and proportion of appointees to the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviews who are Māori.

[UNZ \(2018\) parity analysis](#)

[AQA Constitution](#)  
[KD-A1]

[Enhancement Theme website](#)

[Guide to Cycle 6, p29](#)  
[KD-A3]

See ToR C12 (p35)

Outside enhancement theme activities, AQA also seeks to support tikanga in other events and meetings through welcomes and openings being conducted in te reo Māori. It intends to publish some documents in te reo Māori.

The above developments have been guided by Māori in a range of informal relationships. To develop its commitment to acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi further, AQA may need to consider a more enduring model for advice and guidance. This could include the establishment of an advisory group and/or appointment of Māori staff to AQA.

### Pasifika

The Cycle 6 enhancement theme also recognises the place of Aotearoa within the Pacific, and enhancement theme activities also engage with Pasifika staff and students. AQA is also seeking to recruit and appoint Pasifika people to the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers and to audit panels.

More broadly, AQA is seeking to strengthen its relationships with quality assurance bodies across the Pacific and has had some initial discussions about reinvigorating a Pacific Quality Forum.

### Staffing profile

The former Director of AQA retired in early 2016 and the current Executive Director commenced in the role on 29 February 2016. Staffing is discussed further in ToR F3 (p59).

### New Zealand Government education reforms

The New Zealand Government has been pursuing a large-scale programme of reforms across the entire New Zealand education system since 2018. At the time of writing this self-review document, an Education and Training Bill, which will replace the existing New Zealand Education Act (1989), is progressing through legislative processes. The Education and Training Bill had its first reading in the New Zealand Parliament on 5 December 2019 and in mid-March is still in the Select Committee phase. The Education and Training Bill is a comprehensive re-write of the legislation for all education and training in New Zealand. However, the Bill does not signal any changes to quality assurance arrangements for the university sector. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee will remain as the body responsible for quality assurance of New Zealand universities.

**Enhancement  
initiative**

[Education and  
Training Bill](#)

## A6. Response to 2015 review

The 2015 Review of AQA made thirteen recommendations. AQA provided a one-year follow-up report to the Vice-Chancellors outlining how it was addressing the recommendations and published this report on the AQA website. Further progress on recommendations was monitored through AQA's annual statements of performance expectations in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

In summary, the current status of AQA's response to recommendations in the 2015 review is as follows.

[AQA one-year  
follow-up report  
2017/18  
Statement of  
Performance](#) (see  
measure 3.3, p11)

**1. The Panel recommends that the AQA Board explore ways to enhance the effectiveness of student representation on the Board.**

NZUSA have agreed to endeavour to make nominations for Board members able to serve more than one year. Also, NZUSA's processes for nominating a student member of the Board include consulting with students' associations that are not members of NZUSA. These efforts have been successful. The current member of the AQA Board nominated by NZUSA is in his second year on the Board and the previous NZUSA-nominated member completed a three-year term. Work with NZUSA to support capability building and knowledge transfer also helps enhance effectiveness, as more potential nominees are aware of AQA and its role.

**2. The Panel recommends that the AQA Board explore ways to incorporate international representation on the Board.**

The Board agrees on the importance of the Board being connected to international trends and developments and considers that it is well advised by AQA staff on these matters. An International Framework was approved by the Board in March 2019 to support the continuity of this work and international engagement and developments are reported regularly to the Board. While Board members themselves bring international perspectives and experience, no single Board member is appointed to provide international representation. The Board will continue to consider cost-effective means of enhancing international perspectives. However, the costs of having a dedicated international Board member are not considered to be justified.

[International Framework](#)

[sd-A5]

**3. The Panel recommends that the AQA Board explore the scope for enhanced induction for new AQA Board members.**

New Board members receive a dedicated induction that includes provision of key documents and a meeting with the Chair and Executive Director for an overview of AQA and its operating environment and identification of current priorities.

*Induction materials:*

[Agenda](#)

[sd-A6a]

[Presentation](#)

[sd-A6b]

**4. The Panel recommends that the AQA Board clarify its process in relation to the receipt and approval of audit reports to ensure that the Board's intention is reflected in the process.**

AQA staff have actioned this recommendation. The email request to Board members was revised to make it more explicit that their formal approval is sought (or reasons why this is not yet given), and provision is made on the AQA Board agenda to ensure formal approval is recorded for reports which have been approved between Board meetings.

**5. The Panel recommends that there be a debriefing report compiled after each audit site visit, based on the feedback from universities and audit panel members, for discussion by the AQA Board.**

This has been actioned and a debriefing report is considered by the Board after audit site visits, beginning with the Cycle 5 audit of the University of

Otago. The Executive Director will report to the Board on any issues during site visits for Cycle 6.

Additionally, a mid-cycle review was developed for Cycle 5 (Cameron and Kirkwood, 2015) and a process review of Cycle 5 (Matear, 2018a) examined the audit process from the perspectives of both auditors and universities. These reports enable systemic issues to be identified and have informed the development of Cycle 6.

**6. The Panel *recommends* that AQA encourage universities to make a public statement available within three years after their audit report is released in regard to the actions they have taken as a result of the quality audit.**

Universities' one-year follow-up reports on their Cycle 6 audit reports will be made available publicly. Universities are strongly encouraged to make their mid-cycle reports between Cycle 5 and Cycle 6 publicly available. To date, four of the five universities who have submitted mid-cycle reports have indicated they intend to make their reports available and three reports are available on university websites.

**7. The Panel *recommends* that AQA and the AQA Board actively consider and consult on ways to enhance the student voice and the engagement of students with the audit process.**

AQA has worked with NZUSA on this matter and a 2017 MoU between AQA and NZUSA reflects shared objectives on this issue. Audit panels in Cycles 6 will include a student, or recent graduate, as a member of the panel. AQA will continue to work with NZUSA and other national students' associations and universities to enhance the engagement with students in the audit process. Particular attention is being paid to how student partnerships in quality Scotland (sparqs) support both student associations and institutions in engaging students in the audit process.

**8. The Panel *recommends* that AQA and the AQA Board consider, in consultation with the universities and other stakeholders, how Cycle 6 might be more focused. This is to ensure that universities can derive the most benefit from the audit process and ensure alignment with each university's strategic goals, including what it means to be a university, and an academic, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

The development of Cycle 6 involved considerable discussion with universities and advice from international experts to develop a model of academic audit that reflects the maturity of New Zealand universities and that will add value to universities. The introduction of an enhancement theme provides focus. Section A5 sets out the development of Cycle 6 in more detail.

**9. The Panel *recommends* that AQA ensure that international auditors, and New Zealand-based auditors, can be enabled to bring international best practice to the audit process, and quality assurance and quality enhancement activities. Conversely, AQA needs to ensure that**

[Cameron and Kirkwood \(2015\)](#)  
[sd-A7]  
[Matear \(2018a\) Process review](#)  
[KD-A5]

*See ToR C8, p31*

[AQA-NZUSA MoU](#)

[Sparqs](#)

[Cycle 6 Discussion paper](#)  
[sd-A8]  
[Summary of key steps in development of Cycle 6](#)  
[sd-A9]

<p>international auditors are aware of the New Zealand tertiary education context and any current local issues before their service on an audit panel.</p> <p><b>10. Recognising that it is crucial that all auditors are well prepared in a timely way, the Panel <i>recommends</i> that systems be put in place to ensure that all auditors have received sufficient training before they attend an audit site visit. This should occur relatively close to an audit visit and might make use of on-line training materials.</b></p> <p><b>11. The Panel <i>recommends</i> that AQA ensures that there is an appropriate diversity in the skills and experience of audit panel members, and that audit panel members be recruited and chosen carefully to match the distinctive nature of individual institutions.</b></p> <p>Recommendations 9, 10 and 11 are addressed through the development of an Auditor Recruitment and Training Plan. This plan is part of AQA's capability strategy.</p> <p>Cycle 6 audit panels will normally consist of a panel convenor and four further auditors, including at least one international panel member and a student or recent graduate panel member. Audit panels should also include Māori panel members and, if possible, Pasifika panel members. The AQA Board monitors the diversity and mix of appointees to the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers.</p> <p><b>12. The Panel <i>recommends</i> that AQA emphasise the importance of the Self-Review Report and associated documentation to universities and to the audit panels, and work to enable the sharing of exemplars and best practice between universities.</b></p> <p>AQA facilitates sharing of exemplars and good practice between universities in its quality enhancement activities, which include meetings, events and publications. A review of Cycle 5 commendations, affirmations and recommendations identifies good practice across the Cycle 5 audit framework (Matear, 2018b). This enables universities to identify where good practice may be found. Events including the Support for Quality Conference (2013 to 2017), Quality Forum (2018 and 2019), Enhancement Theme Symposium and Cycle 6 self-review workshops also facilitate sharing of sharing of good practice.</p> <p>With respect to self-review reports specifically, AQA believes universities are in no doubt about the importance of the Self Review Report. AQA receives regular and positive feedback from universities about the usefulness to them of the self-review process and resulting report for internal quality improvement and documentation. Throughout Cycle 5, AQA reinforced the importance of self-review reports and has provided iterative guidance on the content and structure of those reports.</p> <p>As the reports belong to the individual universities, AQA does not share them. However, AQA does encourage sharing between universities themselves. AQA workshops to support universities preparing for self-review</p>	<p><a href="#">Auditor Recruitment and Training Plan</a> [sd-A10]</p> <p>See ToR C12, p35</p> <p><a href="#">Matear (2018b) Cycle 5: Analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations</a> [KD-A6] <a href="#">AQA Previous events</a></p> <p><a href="#">2019/20 AQA workshops Introduction to</a></p>
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in Cycle 6 have also facilitated sharing between universities as they have been encouraged to bring and re-examine their Cycle 5 self-review reports.

**13. The Panel *recommends* that the possible remedies in an appeal be more clearly articulated.**

This recommendation has been actioned. Appeal provisions of other jurisdictions were reviewed as benchmarks and the Appeal Policy has been reviewed to include possible remedies.

[Cycle 6 and Self-review](#)

[sd-A11]



## B. Leadership and advocacy

This section addresses the extent to which AQA provides leadership and advocacy as part of its purpose. AQA is clear that academic quality happens within universities. However, AQA can support the development of good practice, ensure that external quality assurance arrangements reflect good international practice and assist universities to respond to changes in student expectations, technology and other influences.

In addition to being set out as part of AQA's purpose, leadership is included as one of the Executive Director's annual KPIs. The ED's KPIs are evaluated directly by the Chair and Deputy Chair in annual reviews of the Executive Director.

Leadership in the Executive Directors KPIs is expressed as:

1.1 AQA is recognised as an authoritative, best practice, voice in quality assurance and quality enhancement.

1.2 AQA contributes to the development of quality assurance nationally and internationally.

The success indicators for these KPIs are acceptance of peer-reviewed journal or conference papers; AQA being sought as a reviewer or commentator on quality assurance matters; timely, constructive responses to relevant consultation papers; and contribution to national and international fora.

Six GGP provide the terms of reference for the assessment of leadership and advocacy.

[ED KPIs March 2019](#)

[sd-B1]

### B1. AQA operates with transparency, integrity and professionalism and adheres to ethical and professional standards. (2.1.1)

AQA operates with transparency, integrity and professionalism at all times. Transparency is demonstrated in the publication of materials on the AQA website and regular communication with universities, particularly the professional quality personnel in universities. The AQA newsletter also contributes to transparency in providing regular updates of activity in Cycle 6, as does the publication of AQA's annual reports. The annual reports include the audited financial statements and statement of performance.

Transparency, integrity and professionalism are important at all times, but particularly in the conduct of academic audits. AQA's audit policy, the guides to Cycle 6 including the supplement for auditors and in panel agreements for auditors help to ensure this. AQA processes for managing conflicts of interest are discussed further in ToR C14 (p37) and E3 (p49).

AQA does not use a specific ethical or professional standards framework but does demonstrate the sorts of ethical and professional standards expected in the New Zealand university sector. High ethical standards are supported by AQA policies as follows:

- Risk assessment and oversight policy – includes reputational risk to AQA and risks to the integrity of academic audit
- Finance policy – provides limits on and oversight of ED expenditure
- Health, safety and personal well-being policy – sets out support for well-being and unacceptability of harassment, bullying or

[AQA newsletters](#)  
[Annual reports](#)

[AQA Policies](#)  
P6, p16  
[KD-B1]  
[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
[KD-A3]  
[Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement](#)  
(p19)  
[KD-B2]

[AQA Policies](#)  
[KD-B1]



<p>discrimination of any form. A health and safety report is made to every Board meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fraud and theft prevention and investigation policy – establishes zero tolerance of fraud or theft and internal controls for prevention.</li> </ul> <p>AQA uses style guides for publications, presentations and its website to maintain a professional appearance.</p> <p>AQA considers that transparency, integrity and professionalism are well-handled, and policy and practices are appropriate for AQA’s activities. No concerns have been raised in this review period.</p>	
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## B2. AQA is open to international developments in quality assurance and has mechanisms that enable it to learn about and analyse the main trends in the field.

### (2.2.1)

<p>AQA follows international developments in quality assurance closely. It does this through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• membership in international quality assurance associations (INQAAHE and APQN)</li> <li>• reviewing relevant academic and professional journals and publications</li> <li>• monitoring international QA bodies and other organisations’ websites</li> <li>• attending relevant conferences</li> <li>• visits and meetings with international quality assurance agencies</li> <li>• appointment of international auditors and international experience of New Zealand auditors</li> <li>• appointment of AQA staff to overseas registers.</li> </ul> <p>The development of Cycle 6 involved extensive consideration of international developments and trends. A review of Cycle 5 processes (Matear, 2018a) included an assessment of the Cycle 5 Audit Framework against the UK Quality Code and the Australian Higher Education Standards Framework and questioned whether some aspects were adequately covered in the AQA Audit Framework compared with other frameworks (p6). These aspects were subsequently discussed in audit framework development workshops and some—particularly credit transfer and recognition of prior learning—were included in the final Cycle 6 Audit Framework.</p> <p>This comparison of quality assurance frameworks was extended into an analysis of key features of quality assurance systems and the drivers and boundary conditions that make one model more appropriate than another in a particular context. This was presented as a conference paper at the 2017 INQAAHE conference (Matear and King, 2017).</p> <p>The introduction of an enhancement theme into the overall model for Cycle 6 is a substantive example of learning from other jurisdictions. AQA invited the Convenor of the (then) current Scottish enhancement theme to attend its 2017 <a href="#">Support for Quality Conference</a> and learnt a great deal from this interaction.</p> <p>AQA’s engagement in student voice has also followed and learnt from other jurisdictions, particularly the Scottish experience again, but also developments</p>	<p><a href="#">International Framework</a> [sd-A5]</p> <p><a href="#">Cycle 6 Discussion paper</a> [sd-A8]</p> <p><a href="#">Matear (2018a) Process review</a> [KD-A5]</p> <p><a href="#">Cycle 6 Devt WS (Aug. 17)</a> [sd-B2]</p> <p><a href="#">Matear and King (2017)</a> [sd-B3]</p> <p><i>Link in text</i></p>
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<p>in Australia. The Scottish system is a valuable model of quality assurance for New Zealand universities as it is also a (relatively) small system that has maintained a peer-review approach to quality assurance and is an internationally recognised leader.</p> <p>The Australian approach to external quality assurance is different. However New Zealand and Australia have been strengthening their engagement with student voice over a similar time period and the two systems have learnt from one another (Matear, Varnham and Shaw, 2018). The Executive Director has contributed to Australian student voice events and Australian colleagues have attended the New Zealand Student Voice Summit. The AQA Executive Director and the leader of the Student Voice Australia initiative have communicated regularly over the last three years. Bringing TEQSA's academic integrity workshops to New Zealand in 2020 is another example of AQA learning from international developments.</p> <p>The reference list and suggested resources in the Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit demonstrate the extent to which AQA maintains currency with international developments and, where appropriate, incorporates these into its own approach. For example, AQA will adopt the Finnish practice of explicitly asking about feasibility and usefulness of recommendations in its feedback processes (see ToR C3, p27).</p> <p>International developments are reported to the Board and communicated in the 'Have you seen this' column in the AQA newsletter.</p> <p>AQA appoints international auditors to its Registers of Auditors and Reviewers and audit panels include at least one international auditor. Additionally, several New Zealand auditors have substantial international expertise. Their knowledge and experience also help keep AQA's awareness of international developments in quality assurance current.</p> <p>The AQA Executive Director has been appointed as a specialist on the HKCAAVQ register but has not yet participated in any reviews. However, the HKCAAVQ online specialist training programme provided a useful reference point in considering the development of online materials for AQA auditors. The HKCAAVQ programme is open only for specific time periods, which has made completion difficult.</p> <p>Overall, AQA considers that the development of Cycle 6 Academic audit provides evidence that it is well connected to international practice. That AQA has learnt from international trends quality assurance practice is also demonstrated in conference papers it has presented.</p>	<p><a href="#"><i>Matear et al. (2018) STARS</i></a></p> <p><a href="#">TEQSA academic integrity workshop</a></p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p36 [KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">AQA newsletters</a></p>
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### **B3. AQA collaborates with other QA agencies where possible, in areas such as exchange of good practices, capacity building, and review of decisions, joint projects, or staff exchanges. (2.2.2)**

<p>AQA collaborates with other QA agencies nationally, regionally (Australia and the Pacific) and internationally. AQA's International Framework sets out key agencies and the benefits and status of each relationship. This framework is reviewed regularly.</p>	
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Within New Zealand, AQA's main collaboration is with CUAP with which it shares a set of principles that underpin their approaches to quality assurance. The principles were revised in 2019 and two further principles added. AQA is working with CUAP and UNZ on developing a revised publication that incorporates these. AQA and CUAP also collaborate on international matters such as joint presentations to visiting delegations.

Still within New Zealand, AQA is a member of the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) with NZQA and UNZ. This provides a forum for sharing practice and initiatives and a basis for collaborative activity.

AQA collaborates with NZQA on presentations to and programmes for international delegations and visitors. AQA organised a programme for the CEO of TEQSA's visit to New Zealand in March 2019, which included time with NZQA and AQA. More recently, AQA has recently collaborated with NZQA (and UNZ) to bring TEQSA workshops on academic integrity to New Zealand. Around 150 people from all parts of the New Zealand tertiary sector attended two workshops held in Auckland and Christchurch at the beginning of February 2020. The Auckland workshop was filled to capacity four weeks before the event and informal feedback from both workshops has been positive.

AQA also contributes to NZQA initiatives, with the ongoing review of the New Zealand Qualification Framework the most substantive recent example of this. The AQA Executive Director is a member of the Advisory Group for the review and was a member of an expert working group which met for a week in October to explore options.

While not formal collaboration, AQA also provides advice to CUAP, NZQA and other organisations with an interest in quality assurance in New Zealand. These have included the Ministry of Education and TEC (student voice), ACE Aotearoa and Fire and Emergency NZ (approaches to quality assurance). AQA also maintains a good relationship with Ako Aotearoa.

Regionally, AQA and TEQSA have begun to collaborate on matters of common interest as they arise and AQA is increasing its collaboration with Quality Assurance Bodies (QABs) in the Pacific. Pacific QABs are invited to participate in AQA events. AQA has responded to requests from the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) to assist with reviewer recruitment and appointment. AQA and the Samoan Qualifications Authority (SQA) maintain a good working relationship and have been discussing the potential for Pacific QABs to meet and share good practices. SQA regularly attends AQA events. While not directly involved in the project itself, AQA supported a peer benchmarking project between New Zealand and Pacific institutions and agencies (Booth, 2018) and was an invited commentator to the concluding workshop for this project.

AQA's International Framework sets out why key relationships are maintained. An appendix to the international framework lists the QAAs in other countries with which AQA has signed an agreement to cooperate or maintains an important relationship. In 2020, AQA has formal international agreements with:

- the Australian Government Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2019)

[Academic Quality Assurance of New Zealand universities](#)

[TEQSA CEO visit programme](#)  
[sd-B4]

[Academic Integrity workshop flyer](#)  
[sd-B5]

[Booth \(2018\). Higher Education Pacific Quality Benchmarking Project](#)

[International Framework](#)  
[sd-A5]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (renewed 2019 – but not signed)</li> <li>• Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA) (renewed 2019).</li> </ul> <p>Internationally, AQA also maintains a relationship with QAA-Scotland, which has shared its approaches to both quality assurance and quality enhancement and facilitated AQA being able to attend a meeting of the sparqs Universities Advisory Group as an observer. In return, AQA has been invited to contribute to a plenary session at QAA Scotland’s 2020 Enhancement Themes conference, so that Scottish colleagues can hear about enhancement themes in other parts of the world.</p> <p>AQA considers the evidence presented in support of meeting this term of reference shows that it does collaborate effectively with other QA agencies. This collaboration is mainly concerned with exchange of good practice, although a small amount of joint activity does occur.</p>	
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#### **B4. AQA discloses to the public the decisions about the EQAA resulting from any external review of its own performance. (4.2.1)**

<p>AQA publishes on its website its five-yearly external reviews, annual reports and the one-year follow-up report to the external review. The release of an external review is also notified in a press release and to AQA’s mailing list.</p> <p>AQA’s annual reports include its audited financial statements and statement of performance. These constitute an annual external review of AQA’s performance, although their emphasis is on the accuracy and adequacy of AQA’s reporting of its performance rather than the performance itself.</p> <p>While not directly a review of AQA’s performance (although AQA’s contribution is referred to), AQA also commissioned and published an external review of the Cycle 6 enhancement theme. This is also published on the AQA website.</p> <p>Therefore, AQA meets this term of reference.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA External Reviews</a></p> <p><a href="#">Annual reports</a></p>
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#### **B5. AQA prepares and disseminates periodically integrated reports on the overall outcomes of QA processes and of any other relevant activities. (4.2.2)**

<p>AQA has undertaken and published two comprehensive reviews of Cycle 5 processes and findings and a summary of how universities have responded to recommendations in Cycle 5 audit reports. Anecdotal feedback is that professional quality staff in New Zealand universities have found these reports useful.</p> <p>AQA also publishes reports on outcomes of quality assurance processes in its newsletter, a series of thematic notes and occasional working papers. Thematic notes are an occasional series of short notes on topics of interest to New Zealand universities. They may be prompted by analysis of audit reports, developments in other jurisdictions or policy initiatives and, in turn, are intended to prompt further consideration among New Zealand universities.</p>	<p><i>Matear (2018a)</i> <a href="#">Process review</a> [KD-A5]</p> <p><i>Matear (2018b)</i> <a href="#">Cycle 5: Analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations</a> [KD-A6]</p>
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The following thematic notes have been developed:

*Table 2 Thematic note topics*

Topic	Date	Dissemination	
Outcome standards	2016	<a href="#">September newsletter</a>	<i>Link in text</i>
Enhancement	2016	Attached to Cycle 6 consultation with universities	<a href="#">Cycle 6 Discussion paper</a> [sd-A8]
Student voice	2016	Developed into conference paper (Matear, Varnham and Shaw, 2018)	<a href="#">Matear et al. (2018) STARS</a>
Course advising and academic advice	2017	Developed for and discussed with the UNZ Committee on Student Administration and Student Services	<a href="#">Course advising Thematic note</a> [sd-B6]
Teaching quality, development and excellence	2017	Published on AQA website	<a href="#">Teaching quality Thematic note</a>
Other materials, such as a working paper on evidence in quality assurance are also published on the AQA website.			<a href="#">AQA working paper – Evidence</a>
AQA also publishes reports from quality enhancement activities such as its Quality Forum and the Enhancement Theme Symposium.			<a href="#">Quality Forum Report 2018 Symposium 2018</a>
AQA considers that while it does publish reports on the outcomes of QA and other academic quality activities, the formats and mechanisms through which it does this have become rather fragmented. It intends to review this and develop a more straightforward approach.			<b>Enhancement initiative</b>

## B6. AQA is sought as a credible commentator on matters of academic quality.

<p>AQA does not comment frequently in the media on matters of academic quality, consistent with its view that academic quality occurs in universities. It does comment when those matters are more directly related to quality assurance.</p> <p>Media comment or responses over the last couple of years have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio NZ and <a href="#">Christchurch Press</a> 30 March 2017 – assessment practices and standards</li> <li>• <a href="#">Interview with QAA Scotland</a> October 2017 – enhancement theme</li> <li>• UNZ <a href="#">news article</a> November 2018 – enhancement theme</li> <li>• THE (Anna McKie 13-3-19) – contract cheating – email response</li> <li>• <a href="#">TVOne</a> May 2019 – academic integrity</li> </ul> <p>In addition to media comment, AQA is sought as a commentator at conferences or events and to contribute to reference and other working groups. Invited contribution includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commentator at the Higher Education Pacific Quality <a href="#">Benchmarking Project</a> International Peer Review Workshop (November 2017)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Evidence in links in text</i></p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presentation to Massey University Leadership Development programme (December 2017)</li> <li>• presentation on Quality Assurance and academic integrity at the <a href="#">2018 Higher Education Quality Network conference</a> in Melbourne</li> <li>• keynote presentation at the 2018 <a href="#">10<sup>th</sup> Higher Education International conference on Innovation and Developments in Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance</a> in Macao, China</li> <li>• workshop facilitator HEQN conference (June 2019)</li> <li>• member of the advisory group and expert working group to review the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (from 2017).</li> </ul> <p>At other times AQA assists or provides background evidence to support UNZ media comment. Examples of this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on the development of a complaints mechanism (2017)</li> <li>• Background information for UNZ articles on cheating (2018, 2019).</li> </ul> <p>Finally, AQA provides comments through submissions processes for developments in New Zealand tertiary education. Submissions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Productivity Commission</a> investigation into New models of tertiary education (May 2016)</li> <li>• Kōrero Mātauranga (May 2018)</li> <li>• Micro-credentials in NZ's education and training system (April 2018)</li> <li>• Reform of vocational education (April 2019)</li> <li>• Tertiary student voice (September 2019)</li> <li>• New Zealand Qualifications Framework review (September 2019).</li> </ul> <p>While AQA does not seek to position itself as a regular commentator, the number of times that it is asked to comment or contribute is evidence of its credibility.</p>	<p><a href="#">Productivity Commission</a> [sd-B7] <a href="#">Kōrero Mātauranga</a> [sd-B8] <a href="#">Micro-credentials</a> [sd-B9] <a href="#">ROVE</a> [sd-B10] <a href="#">AQA Submission to TSV</a> [sd-A4] <a href="#">NZQF</a> [sd-B11]</p>
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## C. Quality assurance

This section addresses how effectively AQA undertakes quality assurance processes that assist universities. This is expressed in AQA's Constitution as "applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities in improving student engagement, academic experience and learning outcomes".

This is the most substantial and significant part of AQA's work and consequently this is a large section with eighteen terms of reference to be addressed. Therefore, this section begins with an overview of AQA's quality assurance activities. Quality enhancement activities are examined in Section D.

AQA's quality assurance activities are guided by its Constitution, its policies, the joint principles with CUAP, frameworks including INQAAHE's GGP and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), and national and international developments in university education and quality assurance. AQA undertakes its quality assurance activities of New Zealand universities through a regular cycle of academic audit.

Both Cycle 5 and Cycle 6 academic audits use a framework of guideline statements. The Cycle 5 framework had 40 guideline statements across seven 'academic activity themes'. These were refined to 30 guideline statements in five sections for Cycle 6.

The 30 guideline statements for Cycle 6 are expressed in outcomes-oriented language. Cycle 6 guideline statements should consider all students, all delivery, and all staff who undertake or support teaching or supervision; with the university placing emphasis as is appropriate to their student body and strategic priorities. The audit framework is underpinned by the university's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, its role as critic and conscience of society and the research teaching nexus. These underpinning elements should be reflected in the university's self-review report. The Cycle 6 audit framework is summarised in Figure 1.

[AQA Constitution](#)  
[KD-A1]

[Academic Quality Assurance of New Zealand universities](#)

[INQAAHE GGP](#)

[ESG](#)

[Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework](#)  
[KD-C1]



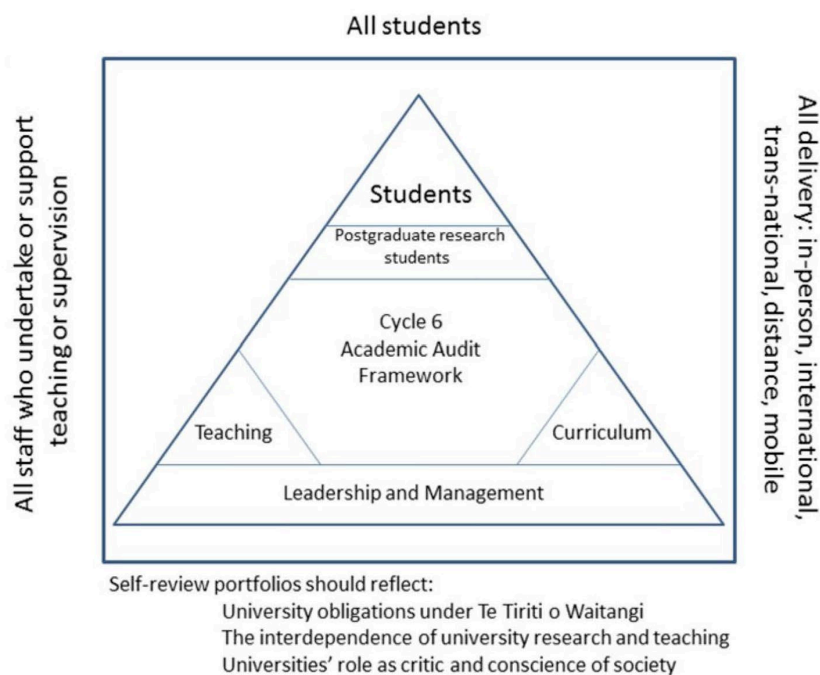


Figure 1 Cycle 6 Audit Framework

The Cycle 6 audit framework was developed with significant university input. Between 2 and 23 May 2018, AQA consulted formally with universities on the audit framework, approved by the AQA Board in July 2018 and endorsed by the Vice-Chancellors at their 9-10 August meeting 2019.

The key steps in the audit process are:

- preparation and submission of the self-review report and portfolio by the university
- planning meetings between AQA and the university
- review and assessment of the self-review by the audit panel
- site visit(s)
- report by the audit panel
- follow-up reporting by the university.

The audit is undertaken by a panel of peers and, for Cycle 6, a student or recent graduate, drawn from AQA's Register of Auditors and Reviewers. Auditors who meet the criteria for appointment are appointed to the Register by the AQA Board. Auditors must participate in training to ensure they understand the audit framework and process before they can participate in a Panel.

The audit reports address all guideline statements and panels may make commendations, affirmations or recommendations as part of their conclusions.

Audit processes and logistics are managed by AQA, which also publishes comprehensive guides to help universities and auditors prepare for and undertake audits. AQA also has an internal 'Audit operations manual'; the redevelopment of this manual for Cycle 6 audits is addressed in measure 1.4 of the 2020-2021 statement of performance expectations.

[Summary of key steps in development of Cycle 6](#)  
[sd-A9]

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
(Section 4, p25)  
[KD-A3]

[Criteria for auditor appointment](#)

[Statement of Performance Expectations 2020-2021](#)  
[sd-C1]



Some of the comment in this section refers to academic audit in Cycle 6 and these audits have not yet occurred. The likelihood of their effectiveness however can be assessed in relation to the effectiveness of Cycle 5 academic audits on which they build and by considering the changes that have been made for Cycle 6. While this may present some challenge to the panel for the external review of AQA, it is useful for AQA as it will gain feedback before audits are conducted in Cycle 6.

**C1. AQA recognises that institutional and programmatic quality and quality assurance are primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions (HEIs) themselves, and respects the academic autonomy, identity and integrity of the institutions and programmes. (3.1.1)**

AQA does recognise that academic quality and quality assurance are primarily the responsibility of the universities themselves. This is demonstrated in key principles stating that “academic quality is fundamentally the responsibility of each university” and reflected in AQA operations and activities. Academic audit draws on a university’s strategic plan (or equivalent) to appreciate the context for the audit but does not attempt to evaluate the strategic plan or direction itself.

[Academic Quality Assurance of New Zealand universities](#)

The review of Cycle 5 processes (Matear, 2018a) examined whether using an audit framework comprising specific guideline statements limited a university’s ability to present a coherent narrative in its self-review, and thereby compromised its autonomy and identity. On balance, the review concluded that the framework did still permit coherence and allow universities to be audited as individual universities. The lessons for Cycle 6 identified in the review of Cycle 5 processes were that:

*Matear (2018a)*  
[Process review](#)  
[KD-A5]

- expectations regarding narrative should be explicit in guidance to universities and audit handbooks
- universities should be advised that parts of the audit framework can be sequenced to facilitate the development of a coherent narrative.

The Guide to Cycle 6 is explicit that “AQA auditors consider the university’s self-review related to the audit framework in the context of the university’s strategic direction and priorities” and there are numerous references to the importance of the context of an individual university throughout the guide.

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
pp v-vi  
[KD-A3]

Also, at both the planning visit and the site visit, confidential meetings are held with the Vice-Chancellor to ensure the Panel is aware of any contextual matters or specific challenges the university might face or any significant changes in progress or planned which might impact on matters relevant to the audit. These meetings further help ensure that the identify and autonomy of the university are respected.

Audit panels make recommendations, they do not set requirements because they recognise university autonomy, identity and integrity. In making recommendations, audit panels will identify an issue that should be addressed but will not (or very rarely) tell a university how to address it. Universities do not have to respond to recommendations, although they are expected to. Recommendations are made to be enhancement-oriented and useful to a

university. If a university is not going to address a recommendation, it would be expected to provide an explanation for this.

AQA is therefore confident that it does recognise and respect university autonomy, identity and integrity.

## C2. AQA promotes the development and appropriate implementation of IQA processes in accordance with the understanding that the primary responsibility for assuring quality resides with the institutions and its programmes. (3.1.2)

As above, AQA is clear that the responsibilities for quality assurance rest primarily with the universities. AQA is also conscious that its academic audits are not the only external accountability requirement for NZ universities. However, academic audit is the only comprehensive, enhancement-led process, that takes a holistic view of academic quality for New Zealand universities.

The Guide to Cycle 6 sets out a quality assurance and accountability framework for New Zealand universities and locates the contribution of academic audit in this framework (Figure 2).

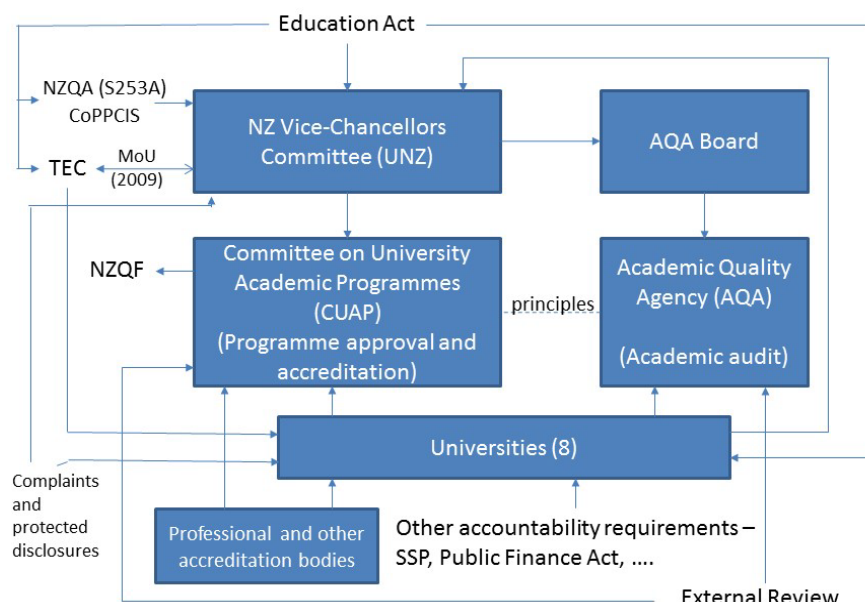


Figure 2 The quality assurance and accountability framework for New Zealand universities

As part of its audit framework in Cycles 5 and 6, AQA panels assess how universities lead and manage their teaching and learning. This includes a university's internal quality assurance. A key aspect is how universities manage delegations for academic decision making.

Self-review reports provide the interface between a university's internal quality assurance (IQA) and AQA's external quality assurance (EQA) processes. AQA does not mandate how a university should undertake its self-review but does provide workshops for universities to support their self-review processes and facilitate sharing of good practice between universities. On-line learning materials are being developed to support self-review activities further.

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
p1  
[KD-A3]

C5 GS 1.1  
C6 GS 4  
[Cycle 5 Audit Framework](#)  
[Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework](#)  
[KD-C1]

Being explicit about the context in which academic audit occurs for New Zealand universities and the development of self-review workshops demonstrates that AQA does understand that the primary responsibility for assuring quality lies with the universities. Evidence that AQA promotes development of internal quality assurance processes is presented in Section D.	<a href="#">2019/20 AQA workshops Introduction to Cycle 6 and Self-review</a> [sd-A11]
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### C3. AQA bears in mind the level of workload and cost that its procedures will place on institutions, and, strives to make them as time- and cost-effective as possible. (3.1.3)

AQA is highly conscious of the workload and cost that engaging in academic audit places on universities. The review of Cycle 5 processes considered that universities had been well supported by AQA throughout Cycle 5.	<a href="#">Cycle 6 Discussion paper</a> [sd-A8]
These matters were part of the development of Cycle 6 Academic Audit. The extension of the cycle to seven to eight years and reconfiguration of the site visit component were due in part to a desire to reduce the time and cost of academic audit to universities. However, any cost reduction as a consequence of longer periods between audits must be offset against potential increases associated with the Cycle 6 enhancement theme (see D4, p47).	<i>Matear (2018a)</i> <a href="#">Process review</a> [KD-A5]
The enhancement orientation that AQA and the universities adopt in their approach to quality assurance means that value is also considered as well as cost. One of the over-arching objectives of the Cycle 6 Audit Framework is “to provide a set of guideline statements that a university will gain value from evaluating itself against and from the assessment made by the audit panel, leading to enhancement”.	
AQA encourages universities to make use of materials that have been prepared for other purposes, as appropriate, and not to see audit as an event in itself. Guidelines for evidence in Cycle 6 anticipate that most of the evidence presented by a university will be pre-existing (Guide to Cycle 6, p12).	<a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p12 [KD-A3]
Universities meet the direct costs of their audits, ie, costs of panel honoraria, travel, accommodation and sustenance. Other costs, including the AQA secretariat and Board roles are covered in the AQA annual budget. Recommendations made by an audit panel are discussed with the university in a post-audit meeting to ensure they are feasible, appropriate and affordable. The feedback forms for Cycle 6 audits will adopt the Finnish approach of explicitly asking the university about the feasibility and usefulness of recommendations.	<a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p36 [KD-A3]
The development of self-review workshops for Cycle 6 is a further example of how AQA is seeking to make its processes time- and cost-effective by improving understanding of the processes and requirements at an early stage in a university’s preparation for its Cycle 6 audit.	<a href="#">2019/20 AQA workshops Introduction to Cycle 6 and Self-review</a> [sd-A11]

## C4. AQA recognises and values institutional diversity and translates this valuation into criteria and procedures that take into account the identity and goals of higher education institutions. (3.2.1)

One of AQA's terms of reference is that it will "acknowledge and respect the individual contexts of universities in undertaking quality assurance reviews". The Guide to Cycle 6 also stresses the importance of audits reflecting the "context and priorities of individual universities" (p26). To give further effect to this, the Guide to Cycle 6 also indicates that a university's self-review report should provide an introduction or preface. The purpose of the introduction is to provide "context for audit panel members. They should be able to appreciate the nature of the university, how it is structured with respect to academic quality matters, and its priorities and objectives over the period of the audit cycle." (p26.)

In many respects New Zealand universities may appear to be relatively homogenous. Nevertheless, they do differ from one another in terms of:

- size (range)
- proportion of distance or on-line students
- proportions of Māori, Pasifika, first-in-family and low SES students
- academic portfolios (particularly professional degree ranges such as medicine, engineering, dentistry, architecture).

The extent to which a common set of guideline statements might have an 'homogenising' effect on quality assurance was raised in Cycle 5. However, further reflection indicated that "universities were pleased that the [Cycle 5] Framework did ... permit coherence and allowed universities to generate their own narrative and be audited as individual universities" (Matear 2018, p9.).

It is important that the guideline statements are seen as a framework. This is expressed in the Guide to Cycle 6 as follows:

*Guideline statements provide a structure for universities to self-evaluate and audit panels to evaluate the academic quality of a university. They are intended to be a guide and not to act as a constraint. While all guideline statements are important—and all need to be addressed—they are not all of the same level of importance, size or complexity. Universities should place emphasis on statements that are of greater importance in their context. In addressing the guideline statements, a university may consider it appropriate for its context to address two guideline statements together or to split a guideline statement into sub-parts. Audit panels may comment (including making commendations or recommendations) on other matters that significantly affect academic quality if these arise during an audit (p.12).*

AQA is therefore confident that its processes facilitate the recognition of institutional diversity. AQA will continue to evaluate its effects on individuality and diversity in the sector, seeking to ensure that its processes do not inhibit institutional individuality and diversity in the sector.

[AQA Constitution](#)  
[KD-A1]

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
p26  
[KD-A3]

[Matear \(2018a\) Process review](#)  
[KD-A5]

**C5. The standards or criteria developed by AQA have been subject to reasonable consultation with stakeholders and are revised at regular intervals to ensure relevance to the needs of the system. (3.2.2)**

Consistent with the principle that quality assurance activities are “collective and collegial”, AQA consulted extensively with universities in the development of Cycle 6 and in the development of the Cycle 6 Audit Framework. The design of Cycle 6 takes account of the needs of the system (Matear, 2018c), as was also the case for Cycle 5.

[Summary of key steps in development of Cycle 6](#)  
[sd-A9]

University needs and expectations for Cycle 6 were developed in a series of discussions (held April – June 2016) between the AQA Executive Director and Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic) or other senior university leaders responsible for academic quality and senior quality managers in each university. The AQA Executive Director presented a preliminary paper to and met with the Vice-Chancellors in July 2016. The needs summarised from these discussions were that Cycle 6 should reflect developments in education and trends in international external quality assurance. Cycle 6 needed to “both reflect and respond to changes impacting on universities and continue to support the maintenance of high standards of academic quality that New Zealand universities are known for” (Matear, 2018c).

The development of the Cycle 6 Audit Framework involved a series of workshops with universities and a student representative. AQA then formally consulted with universities on the proposed audit framework and responded to feedback. This is summarised in a July 2018 letter from the Chair of the AQA Board to the Vice-Chancellors. Other stakeholders, primarily NZQA, were provided with updates on progress at JCG meetings.

[AQA Board recommendation to VCs](#)  
[sd-C2]

AQA did consult with stakeholders in the development of Cycle 6. It recognises that formal consultation occurred only with university stakeholders. However, the perspectives of students and international colleagues were sought and incorporated during the development processes.

AQA will seek feedback from panel members and universities on their experience with the Cycle 6 audit framework. If needed and agreed with universities, changes could be made before the end of the cycle, although this would not be desirable. Cycle 6 will be subject to a comprehensive review in 2024. This is separate from the next external review of AQA. However, there would be value in aligning the timeline of these two review processes.

**C6. Standards or criteria take into consideration the specific aspects related to different modes of provision, such as transnational education, distance or online programmes or other non-traditional approaches to HE as relevant to the context in which they operate. (3.2.3)**

AQA recognises that universities deliver their programmes across a range of modes and that this range is increasing. Rather than try and specify all possible modes *a priori* or potentially ask universities to address guideline statements regarding modes that are not relevant to that university, the Cycle 6 Audit Framework indicates that universities should consider all modes of delivery in

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
p10  
[KD-A3]

addressing guideline statements. This allows both the range of delivery modes to be addressed and the university to focus on the modes that are most relevant for it.	
For New Zealand universities, CUAP is responsible for accrediting universities to be able to deliver programmes (qualifications) offshore or trans-nationally. CUAP explicitly addresses overseas and transnational delivery in Appendix G of the CUAP Handbook.	<a href="#">CUAP Handbook</a>

**C7. Standards or criteria explicitly address the areas of institutional activity that fall within the AQA’s scope, and on the availability of necessary resources (eg, finances, staff and learning resources). (3.2.4)**

<p>The guideline statements in the audit frameworks for Cycles 5 and 6 are consistent with AQA’s scope. According to its terms of reference, “AQA will reflect areas of importance to universities with respect to their teaching, learning, student experience and student outcomes activities”. This constitutes a scope statement for AQA.</p> <p>The audit frameworks for Cycles 5 and 6 include guideline statements that address the adequacy of teaching and learning environments and infrastructure as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C5 GS 1.4 Infrastructure – universities should have strategies and/or use processes for ensuring that their teaching and learning spaces and facilities are appropriate for their teaching and learning needs</li> <li>• C5 GS 1.5 Information resources – universities should use processes for ensuring their information resources are appropriate and sufficient for research-informed teaching and learning.</li> <li>• C6 GS 3 Teaching and learning environments – teaching and learning are supported by appropriate learning environments (infrastructure, spaces, media, facilities and resources).</li> </ul> <p>The audit frameworks for Cycles 5 and 6 both include a section on teaching quality that focuses on staff. These sections do not address adequacy as a quantum, as implied in the GGP but rather the quality of and support for teaching. Adequacy of resourcing would be a precursor to the guideline statements in these sections.</p> <p>The availability of financial resources to a university is not within AQA’s scope but is addressed through other accountability requirements, in particular its annual report and financial statements. These are subject to financial audit and the Office of the Auditor General makes further comment on financial performance of universities in reports to the NZ Parliament.</p> <p>Therefore, although the availability of financial resources falls outside AQA’s scope, it recognises the processes in place to safeguard this aspect of university quality. Otherwise the scope of its audits and specific guideline statements with the audit frameworks demonstrate that AQA meets this ToR.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Constitution</a> [KD-A1]</p> <p><a href="#">Cycle 5 Audit Framework</a></p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework</a> [KD-C1]</p> <p><a href="#">OAG briefing on 2018 audits</a></p>
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**C8. Criteria or standards and procedures take into account internal follow up mechanisms, and, provide for effective follow up of the outcomes of the external reviews. (3.2.5)**

<p>AQA expects that universities will have processes or mechanisms for addressing audit recommendations. It does not assess those mechanisms directly (as these are the responsibility of the university – see ToR C2, p27) but it does require reporting of progress at a number of points.</p>	<p>ToR C2, p27</p>
<p>AQA audit procedures include requirements for reporting on recommendations made by audit panels. Both Cycle 5 and 6 requirements include a formal one-year follow up report to the AQA Board on progress the university has made in addressing recommendations in its audit report. These requirements are set out in Section 11 of the AQA Cycle 5 Academic Audit Handbook for Universities and Section 4.8 of the Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit.</p>	<p><a href="#">Cycle 5 Handbook</a> [KD-A2] <a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> [KD-A3]</p>
<p>Six weeks after the completion of its audit, a university has the opportunity to indicate to AQA if it considers a recommendation to be inappropriate or not feasible (Auditor Supplement, p12). The university would address the reasons for this in its one-year follow-up report.</p>	<p><a href="#">Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement</a> [KD-B2]</p>
<p>The one-year follow-up process includes a visit to the university by the Chair of the audit panel and the AQA Executive Director. The visit is supportive and enhancement-oriented rather than compliance-oriented. Most universities provided a draft of their Cycle 5 one-year follow-up report which could be discussed at the meeting.</p>	
<p>An analysis of the one-year follow-up reports for Cycle 5 indicated that, as might be expected, most recommendations could be classified as being ‘in progress’ in terms of being addressed. However, 24% of recommendations could be considered to be complete and 10% of recommendations at an early stage. Only one recommendation was considered to be not yet addressed. This provides evidence that that universities are generally responsive to recommendations made in audit reports and follow-up processes are effective.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Newsletter, September 2019</a></p>
<p>Figure 3 presents the progress on recommendations normalised to the number of recommendations made, as this standardises the response between the activity themes. Percentages have been used in analyses of Cycle 5 audit reports to remove this effect.</p>	

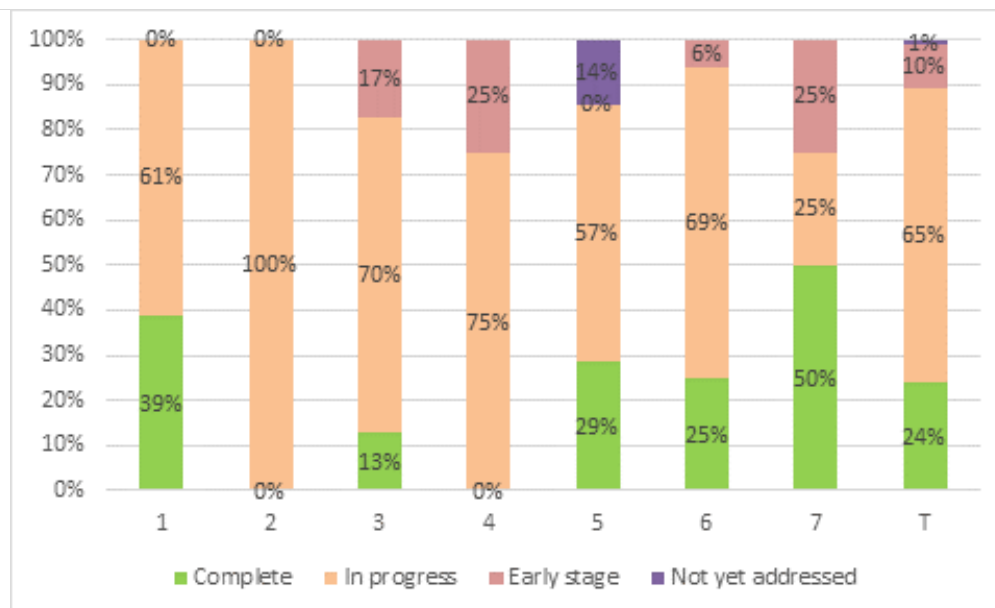


Figure 3: Universities progress on recommendations by Cycle 5 academic activity theme (% recommendations made in a theme addressed)

#### Key to X-axis

1 Leadership & Management of Teaching & Learning

2 Student Profile: Access, Admission and Transition Processes

3 Curriculum and Assessment

4 Student Engagement and Achievement

5 Student Feedback and Support

6 Teaching Quality

7 Supervision of Research Students

T Total

A 'mid-cycle' report has been introduced, recognising the risks of not being aware of universities' further progress in addressing audit recommendations in the longer time interval between the Cycle 5 and 6 academic audits. Universities provide a further report to the AQA Board 'mid' way between their Cycle 5 and 6 audits. The mid-cycle reports are direct to the AQA Board and are not accompanied by any other comment from a panel or panel chair. This is reflected in the Board's consideration of these reports where the Board undertakes an 'evaluative review' of the mid-cycle report and may 'accept' the report or seek further information. Any recommendations which have not been fully addressed at the time of the mid-cycle report will be included in the self-review report for the next audit of the university.

Of the five mid-cycle reports submitted to date, four universities have expressed a commitment to make their report public and the fifth undertook to make the report widely available internally. To date, three universities have published their reports on their public websites, one has published on their internal site and one university has indicated its publication is delayed by a web upgrade project. The publicly available reports are:

- [Victoria University of Wellington](#) November 2018
- [University of Canterbury](#) November 2018
- [University of Waikato](#) April 2019

The assessment of progress in one-year follow-up reports and the publication of mid-cycle reports by universities demonstrates that follow-up processes are effective.

*Links to mid-cycle reports in text*



### C9. AQA procedures specify the way in which criteria will be applied and the types of evidence needed to demonstrate that they are met. (3.2.6)

<p>AQA produces a series of handbooks or guides for each cycle of academic audits. These set out expectations of evidence and the processes by which criteria will be applied.</p> <p>Feedback from Cycle 5 auditors indicated that most auditors held positive views about the Cycle 5 Auditor Handbook (Matear, 2018a). This review of Cycle 5 processes also concluded that auditors considered that evidence and critical self-treatment of evidence could have been stronger. These aspects have been emphasised in Cycle 6.</p> <p>In Cycle 6, the guides to audit are explicit that the guideline statements (criteria) apply to all students, all staff and all delivery. Universities will place emphasis on specific groups or modes “as is appropriate to their priorities, student body and delivery profile” (p10). Cycle 6 characterises this as taking an embedded or systemic approach to quality.</p> <p>Cycle 6 is also explicit that evidence should reflect this embedded or systemic approach to quality and the Guide includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guidelines for evidence in Cycle 6 (pp 12-13)</li> <li>• comment on evidence with respect to each of the guideline statements</li> <li>• an appendix summarising the sorts of evidence a university is expected to provide (pp 70 -75).</li> </ul> <p>These points are reinforced in self-review workshops for universities and will be included in auditor training workshops.</p> <p>While the Cycle 6 procedures have yet to be tested in an audit, AQA is confident that its preparation—which builds on Cycle 5 and feedback on Cycle 5—will be effective. This view is strengthened by the Executive Director being asked to present a paper on expectations for evidence in Cycle 6 at the 2019 APQN conference as a plenary session and feedback from Cycle 6 self-review workshops.</p>	<p><a href="#">Cycle 5 Handbook</a> [KD-A2]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> [KD-A3]</p> <p><i>Matear (2018a)</i> <a href="#">Process review</a> [KD-A5]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> [KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">2019/20 AQA workshops</a> <a href="#">Introduction to Cycle 6 and Self-review</a> [sd-A11]</p> <p><a href="#">Matear (2019)</a> <i>Reconsidering evidence</i> [sd-A3]</p>
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### C10. AQA carries out an external review process that is reliable and based on published criteria and procedures. It follows a self-assessment or equivalent, and, includes an external review (normally including a site visit or visits), and a consistent follow up of the recommendations resulting from the external review. (3.3.1)

<p>AQA’s external review process is consistent with the description in this term of reference. The processes are governed by AQA’s purpose and terms of reference in its Constitution, reflect shared principles of quality assurance and are set out in guides and handbooks for the audit cycles.</p> <p>The key steps in the audit process are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preparation and submission of the self-review report and portfolio by the university</li> <li>• planning meetings</li> <li>• review and assessment of the self-review by the audit panel</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">AQA Constitution</a> [KD-A1]</p> <p><a href="#">Academic Quality Assurance of New Zealand universities</a></p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a></p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• site visit(s)</li> <li>• report by the audit panel</li> <li>• follow-up reporting by the university (p25).</li> </ul> <p>Maintaining an internationally referenced, cyclical, peer-review model of external quality assurance is a key component of the design of Cycle 6. AQA has approached the international referencing of Cycle 6 through examining international developments and seeking advice from international experts in the development of Cycle 6. AQA has also presented aspects of Cycle 6 at international quality assurance conferences (Matear, 2018c, 2019).</p> <p>Follow-up reporting is addressed in ToR C8 (p31).</p> <p>Reliability of the process is ensured through consistent provision of advice to universities, training of audit panel members and the roles of the Executive Director and the Board in moderating audit reports. As set out in the Guide to Cycle 6 “the Board’s main role is to ensure the audit has been conducted in a fair and robust manner, according to the audit protocol it has approved, and that the conclusions within the report are supported by adequate evidence” (p34). Retaining the same director across audits also helps ensure reliability and consistency of implementation of audit processes.</p> <p>These processes have yet to be fully tested in Cycle 6 and, again, they build on what was considered to be good practice in Cycle 5 and feedback gathered on Cycle 5.</p>	<p>[KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">Matear (2018c) Evolving Quality</a> [KD-A4] <a href="#">Matear (2019) Reconsidering evidence</a> [sd-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p34 [KD-A3]</p>
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**C11. AQA has published documents, which clearly state what it expects from higher education institutions, in the form of quality criteria, or standards and procedures, for self-assessment and external review. (3.3.2)**

<p>AQA’s guides and handbooks set out both the requirements and processes for self-assessment and external review. These are published in hard copy and are available on the AQA website. AQA also publishes background documents which provide more detail on the development of key aspects of external review, for example expectations for evidence in Cycle 6.</p> <p>The following guides have been developed for Cycle 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a short guide setting out the audit framework and expectations for evidence</li> <li>• a comprehensive guide that includes both enhancement and audit phases and resource materials</li> <li>• a supplement for auditors.</li> </ul> <p>The second edition of the short and comprehensive Guides to Cycle 6 were published in January and February 2020, following first editions published in May 2019. The first editions were published in 2019 to help universities who wanted to take early steps in preparation for audit. A second reason for early publication was to enable AQA to be able to undertake an early audit in the (unlikely) event that it would be required to do so. The second editions of the Guides to Cycle 6 include guideline statements developed by the Enhancement Theme Steering Group and resource materials published since the first editions.</p>	<p><a href="#">Cycle 5 Handbook</a> [KD-A2] <a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> [KD-A3] <a href="#">AQA working paper – Evidence</a></p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework</a> [KD-C1]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> [KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement</a> [KD-B2]</p>
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Although the adequacy of these documents cannot be fully tested until the audit phase of Cycle 6 commences, AQA has good reason to think that they will be appropriate. The first editions of the short and comprehensive guides were distributed to universities in June 2019 and they have been used in self-review workshops. The auditor supplement was reviewed by an experienced auditor prior to publication.

**C12. The external review process is carried out by teams of experts consistent with the characteristics of the institution/programme being reviewed. Experts can provide input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students, employers or professional practitioners. (3.3.3)**

National and international peer review is an underpinning principle of quality assurance for AQA. External reviews are carried out by audit panels comprised of national and international peers. For Cycle 6, audit panels will also include a student or recent graduate.

The perspectives that are important to be reflected in audit panels for Cycle 6 are those of:

- national and international peers
- Māori and, if possible, Pasifika
- students or recent graduates (p29).

The Panel Chair will normally be a senior New Zealand academic or academic manager. The AQA Board appoints the audit panel for each audit and will ensure that panels contain appropriate diversity in the skills and experience of audit panel members and match the distinctive nature of individual institutions.

Auditor recruitment is critical to the success of academic audit as this provides the ability to appoint appropriately experienced and diverse panels. The AQA Board monitors progress on auditor recruitment. Efforts to recruit auditors able to bring a Māori perspective, a Pasifika perspective and that of a student or recent graduate need to be maintained.

Student, or recent graduate, members of audit panels are being identified and developed through joint work with NZUSA and other national student associations. This work includes capacity and capability building undertaken in an annual Student Voice Summit. To date five students or recent graduates have been appointed to the Cycle 6 Register.

At the time of writing, 31 appointments have been made to the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers. This includes seven international appointments and five students, or recent graduates. However, only one Māori auditor and two Pasifika auditors have been appointed to date. AQA recognises that ongoing efforts are required to recruit Māori auditors and Pasifika auditors and the diversity of the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and reviewer is monitored by the AQA Board.

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
p29  
[KD-A3]

[Student Voice Summit 2019](#)

[Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers](#)

Table 3 Diversity of Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers

Total 31						Students or recent graduates 5			
Male 14			Female 17			Male 4		Female 1	
Māori 1	Pasifika	Int'l 3	Māori	Pasifika 2	Int'l 7	Māori	Pasifika	Māori	Pasifika

Employer or industry perspectives are not explicitly included in audit panels. They are not excluded, however, and some appointees to the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers may bring an industry perspective. Rather than requiring an industry perspective in an institutional-level external quality assessment, it is anticipated that universities would ensure that industry or employer perspectives are considered in programme-(or course-)level guideline statements. This is a requirement of the programme approval processes, particularly for professionally accredited programmes, managed by CUAP. GS 14 and 16 refer to stakeholder input and this would, in most cases, include employer or industry input.

[Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework](#)  
[KD-C1]

### C13. AQA has clear specifications on the characteristics and selection of external Reviewers, who must be supported by appropriate training and good supporting materials such as handbooks or manuals. (3.3.4)

Consistent with the principle that academic quality is assured by peer review, external evaluation is conducted by qualified and experienced auditors and reviewers who have been appointed to the AQA's Registers of Auditors and Reviewers. A new register is established for each audit cycle. The Cycle 6 Register includes students, or recent graduates, as well as peers. Auditor recruitment is part of AQA's capability strategy and is set out in AQA's Auditor Recruitment and Training Plan, approved by the AQA Board in March 2019.

[Auditor Recruitment and Training Plan](#)  
[sd-A10]

The appointment of external reviewers (auditors) to specific panels is a two-step process. Auditors must first be appointed to the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers by the AQA Board. The Board consider the following criteria in making appointments to the Register:

- senior academic, senior management or senior student experience in the teaching and learning activities of universities within the last 5 years (3 years for senior students); or other experience considered relevant by the AQA Board
- substantial experience with academic quality assurance, or other quality assurance contexts
- appreciation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- familiarity with New Zealand and/or international contexts of university education and quality assurance, research and best practice in university teaching and learning and student achievement
- demonstrated abilities to appreciate multiple perspectives, engage effectively with a range of people from students to Vice-Chancellors, and form evidence-based judgments
- record of working constructively in small teams, ability to meet deadlines and maintain confidentiality

[Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers](#)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ability to commit time required for reviewing audit materials, panel meetings, site visits, reviewing and commenting on audit report drafts and providing feedback on experiences of audit</li> <li>• commitment to participate in auditor training.</li> </ul> <p>Individual audit panels are then appointed by the AQA Board from the Register of Auditors and Reviewers.</p> <p>Before undertaking an audit, an auditor must have participated in the training for that audit cycle. In most circumstances, the training will have been organised by AQA. However, AQA will recognise other appropriate training particularly for international panel members, and in these circumstances may provide a briefing to ensure that international auditors are familiar with New Zealand and the specific requirements of Cycle 6. If an auditor is unable to participate in a scheduled auditor training workshop, AQA will deliver an individual training session.</p> <p>Auditor training and development is supported by an Auditor Supplement for the Guide to Cycle 6 and online training materials yet to be developed. Measures for auditor training and resources are included in AQA’s 2019-20 and 2020-21 statements of performance expectations.</p>	<p><a href="#">Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement</a> [KD-B2] <a href="#">Statement of Performance Expectations 2020-2021</a> [sd-C1]</p>
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**C14. External review procedures include effective and comprehensive mechanisms for the prevention of conflicts of interest, and, ensure that any judgments resulting from external reviews are based on explicit and published criteria. (3.3.5)**

<p>AQA is proactive in preventing conflicts of interest. Panel members are expected to declare “that [they] have no known conflicts of interest with the university being audited, and that [they] must declare to AQA any conflict of interest that might arise following the signing of this acceptance” to be a member of an audit panel. Universities can also identify a conflict of interest. Any such conflict needs to be set out in writing with evidence. The final responsibility for appointing an audit panel, however, remains with the AQA Board.</p> <p>An Auditor Supplement sets out how panel members should assess the self-review report and accompanying portfolio. Evidence is drawn from a university’s self-review portfolio, additional material provided by the university in response to panel requests and interviews with university students, staff and other stakeholders. Panel members should not draw on other evidence that is not in the public domain.</p> <p>The overarching criteria for assessing whether a university meets a guideline statement is that “guideline statements set out expectations of outcomes and standards that a university of good international standing would be expected to demonstrate, or which universities might expect of each other. They are not fixed, minimum, standards but are relative and dynamic” (p10).</p> <p>The audit panel’s findings are not summative judgements, but comment on the guideline statements, and may include commendations, affirmations or recommendations (Cameron, 2013).</p>	<p><a href="#">Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement</a> p19 [KD-B2]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p29 [KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement</a> [KD-B2] <a href="#">Panel workbook example</a> p7 [sd-C3]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p10 [KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p34 [KD-A3]</p>
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Commendations	refer to examples of exceptionally good practice, or to examples of effective innovative practice, in areas that have or should result in enhancements to academic quality or to processes underpinning academic quality, and that should produce positive impacts on teaching, learning and student experience.	
Affirmations	refer to areas the university has already identified in its self-review report or during the site visit as requiring attention, and on which the university has already taken action but does not yet have sufficient outcome to evaluate impact. Affirmations are, in effect, a validation by the audit panel that something needs to be done and that the approach taken is likely to be effective.	
Recommendations	refer to areas where the audit panel believes the university would benefit from making some improvements or changes. Recommendations alert the university to what the panel believes needs to be addressed, not to how this should be done. The panel may indicate some priority for recommendations by noting a need for action as urgent.	
The AQA Board oversight processes ensure that 'judgements', including commendations, affirmations and recommendations, are based on evidence. See also ToR E12 (p54).		ToR E12 (p54)

**C15. AQA's system ensures that each institution or programme will be evaluated in a consistent way, even if the external panels, teams, or committees are different.**

**(3.3.6)**

The requirements and processes for AQA audits are set out in the guides and handbooks for an audit cycle and all panel members are trained before undertaking an audit. As set out in response to ToR C10 (p33), both the AQA professional staff and the AQA Board have a role in ensuring consistency of the process.	ToR C10 (p33)
In response to a recommendation in the 2015 External Review of AQA, a debriefing report is provided to the AQA Board after each site visit. This also helps alert the Board to any issues of potential inconsistency.	<a href="#">2015 External Review of AQA</a>

**C16. AQA carries out the external review within a reasonable timeframe after the completion of a self-assessment report, to ensure that information is current and updated. (3.3.7)**

The timelines for the external review process are set out in the Guide to Cycle 6 (p25) and adhered to closely. Inevitably, there will be some changes in a university between the submission of its self-review report and the site visit. These are catered for by a planning visit by the chair of the panel and AQA Executive Director that includes a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor, and a	<a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p25 [KD-A3]
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meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and the panel as the first meeting in the site visit schedule. The planning meeting allows the Vice-Chancellor to indicate any significant changes or initiatives since the submission of the self-review. The meeting between the Vice-Chancellor and the panel also allows the panel to be briefed on any further changes, as well as the panel asking questions of the Vice-Chancellor.

The timeline for Cycle 6 is as follows:

<b>Audit step/task</b>	<b>Indicative number of weeks <u>before</u> site visit</b>
AQA writes to university to advise indicative audit timeframe	40
First university planning meeting with AQA Director to confirm all requirements and processes are clear	30
Names of panel members including proposed chair provided to university	20
AQA Board confirms panel	18
University submits <b>8</b> copies of the self-review report and portfolio to AQA	16
Panel reviews self-review report and portfolio	16-12
First panel meeting (2 days)	12
University advised of any further information/evidence needs	10
Second university planning meeting with panel chair and AQA Director (includes strategic update and arrangements for mihi whakatau) Further information/evidence provided Second panel meeting via videoconference—if necessary	5
Interview schedule confirmed—see Appendix 4	4
Site visit	0
	<b>Indicative number of weeks <u>after</u> site visit</b>
Draft report to AQA Board	6
[Revised] Draft report to university for confirmation	10
Publication of report (plus media releases)	14
Request for feedback to panel and university	16
Feedback from university and panel	20
Draft one-year follow-up report to AQA	
One-year follow-up visit by panel chair	
One-year follow-up report to AQA Board—to be published by university after acceptance	
Two-year follow-up and mid-cycle report	

This is the same as the timeline for Cycle 5, except for the following changes, which were identified as “lessons for Cycle 6” in the 2018 review of Cycle 5 processes:

- The first planning meeting between AQA and the university will be held two weeks earlier to ensure that expectations are clear.
- The first panel meeting will be held three weeks earlier and is a two-day meeting to enable the panel to reach preliminary conclusions and a more targeted site visit.
- The provision for a student submission has been removed. This was considered of limited value in Cycle 5. However, the student

*Matear (2018a)*  
[Process review](#)  
[KD-A5]

<p>perspective has been strengthened with the inclusion of a student, or recent graduate, as a panel member.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new step to advise the university of further evidence needs has been added. Again, this should enable the site visit to be more targeted.</li> <li>• The second planning meeting with the university will be later. However, the preceding changes, based on feedback on Cycle 5, are designed to enable the panel and the university to have more information earlier.</li> </ul> <p>A potential challenge with holding the first panel meeting earlier in the process and only four weeks after the panel receive the audit portfolio is that less time is available for collating the panel's initial assessment of the portfolio. However, the time available for the panel to complete this initial assessment has not changed.</p> <p>Since the Cycle 5 audits were undertaken, AQA has moved to a cloud-based file storage system, which allows panel members to collaborate on a shared electronic document. Panel members are still expected to undertake their individual assessment of the portfolio. AQA trialed this approach with a programme review currently underway. Feedback will be sought from the panel for the programme review. This may lead to further guidance being provided in a second edition of the Auditor Supplement.</p> <p>As with several of the other ToR in this section, while AQA is confident that it has planned well for the audit phase of the cycle, the effectiveness of these processes cannot be fully assessed until audits have been undertaken. To ensure that audit processes are working as intended, AQA intends to undertake an interim review of Cycle 6 audit processes. This should be conducted after the audit of the second university in the Cycle.</p>	<p><b>Enhancement initiative</b></p>
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### C17. AQA provides higher education institutions with an opportunity to correct any factual errors that may appear in the external review report. (3.3.8)

The audit process provides universities with the opportunity to correct matters of factual accuracy before the audit report is finalised. This aspect of the process is set out in Section 4.7 (p34) of the Guide to Cycle 6.	<a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p34 [KD-A3]
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### C18. AQA provides clear guidance to the institution or programme in the application of the procedures for self-evaluation, the solicitation of assessment/feedback from the public, students, and other constituents, or the preparation for external review as necessary and appropriate. (3.4.1)

AQA's advice to universities is set out in its audit guides and also provided in self-review workshops. Consistent with the view that audit should not be seen as an event in itself, universities are not expected to solicit feedback specifically for audit. It is anticipated that most evidence should be pre-existing.	<a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p12 [KD-A3]
Universities were asked for feedback on their experience of Cycle 5 audit process, including whether they received "sufficient and/or appropriate guidance ..... [on] the self-review and preparation of the portfolio" (Matear, 2018a). A response that more workshops would have been helpful has been	<a href="#">Matear (2018a) Process review</a> [KD-A5]



addressed in Cycle 6 with AQA running a series of workshops on “An introduction for Cycle 6 Academic Audit and Self-review”. On-line materials are also being developed.

A pilot self-review workshop was delivered in June 2019 and three self-review workshops have been delivered in Wellington (December 2019), Auckland (February 2020) and Dunedin (March 2020). Feedback from the Wellington and Auckland workshops indicates that participants found it useful in preparing for their self-reviews.

Overall, AQA is confident that its guidance is clear, but appreciates that guidance for Cycle 6 has yet to be fully tested.

[2019/20 AQA workshops](#)  
[Introduction to Cycle 6 and Self-review](#)

[sd-A11]

## D. Quality enhancement

This section addresses how effectively AQA undertakes the quality enhancement component of the purpose statement in the AQA Constitution: “applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities in improving student engagement, academic experience and learning outcomes”.

[AQA Constitution](#)  
[KD-A1]

Most of the frameworks for evaluating quality assurance bodies focus, as reasonably expected, on quality assurance activities, with only the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) suggesting an enhancement-oriented term of reference. This is used as term of reference D1.

[CHEA Recognition of Accrediting Organizations](#)  
10 F, p5

The other terms of reference in this section have been adapted from the INQAAHE GGP to provide a structure for considering how well AQA supports quality enhancement activities that assist universities. This phrasing is intentional as AQA can only undertake quality enhancement processes with respect to its own activities and can only support quality enhancement activities that universities undertake.

Being enhancement-led is an underpinning principle of quality assurance. AQA’s quality enhancement activities include:

- audit processes that encourage universities to identify their own enhancement initiatives
- making enhancement-oriented recommendations in audit reports
- requiring follow-up reports from universities of their progress in addressing recommendations
- support for the Cycle 6 universities’ enhancement theme
- communications
- events that encourage the development and sharing of good practice in academic quality.

[Academic Quality Assurance of New Zealand universities](#)

The enhancement-led nature of quality assurance related to enhancement initiatives, enhancement-oriented recommendations and follow-up reports was demonstrated in the preceding section.

The enhancement theme was a new component of Cycle 6. Particular attention is therefore paid to it in this section. The overall approach was adopted and adapted from the Scottish experience of enhancement themes as part of a national quality enhancement framework.

[Scottish Enhancement Themes](#)

The enhancement theme is set out in Section 2 of the Guide to Cycle 6 and further information and resources are available on the AQA website. A dedicated website has been developed. Before the dedicated website was developed, the enhancement theme materials were held on the AQA website.

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
[KD-A3]

An enhancement theme is a topic of national significance, important to all universities, that all universities work on in a common time period. Universities are not all expected to do the same thing or take the same approach to the theme. Each university undertakes the enhancement theme in a way that fits with its own priorities and ethos, and each university has developed a plan setting out its objectives and approach to the theme. While not all universities

[New Zealand Enhancement Theme](#)

[AQA Enhancement Theme page](#)

are expected to address the enhancement theme the same way, they are expected to be working on the theme topic, sharing good practice and providing constructive peer review of developments and plans.

The topic of the enhancement theme “Access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students” is not new and all universities have been addressing this topic for some time. However, despite this attention, gaps in access and achievement have persisted at a sector level. Selecting this topic for the enhancement theme enables universities to add an academic quality approach to the topic and ask: ‘What do universities need to do?’. The rationale for this approach is articulated by members of the enhancement theme steering group in an [introductory video](#).

The enhancement theme is overseen by a Steering Group comprising:

- a convenor (1)
- the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic or equivalent from each university, or their nominee (8)
- Chair and another member of Te Kāhui Amokura (2)
- two Pasifika nominees from universities (2)
- two student members, bringing the voices of Māori students and Pasifika students to the Steering Group (2).

The Enhancement Theme Steering Group is supported by AQA, with additional support from Te Pouhārō, Portfolio Manager – Education System & Māori, UNZ. The Steering Group reports to the Vice-Chancellors. The AQA Executive Director reports to the AQA Board on progress in supporting the theme.

In addition to providing support for the enhancement theme and taking an enhancement-oriented approach to quality assurance, AQA’s other quality enhancement activities are its communications and its events.

AQA communications are centered on its website and a quarterly newsletter. The newsletter is emailed to around 270 recipients.

AQA has explored website analytics to better understand the use of its website. Annual usage levels over the past three years in terms of overall users have varied between 4.4k and 5.6k (google analytics metrics). However, the AQA website is not well suited to the use of analytics as it contains much information in pdf format, which is not reported in analytics.

AQA events also support the quality enhancement aspect of its purpose. Events have included an annual meeting on topics of academic quality of current interest to universities. From time to time AQA will also facilitate other events in conjunction with other organisations:

- 2017 – a webinar on evidence informed policy making by Dr John Bamber – with Ako Aotearoa and UNZ
- 2020 – TEQSA [Academic Integrity workshops](#) – with NZQA and UNZ

Cycle 6 self-review workshops are discussed elsewhere in this self-review.

[ETSG Terms of Reference](#)  
[sd-D1]

[AQA newsletters](#)

[TEQSA academic integrity workshop](#)

**D1. AQA encourages and assists universities in ongoing improvement of academic quality, including a commitment to flexibility and appropriate innovation in promoting academic quality. (CHEA 10F)**

The introduction of an enhancement theme into Cycle 6 is an example of appropriate innovation promoting academic quality. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the development of Cycle 6 considered the strengths and requirements for academic quality in the New Zealand university sector. For the introduction of the enhancement theme, this followed an analysis of the findings from Cycle 5 audit reports and the conclusion that New Zealand universities were demonstrating that they were of the standard expected of a good international university. On this basis it was determined that the universities did not require an audit cycle with a period of four to five years and that a longer cycle would provide 'space' to address an issue where system level improvement was sought and that an enhancement theme approach would be appropriate.

Enhancement themes are not new globally; AQA and the universities took advice from QAA Scotland, which has been supporting enhancement themes since the early 2000s. The implementation of an enhancement theme in New Zealand has differed from the QAA-Scotland approach in a number of ways to make it more appropriate to the New Zealand context.

These differences include:

- undertaking enhancement and audit components sequentially rather than concurrently as is the case in Scotland
- steering and governance arrangements. In Scotland, enhancement theme and other academic quality activities are overseen by a committee that includes the QAA, NUS Scotland, the funding body and Universities Scotland
- no central funding of university enhancement initiatives in New Zealand.

AQA provides a secretariat for Steering Group meetings including the preparation of background papers, organising and reporting on symposia, developing other papers and syntheses, and supporting tikanga in meetings and events. AQA's role in supporting the enhancement theme was recognised in an interim review of the theme (Ako Aotearoa, 2019, p5).

Enhancement theme activities supported by AQA have included:

- three to four meetings a year of the Enhancement Theme Steering Group (ETSG)
- development of two frameworks to guide enhancement theme activities
- development and compilation of enhancement theme resources and materials
- development of enhancement theme plans by universities and reporting on progress. A synthesis of plans has been developed.
- sharing good practices and challenges between universities at ETSG meetings and events
- two symposia involving members of universities internal steering groups. The first symposium was organised around the themes in

[\*Matear \(2018c\) Evolving Quality\*](#)  
[KD-A4]  
[\*Matear \(2018a\) Process review\*](#)  
[KD-A5]  
[\*Matear \(2018b\) Cycle 5: Analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations\*](#)  
[KD-A6]

[\*ETSG Terms of Reference\*](#)  
[sd-D1]

[\*Interim review of the Enhancement Theme\*](#)

[\*ET frameworks\*](#)

[\*Synthesis of ET plans\*](#)

<p>university plans and emphasised sharing of initiatives and good practice. The second symposium focused on evidence and evaluation and workshopped approaches and guides to evaluation. Reports from the symposia are published on the enhancement themes and AQA websites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commissioning and responding to an interim review of the enhancement theme</li> <li>• development of two guideline statements for inclusion in the Cycle 6 Audit Framework.</li> </ul> <p>The final meeting of the Enhancement Theme Steering Group was held in March 2020. Universities presented reports on their progress and reflections on their experience of the enhancement theme. A short summary report to accompany university final reports is being developed.</p> <p>The overall design of Cycle 6 recognises that two to three years is a short timeframe to see progress on a topic as complex and systemic as that addressed by the enhancement theme. University progress on their individual enhancement theme plans will be assessed in the audit component of the Cycle, and two guideline statements (GS 6 and 7) have been developed to do this. Evidence of effectiveness and value of the enhancement theme is therefore expected to be seen in Cycle 6 audit reports. It is likely that enhancement theme activities will also provide evidence for other guideline statements in the Cycle 6 audit framework. AQA is conscious of advice from the ETSG that audit panels will need to be well briefed on the background to and objectives of the enhancement theme.</p> <p>AQA also demonstrates flexibility and commitment to innovation in how it responds to feedback and changes its events to meet other quality enhancement needs of universities.</p> <p>The format of AQA's other quality enhancement events has changed over the years depending on the current needs of the sector. In 2016 and 2017, a medium-sized event 'Support for Quality' event was held. In 2018 and 2019 this was replaced by a more focused 'Quality Forum' that provided greater opportunity for dialog between professional quality staff in universities. The 2019 Quality Forum included a small number of participants from outside the New Zealand university sector with two participants from the Samoan Qualifications Authority and one from a national organisation with a significant level of training activity. Materials and reports from events are held on the AQA website.</p> <p>Feedback is sought from all events and used to inform future events. The current format for the Quality Forum is considered appropriate.</p> <p>Overall, AQA considers it is innovative in promoting improvement in academic quality (or quality enhancement). Evidence for this is provided both in the major innovation of the introduction of an enhancement theme and in ongoing innovation in the form of changes to events and opportunities to bring relevant events to New Zealand. Less consistent innovation has been applied to AQA communications, although Twitter, LinkedIn and</p>	<p><a href="#">2018 Symposium workbook</a>  <a href="#">2018 Symposium report</a>  <a href="#">2019 Symposium workbook (large file)</a> [sd-D2]  <a href="#">Interim review and response</a>  <a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework</a>  [KD-C1]  GS 6 and 7</p> <p><a href="#">12 March 2020 ETSG meeting notes</a>  [sd-D3]</p> <p><a href="#">Previous events</a></p> <p><a href="#">QF 19 Feedback</a>  [sd-D4]</p> <p>See ToR F6, p61</p>
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ResearchGate are used to some extent by the Executive Director. LinkedIn, particularly, generates an increase in web traffic to AQA newsletters.	
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## D2. AQA recognises that quality enhancement is primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions (HEIs) themselves, and respects the academic autonomy, identity and integrity of the institutions and programmes.

Consistent with its approach to quality assurance, AQA recognises that academic quality enhancement takes place within universities. The enhancement theme is explicit in being led and undertaken by universities (not AQA). While universities are all engaged in a single enhancement theme, their objectives, priorities and approaches to the enhancement theme differ and are expected to differ.

The ETSG response to the interim review of the enhancement theme reflects this distinction between collective activities rather than common activities and approaches.

Final enhancement theme reports from universities also reflect university responsibility for quality enhancement, with some universities commenting that their own strategic frameworks are expected to drive change in access and achievement rates for Māori students and Pasifika students.

The ETSG also commented at its final meeting that it was “not surprising that the narrative is different for each university. It is important to recognise and capture these different perspectives”.

[ETSG response to Interim review](#)

[12 March 2020 ETSG meeting notes](#)  
[sd-D3]

## D3. AQA promotes the development and appropriate implementation of quality enhancement processes in accordance with the understanding that the primary responsibility for quality enhancement resides with the institutions and its programmes.

Similarly, AQA recognises that the responsibility for quality enhancement lies within universities. This is reflected in how recommendations are made in audit reports. An audit panel will recommend that something needs to be addressed but will not direct how it should be addressed, as this is a matter for the university to determine.

Universities are encouraged to identify ‘enhancement initiatives’ in their self-review reports. These are conclusions reached by the university itself that a matter needs to be addressed and a commitment to addressing it. They are expected to be significant initiatives rather than business as usual improvements or continuous improvements. Responding to feedback on Cycle 5, the Cycle 6 audit reports will endeavor to comment on all enhancement initiatives identified by a university. Where a panel agrees with the university that an enhancement initiative is likely to lead to a significant improvement, it may ‘affirm’ that initiative. Progress on enhancement initiatives is also reported by universities in their one-year follow-up reports.

The enhancement theme phase has demonstrated that AQA understands that quality enhancement resides with the universities themselves. This is also

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
p34  
[KD-A3]

reflected in how AQA has responded to follow-up reports for Cycle 5 audits. While ongoing compliance with this ToR is anticipated for the audit phase of Cycle 6, this cannot be fully assessed at this point.	
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**D4. AQA bears in mind the level of workload and cost that its procedures will place on institutions, and, strives to make them as time and cost effective as possible.**

<p>AQA recognises that while universities have been addressing the topic of the enhancement theme for some time, the mechanism of the enhancement theme is new and will have incurred costs for universities. Over the full length of the Cycle 6 Audit Cycle, universities will have had some savings in having a longer time period between audits. However, AQA recognises that universities will have incurred costs in providing membership of the enhancement theme, establishing internal enhancement theme processes and supporting participation in enhancement theme activities. AQA has sought to minimise direct costs by aligning meetings of the steering group with CUAP meetings when some steering group members will already be in Wellington.</p>	
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<p>It has also focused on whether the enhancement theme is delivering value for universities. The ETSG report to the Vice-Chancellors (following consideration of the interim review of the theme) considered that a number of benefits had been produced by the theme to date. These included encouraging universities to evaluate their own activities, developing trust and open collaboration between universities, building goodwill and valuing the student voice. The initial benefits therefore are seen more as ways of working rather than substantive progress on rates of access and achievement. The ETSG comments that it will take some time for 'real' evidence to become available.</p>	<p><a href="#">ETSG response to interim review and report to VCs (June 2019)</a> [sd-D5]</p>
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**D5. AQA recognises and values institutional diversity and translates this valuation into criteria and procedures that take into account the identity and goals of higher education institutions.**

<p>Enhancement theme activities recognised from the outset that universities will have different priorities related to the enhancement theme topic. Universities developed individual enhancement theme plans that reflected their different student bodies, contexts and priorities. There were however several common themes in universities' enhancement theme plans, which are summarised in a document available on the enhancement theme webpage/website.</p>	<p><a href="#">Synthesis of ET plans</a></p>
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<p>Two guideline statements arising from the enhancement theme also reflect individual university contexts and priorities. The application of these guideline statements within the audit framework will continue to recognise differing university contexts and priorities.</p>	<p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework</a> [KD-C1] GS 6 and 7</p>
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<p>Therefore, AQA is clear that it does recognise and value institutional diversity in quality enhancement and that its processes and practices support this diversity.</p>	
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## E. Confidence

This section examines the extent to which AQA contributes to confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities. Supporting confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities is part of AQA's purpose. It does this through being a credible agency itself and having robust and internationally recognised quality assurance processes. The Terms of Reference in this section provide criteria against which this can be demonstrated.

Much of the evidence in this section derives from AQA's Constitution and policy suite and the guides to Cycle 6. Also, a number of the ToR in this section are addressed in responses to ToR elsewhere in this report. Therefore, a number of responses to these ToR are quite short.

### E1. AQA has an established legal basis and is recognised by a competent external body. (1.1.1)

AQA's legal basis derives from the New Zealand Education Act (1989) Section 159AD which establishes the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee as the body responsible for quality assurance matters in the universities. As set out in its Constitution (Section 1.1) "In order to maintain and enhance the quality of the academic activities of universities, the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee [NZVCC] established the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities [AQA] ...".

AQA has been recognised as being aligned with the INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice since 2012. It is also a full member of the Asia Pacific Quality Network.

[New Zealand Education Act \(1989\), Section 159AD](#)  
[AQA Constitution](#)  
[KD-A1]  
[Recognition of alignment with INQAAHE GGP](#)

### E2. AQA takes into consideration relevant guidelines issued by international networks and other associations in formulating its policies and practices. (1.1.2)

Evidence for this has been presented in the Introduction/context section to this report describing the development of Cycle 6 and with respect to ToR B2 (p17). International reference points were examined for each component of Cycle 6 and particular attention was paid to the:

- UK Quality Code
- Australian Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF)
- EQA arrangements in the UK and separately Scotland, Ireland, Australia, Hong Kong, Ontario, Finland and the non-university New Zealand system.

These jurisdictions were selected because they are countries with university systems similar to New Zealand's or because of other relevance. Australia is New Zealand's geographically closest university system and AQA draws a number of its international auditors from Australia. Mapping the Cycle 5 audit framework coverage against the UK Quality Code and HESF occurred in the early stages of the refresh of the audit framework from Cycle 5 to Cycle 6. This, *inter alia*, informed the development of the Cycle 6 Audit framework. Other analysis of the design of external quality assurance arrangements also informed the development of the Cycle 6 Audit framework and contributed to

[Mapping against QC and HESF](#)  
[sd-E1]  
  
[International Comparisons Working Notes 1 file](#)  
[sd-E2]



the development on a paper presented at the 2017 INQAAHE conference (Matear and King, 2017).	<a href="#">Matear and King (2017)</a> [sd-B3]
AQA maintains ongoing currency with international developments and this informs its quality assurance and enhancement practices as well as its own operating practices. The introduction of an enhancement theme and the development of the Cycle 6 audit framework are substantial examples of AQA considering international guidelines and practices.	

### E3. AQA has a clear and published policy for the prevention of conflicts of interest that applies to its staff, its decision-making body, and the external Reviewers. (1.1.3)

<p>AQA manages conflicts of interests through the following mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A register of interests is reviewed and updated at every meeting of the AQA Board.</li> <li>• The Panel agreement signed by external reviewers includes a declaration that they have “no known conflicts of interest with the university being audited, and that [they] must declare to AQA any conflict of interest that might arise following the acceptance”.</li> <li>• Universities can raise conflicts of interest, with supporting evidence, regarding members of the audit panel.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Register of interests</a> [sd-E3]</p> <p><a href="#">Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement</a> p19 [KD-B2]</p>
<p>Policy P6 Academic Audit and Section 4.3 of the Guide to Cycle 6 provide further direction on managing conflicts of interest. AQA has assessed that its academic audit policy could be enhanced by being explicit about ‘previous association’ with respect to potential conflicts of interest.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Policies</a> P6, p16 [KD-B1]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p29 [KD-A3]</p>
<p>The Executive Director is both a member of staff and a member of the Board and is subject to the same conflicts of interest expectations as other Board members and has specific conflict of interest clauses (section 25) in her employment agreement.</p>	<p><b>Enhancement Initiative</b></p>
<p>Employment agreements for other members of staff have confidentiality clauses and conflicts of interest are discussed during orientation and induction meetings. They are also explicitly discussed at panel meetings for audits and reviews.</p>	<p><a href="#">ED Employment agreement</a> [sd-E4]</p>
<p>The lack of issues of concern about conflicts of interest suggests that these processes are effective. However, auditors and reviewers have not been asked explicitly about this when AQA seeks feedback on their experience of audits and reviews. This will be addressed in revision of feedback processes.</p>	<p><b>Enhancement Initiative</b></p>

### E4. AQA has a written mission statement and a set of objectives that explicitly provide that external quality assurance of higher education is its major concern, describe the purpose and scope of its activities and can be translated into verifiable policies and measurable objectives. (1.2.1)

AQA has a Purpose statement rather than a mission <i>per se</i> . Its purpose, as set out in its Constitution and restated in the introduction to this self-review, is to contribute to the advancement of New Zealand university education by:	<a href="#">AQA Constitution</a> [KD-A1]
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of academic quality</li> <li>• applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities in improving student engagement, academic experience and learning outcomes</li> <li>• supporting confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities.</li> </ul> <p>AQA's purpose has provided the overarching structure for the terms of reference for this review so that AQA is reviewed against its purpose.</p> <p>AQA has the following policies to guide how it operates in key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P3 Role and appointment of the Director</li> <li>• P4 Risk assessment and oversight</li> <li>• P5 Finance</li> <li>• P6 Academic Audit</li> <li>• P7 Reviews and Appeals</li> <li>• P8 Health, Safety and Personal Wellbeing</li> <li>• P9 Fraud and Theft Prevention and Investigation.</li> </ul> <p>Policies are reviewed every three years except for the Fraud and theft prevention and investigation policy which is reviewed annually.</p> <p>AQA's purpose is translated into objectives through goals and strategies in its strategic framework (see ToR F2, p57), its International Framework, the Auditor Recruitment and Training Plan, and the Cycle 6 Operationalisation Plan. Together AQA's purpose and these plans shape AQA's annual statements of performance expectations and the Executive Director's annual KPIs.</p> <p>Strategic planning is discussed further in ToR F2 (p57). However, for this ToR, AQA's Constitution clearly sets out that quality assurance of higher education is its major concern and this is translated into policies and objectives.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Policies</a> [KD-B1]</p> <p><a href="#">Policy management schedule</a> [sd-E5]</p> <p><a href="#">Statement of Performance Expectations 2020-2021</a> [sd-C1]</p> <p><a href="#">ED KPIs March 2019</a> [sd-B1]</p>
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### E5. AQA has a governance structure consistent with its mission and objectives, and, adequate mechanisms to involve relevant stakeholders in the definition of its standards and criteria. (1.3.1)

<p>AQA is governed by a Board that is appointed by the NZVCC but is "...operationally independent of NZVCC in the conduct of its quality assurance activities. Neither the NZVCC nor the individual Vice-Chancellors have authority to amend quality assurance processes or the content of quality assurance reports or otherwise direct the operations of the AQA".</p> <p>AQA's Constitution also sets out the membership of the Board and considerations in making appointments to the Board as follows. "The Board comprises seven members appointed by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee plus the director of AQA. The seven appointed members are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one university student representative from nominations presented by the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations</li> <li>• one senior academic from nominations presented by the New Zealand Tertiary Education Union</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">AQA Constitution</a> [KD-A1]</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one member of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee</li> <li>• three suitably experienced lay members</li> <li>• an independent chairperson appointed by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee.</li> </ul> <p>One or two additional members may be co-opted by the Board, for reasons of special expertise or experience." The Board currently has no co-opted members.</p> <p>The AQA Constitution also specifies that "in making its appointments to the Board as defined ... above, the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee will take account of Māori representation and gender balance on the Board. The Board will also normally include among its lay members a person or persons with experience in quality assurance and a person or persons with experience of the professions or as an employer of graduates".</p> <p>Student, academic staff, Vice-Chancellor, Māori and wider public perspectives through lay members are therefore reflected in Board decisions.</p> <p>University stakeholders and students were involved in developing the overall model for the audit Cycle and in setting standards (the audit framework) through involvement in development workshops and formal consultation processes. AQA consults with universities but does not currently consult with students, although individual universities may include student perspectives in developing their response to proposals for consultation. However, AQA does have an MoU with NZUSA and meets regularly with NZUSA and representatives of other national student organisations.</p> <p>AQA considers that its governance structure is consistent with its purpose and objectives and that it does have effective mechanisms to involve relevant stakeholders in the development of its standards and criteria which are articulated in its audit framework. Evidence of these mechanisms was presented in ToR C5 (p29) and evidence of their effectiveness can be seen in university responses to consultation.</p>	<p><a href="#">MoU between AQA and NZUSA</a></p> <p>ToR C5 (p29)</p>
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## E6. The composition of the decision-making body and/or its regulatory framework ensure its independence and impartiality. (1.3.2)

<p>As noted above, AQA's Constitution explicitly provides for its operational independence. Impartiality is ensured through Board Procedures that specify that "Board members should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an interest in helping to ensure that New Zealand universities are meeting their own expectations with respect to the enhancement of the quality of their core activities of research, teaching, learning and community service, and to meeting the expectations of the wider community external to the universities with respect to their ongoing academic performance ..." (GP10)</li> </ul> <p>No situations have arisen that would test the independence and impartiality of the Board.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Constitution</a> [KD-A1]</p> <p><a href="#">AQA Policies GP10, p32</a> [KD-B1]</p>
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## E7. AQA provides full and clear disclosure of its relevant documentation such as policies, procedures and criteria. (4.1.1)

<p>AQA is committed to transparency as good practice. Its Constitution, strategic framework, Annual report (including financial statements and statement of performance), guides to Cycle 6, criteria for auditor appointment, the Register of Auditors and Reviewers, and other information are available on the AQA website.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.aqa.ac.nz">www.aqa.ac.nz</a></p>
<p>Documentation for academic audit was discussed with respect to ToR C11 (p34).</p>	<p>ToR C11 (p34)</p>
<p>As noted in the introduction to Section D, the AQA website is not currently well-suited to the use of web analytics. However, AQA is not aware of anyone being unable to access information that cannot easily be resolved by directing people to the relevant section of the website by email.</p>	
<p>AQA policies and minutes of Board meetings are not currently available on the website. However, the AQA Board agreed at its 18 March 2020 meeting to make policies available on the AQA website. Making agendas and minutes will be discussed further.</p>	<p><b>Enhancement Initiative</b></p>

## E8. AQA reports its decisions about higher education institutions and programmes. The content and extent of reporting may vary with cultural context and applicable legal and other requirements. (4.1.2)

<p>For academic audits of New Zealand universities, AQA publishes the full audit report on its website and releases a short press release drawn from the report. Hard copies of the reports are also sent to all New Zealand universities and key external stakeholders.</p>	<p><a href="#">Cycle 5 Academic audit reports</a></p>
<p>For overseas audits or reviews or other New Zealand reviews, AQA strongly encourages the publication of full audit or review reports. However, AQA respects the fact that such reports are owned by the commissioning body or institution. AQA does not therefore make these reports public or available to other parties without agreement.</p>	
<p>Since the 2015 external review of AQA, the following Cycle 5 audit reports for New Zealand universities have been published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">University of Waikato</a> (December 2015)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auckland University of Technology</a> (March 2016)</li> <li>• <a href="#">University of Otago</a> (September 2016)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Lincoln University</a> (December 2016)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Links to reports in text</i></p>
<p>AQA has also published the <a href="#">2017 Review of CUAP</a>.</p>	
<p>The websites for both AQA and the Macao Polytechnic Institute (MPI) state that AQA has conducted a programme review for MPI but the review itself is not publicly available. Fiji National University have indicated that they intend to make the report of the programme review currently underway publicly available.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA website</a> <a href="#">MPI website</a></p>

AQA considers that its reporting for New Zealand audits and reviews is good practice and it intends to strengthen the commitment to public reporting for any future international reviews.	<b>Enhancement Initiative</b>
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### E9. QA has mechanisms to facilitate the public a fair understanding of the reasons supporting decisions taken. (4.1.3)

<p>With respect to this ToR, it needs to be noted again that AQA is not a regulator and does not take decisions that 'require' universities to respond in particular ways. This ToR is therefore addressed in the context of whether the public understand academic audit reports.</p> <p>The press release that accompanies the release of a report of the academic audit of a university is intended to make audit reports more accessible to a non-specialist audience. Regional newspapers (NZ does not have a history of national newspapers) tend to note the reports for universities in their region. However, wider public interest in audit reports is low.</p> <p>Outside university communities, awareness of academic audit as an external quality assurance mechanism and AQA's role in providing that is thought to be low. Even within universities, staff and students who are not involved in quality assurance may not fully understand AQA and its role. On one hand, AQA does not need to be known for its own sake; on the other, however, if it is to be able to support confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities it may need to be better known beyond its specialist audience.</p> <p>AQA considers that while it does have mechanisms to facilitate public understanding, these could be reviewed for consistency with international best practice and effectiveness.</p>	<p><a href="#">Example of report release comms plan</a> [sd-E6]</p> <p><b>Enhancement Initiative</b></p>
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### E10. AQA decisions take into consideration the outcomes of both the institution's self-assessment process and the external review; they may also consider any other relevant information, provided this has been communicated to the HEIs. (5.1.1)

<p>Audit processes for forming judgements were discussed in ToR C14 (p37) and are set out in audit guides and handbooks.</p> <p>AQA's decisions are based on the self-assessment of the university being audited, interviews with staff, students and other stakeholders (if warranted) and other information that is publicly available. Section 4.4 of the Guide to Cycle 6 sets out the sources of evidence that panels are expected to utilise. As part of the audit process, to ensure validity and fairness of audit findings, universities can review the draft audit report and provide feedback on any matters of factual inaccuracy or particular sensitivity. This is not an opportunity for a university to debate an audit finding, but to ensure that audit reports are robust.</p> <p>That no appeals against audit findings have been raised is an indication of the effectiveness of this process.</p>	<p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> [KD-A3] <a href="#">Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement</a> [KD-B2]</p>
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## E11. AQA decisions are impartial, rigorous, and consistent even when they are based on the reports of other quality assurance bodies. (5.1.2)

<p>AQA's protocols for conducting an academic audit and the expectations of panel members and the role of AQA professional staff are clearly set out. The Board overview ensures impartiality, rigor and consistency. As set out in AQA's Academic Audit policy:</p> <p><i>The Board receives the draft report of academic audits of New Zealand universities prior to it being forwarded to the audited university for limited comment and factual checking. The Board's main task is to ensure:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the audit report indicates that the audit has been conducted in a rigorous but fair and transparent manner</i></li> <li><i>the audit report reflects the focus of audit for this cycle</i></li> <li><i>the conclusions of the audit panel are supported by adequate evidence</i></li> <li><i>the recommendations made in the report are likely to be feasible and useful to the university.</i></li> </ul> <p>AQA recognises that its academic audits are not the only external quality assurance requirements for universities (Figure 2, p26). It therefore encourages universities to make use of materials developed for other quality assurance purposes (for example, for professional accreditation) but also stresses that, where evidence has been developed for other purposes, the relevance of that evidence to the academic audit needs to be critically evaluated.</p> <p>Other than professional accreditation reports, AQA has not had much experience of using reports from other quality assurance bodies, as NZ universities do not tend to have substantial activity in other jurisdictions. However, in its programme review for Macao Polytechnic Institute (2016), the AQA report references the 2013 QAA whole-of-institution review of MPI as appropriate.</p> <p>Again, the lack of appeals against audit findings is an indication of AQA's effectiveness with respect to this ToR. However, AQA is considering exploring how its processes might intersect with those of professional accrediting bodies at a future Quality Forum.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Policies</a> P6, p16 [KD-B1]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p1 [KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">AQA working paper – Evidence</a></p> <p><a href="#">MPI Review Report</a> [sd-A2]</p>
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## E12. AQA decisions are based on published criteria and procedures, and, can be justified only with reference to those criteria and procedures. (5.1.3)

<p>AQA's 'decisions' are in the form of findings in audit reports, expressed in terms of commendations, affirmations and recommendations (see ToR C14, p37) and decisions whether to 'accept' a university's follow-up report and mid-cycle report (see Introduction).</p> <p>Specific criteria have not been published for follow-up reports as a university response to its audit report is a matter for that university. For the Cycle 5 one-year follow-up reports, one university was asked to provide further information before the AQA Board accepted its report. All mid-cycle reports submitted to date have been accepted by the AQA Board.</p>	<p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p34 [KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">Cycle 5 Academic audit reports</a></p>
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The lack of appeals against decisions is an indication of effectiveness of AQA's decision making with respect to this ToR. This is further supported by evidence that New Zealand universities are addressing recommendations in their audit reports (Figure 3, p32).

AQA recognises that criteria and processes for decision-making in Cycle 6 have not yet been operationalised. However, they follow and build on criteria and processes that were considered effective in Cycle 5.

### E13. Consistency in decision-making includes consistency and transparency in processes and actions for imposing recommendations for follow-up action. (5.1.4)

As set out above, AQA is not a regulator and does not 'impose' recommendations on universities. Universities are expected to address recommendations in a timely manner, and this is examined in the one-year follow-up and mid-cycle reports from universities. AQA's Academic Audit Policy provides for the AQA Board to "seek further information and/or ... provide guidance to the panel for the next academic audit of the university" if it is not satisfied with a mid-cycle report.

[AQA Policies](#)  
P6, p16  
Clause 6.7  
[KD-B1]

AQA's processes include follow-up reports from universities. Universities provided one-year follow-up reports on their responses to recommendations and their own enhancement initiatives after the Cycle 5 reports were released. A 'mid-cycle' report was introduced as a component of Cycle 6 which required universities to report further on their response to Cycle 5 recommendations three to four years after the release of their Cycle 5 report.

[Example of one-year follow-up report](#)  
[sd-E7]

### E14. AQA's reported decisions are clear and precise. (5.1.5)

This term of reference cannot yet be tested for Cycle 6. Cycle 6, however, will again follow good practice from previous audit cycles, which emphasised ensuring that reported decisions were clear and precise. Cycle 5 also improved processes from previous audit cycles to give audit panels more time together at the site visit to ensure that panel members agreed on areas for commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Cycle 5 also allowed time for panels to agree on wording for commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

The AQA Board's role in reviewing and approving the release of an audit report to a university also ensures that reported decisions are clear and precise.

[Guide to Cycle 6](#)  
p34  
[KD-A3]

### E15. AQA has procedures in place to deal in a consistent way with complaints about its procedures or operation. (5.2.1)

AQA seeks feedback on all its activities and responds to that feedback. This includes seeking feedback from universities and members of audit panels on their experience of academic audit and the support provided by AQA. However, AQA does not have a complaints policy or procedure.

Complaints about AQA's business processes, particularly employment matters, are covered by employment agreements and employment law. Complaints or

[Matear \(2018a\) Process review](#)  
[KD-A5]

disagreements may also be handled through discussion with union representatives.	
AQA considers these arrangements appropriate for the context and scale of its activity.	

#### E16. AQA has clear, published procedures for handling appeals related to its external review and decision-making processes. (5.2.2)

<p>AQA's provisions for appeals are governed by its Reviews and Appeals policy and set out in Section 4.10 of the Guide to Cycle 6 as follows:</p> <p><i>An appeal against the content of an audit report may be lodged on grounds of a failure of audit process or where it is considered that a conclusion is not adequately supported by evidence. An appeal is lodged only after efforts have been made to resolve the matter directly with AQA.</i></p> <p><i>The process follows two steps: initially a review by the Board of AQA and, if that does not resolve the matter, then an independent appeal investigation convened by Universities New Zealand. A university considering making an appeal should request a copy of the appeals policy from AQA or from Universities New Zealand.</i></p> <p><i>An appeal must be lodged before the audit report is published and should be lodged, or notice given of an appeal to be lodged, within ten working days of the university receiving the final report.</i></p> <p>AQA's Reviews and Appeals Policy (P7) sets out possible grounds for an appeal, the processes through which it will be addressed and available remedies. To date there have been no appeals.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Policies</a> 7, p19 [KD-B1]</p> <p><a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6</a> p36 [KD-A3]</p> <p><a href="#">AQA Policies</a> P7, p19 [KD-B1]</p>
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#### E17. Appeals are conducted by a Panel that was not responsible for the original decision and has no conflict of interest; appeals need not necessarily be conducted outside AQA. (5.2.3)

<p>Consideration of an appeal is a multi-stage process with best efforts being made to resolve the matter at each stage. If the matter cannot be resolved either directly with AQA or following a review by the AQA Board, the AQA Board's decision may be appealed to an independent Appeals Panel which shall be convened by UNZ on behalf of the Vice-Chancellors' Committee.</p> <p>The Appeals Panel comprises three (3) members, being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a former Vice-Chancellor or other senior academic (eg, a former Deputy Vice-Chancellor) (Appeals Panel Chair)</li> <li>• a member external to the university sector with relevant knowledge of academic audit/review processes</li> <li>• a senior university academic (current or recently retired) familiar with academic audit/review processes."</li> </ul> <p>AQA has not yet had to test these processes.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Policies</a> P7, p19 [KD-B1]</p>
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## F. Efficiency and effectiveness

<p>This section assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of AQA. It is concerned more with AQA's business processes than its quality assurance and quality enhancement activities. Having appropriate and effective business processes underpins AQA's ability to undertake quality assurance and quality enhancement processes appropriately and effectively.</p> <p>Efficiency and effectiveness are addressed in Objective 4 of AQA's Statement of Performance Expectations and reported in the annual Statement of Performance as part of the Annual Report.</p>	<p><a href="#">2018-19 SPE</a> [sd-F1] <a href="#">2018-19 Annual Report</a></p>
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### F1. AQA's organisational structure makes it possible to carry out its external review processes effectively and efficiently. (1.3.3)

<p>AQA's organisational structure was outlined in the introduction to this self-review (Section A4, p6). This section focuses on how this structure enables AQA to undertake external review processes.</p> <p>The form of external review utilised by AQA is an institution-level academic audit. The organisational structure of a permanent secretariat and a Register of Auditors and Reviewers allows AQA to construct appropriately experienced and qualified panels. The AQA Board appoints individuals to the Register, then to panels. The permanent secretariat and the Board enable consistency across the audit cycle.</p> <p>Evidence for the effectiveness of this structure can be found in the feedback provided by universities and panels on their experiences of academic audit. This was summarised in a Process Review of Cycle 5. Overall, this report reinforced the "appropriateness and effectiveness" of Cycle 5 processes (p.31).</p> <p>It needs to be noted, however, that Auditors (panel members) receive an 'honorarium' in recognition of their work. This is not equivalent to a salary and auditors undertake audits as peers contributing to the quality assurance and enhancement of universities. It is possible that the level of honorarium could be an inhibitor to some individuals applying to become auditors but this does not currently appear to be the case.</p>	<p><i>Matear (2018a)</i> <a href="#">Process review</a> [KD-A5]</p>
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### F2. AQA has a strategic plan that helps assess its progress and plan for future developments. (1.3.4)

<p>As discussed in ToR E4 (p49), AQA has a strategic framework rather than a plan <i>per se</i>. Longer term planning is derived from the Constitution and informed by reviews of AQA and its activities, and national and international developments in university education and quality assurance. An operationalisation plan for Cycle 6 also provides multi-year planning. Annual planning occurs in the Statement of Performance Expectations and setting the KPIs for the ED. An annual strategic coherence 'map' (Figure 4) ensures that plans and frameworks remain aligned.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA Strategic Framework</a> [KD-F1] <a href="#">C6 Op plan</a> [sd-F2] <a href="#">SPE 2020-2021</a> [sd-C1] <a href="#">ED KPIs March 2019</a> [sd-B1]</p>
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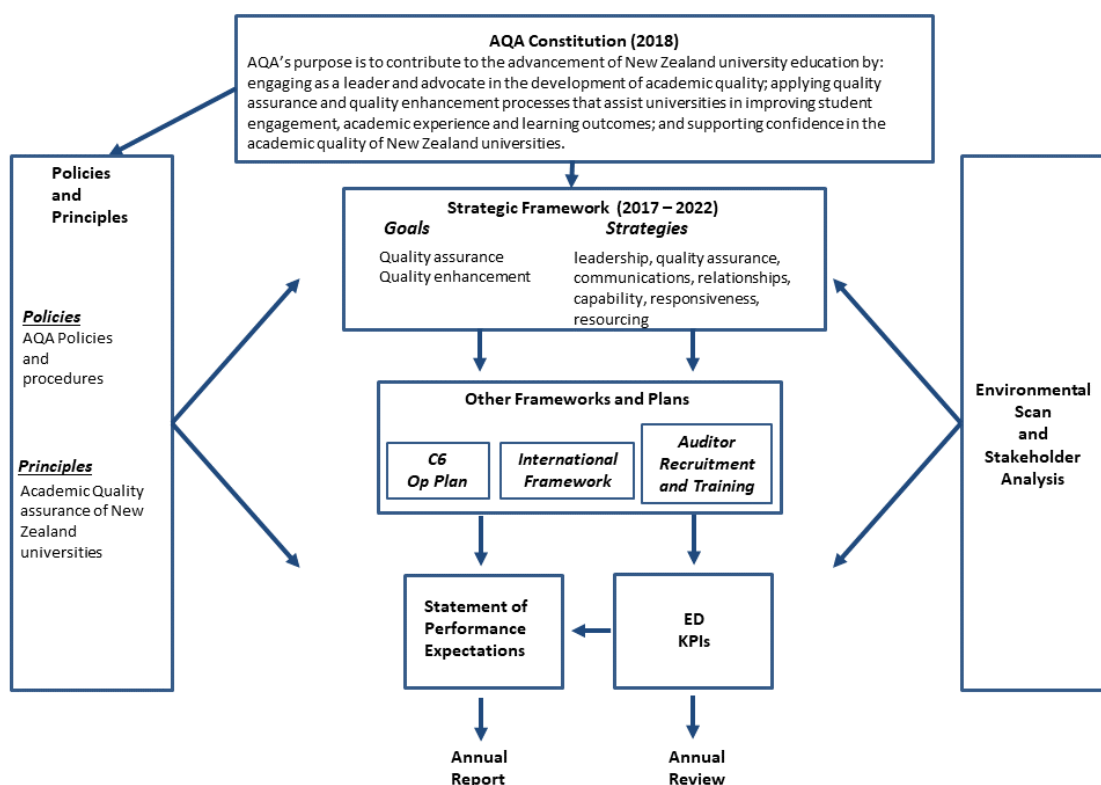


Figure 4 AQA Strategic coherence map

AQA's purpose, as set out in its Constitution, is to contribute to the advancement of New Zealand university education by:

- engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of academic quality
- applying quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities in improving student engagement, academic experience and learning outcomes
- supporting confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities.

[AQA Constitution](#)  
[KD-A1]

AQA will achieve its purpose by focusing on two strategic goals:

**G1 Quality Assurance:** AQA's audits are robust, independent, fair and perceptive, reflect international best practice, assist universities and their students, and give national and international confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities.

**G2 Quality Enhancement:** AQA facilitates and supports an enhancement orientation to quality assurance in New Zealand universities and in its own activities.

AQA will deploy leadership, quality assurance, communications, relationships, capability, responsiveness and resourcing strategies to achieve its goals.

The Cycle 6 Operationalisation plan is monitored by the Board. Achievement of the measures in the SPE is reported in the annual Statement of Performance

[AQA Strategic Framework](#)  
[KD-F1]

<p>(SP) and the success of the Executive Director in implementing strategies is assessed in an annual performance review.</p> <p>AQA needs to comply with Public Benefit Entity Reporting Standard 48 (PBE FRS 48) by June 2022. Preparation for this began in the 2019/20 SPE and will continue in the 2020/21 SPE. Other matters that need to be addressed in future SPEs are kept in a 'bring up' schedule.</p> <p>AQA considers that its strategic planning and reporting is appropriate and effective for its scale and scope. Evidence for this may be found in the Audit Completion Report issued by the financial auditors. Financial audit includes a review of the Statement of Performance. However, its strategic framework is due for review in 2020.</p>	<p><a href="#">C6 Op plan</a> [sd-F2] <a href="#">2018-19 SPE</a> [sd-F1] <a href="#">2018-19 Annual Report</a></p> <p><a href="#">2020/21 SPE paper to March Board meeting</a> [sd-F3]</p>
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### F3. AQA has a well-trained, appropriately qualified staff, able to conduct external evaluation effectively and efficiently in accordance with its mission statement and its methodological approach. (1.4.1)

<p>As outlined in the introduction to this self-review section A4, p6), AQA has one professional staff member, supported by a part-time assistant and other contracted professional and support staff, as required. A service level agreement with UNZ also provides for support for administrative tasks such as payroll management, stationary supplies, organising couriers and setting up meeting rooms.</p> <p>The capabilities and characteristics of AQA staff are specified in position descriptions and in Policy P3 "Role and Appointment of the Director". The Executive Director is appointed by the Board and other staff are appointed by the Executive Director. The adequacy of staffing arrangements is reviewed annually.</p> <p>The risks associated with having a single professional staff member are recognised in AQA's risk management framework and managed through a monthly report on key tasks and dates to the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board and a contingency arrangement in place with the former Director of AQA as part of business continuity arrangements. This contingency arrangement would provide interim support for the Board and allow continuity of key processes if the Executive Director were to become unexpectedly and unavoidably unavailable. The current Executive Director and former Director meet at least three times a year and the Executive Director provides a briefing on key upcoming developments. The former Director advises AQA of upcoming periods of unavailability. If this contingency arrangement were not in place, AQA is aware of recently retired staff with appropriate expertise who could provide interim support until a new appointment was made.</p> <p>AQA has experienced difficulties in being able to recruit and retain support personnel. Staff who can perform at the required level across finance, communications and event management activities are highly sought after and other organisations are able to offer full-time employment. Being able to offer a full-time role might increase the attractiveness of AQA to qualified personnel. However, a second full-time employee would be beyond AQA's present needs.</p>	<p><a href="#">2019-20 Service Level Agreement</a> [sd-F4]</p> <p><a href="#">AQA Policies</a> P3, p2 [KD-B1]</p> <p><a href="#">Contingency Support Agreement</a> [sd-F5]</p>
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AQA has considered whether staffing could be configured differently. It is of the view however that it is performing the activities it needs to and would not wish to undertake a greater volume of support activity. One area where more staffing would be of value is in analysis and writing of 'good practice' materials. However, this sort of specialised expertise may not be found in a quality support person.

#### F4. AQA has the physical and financial resources needed to fulfil its goals and carry out the activities that emerge from its mission statement and objectives. (1.4.2)

AQA's physical and financial resources are provided via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and grant from UNZ.

AQA's financial year is from 1 July to 30 June. Dates in this section refer to the year in which the financial year ended. For example, 2019 covers the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

For financial reporting purposes, AQA is a financial subsidiary of UNZ. AQA's financial reports are prepared, audited and published separately before being incorporated into the UNZ financial report. AQA's main source of funding is an annual grant from UNZ which is invoiced in July and January. Additional revenue is generated from events, reviews or audits for overseas institutions and audits of New Zealand universities. New Zealand universities are invoiced for the recovery of the direct costs of undertaking the audit, and international activities are priced according to a set of international pricing principles. The agency has generated an operating surplus of between 2 and 8.6% of revenue for the last four years.

*Table 4 AQA financial performance 2016 – 2019*

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Annual Revenue (\$)	544,087	517,728	419,101	414,983
Op. surplus (% rev.)	2	7.2	8.6	7.6
Equity at year end (\$)	191,074	228,771	270,762	302,589

AQA's annual grant from UNZ remained consistent at \$400,00 from 2016 to 2019. It was increased to \$410,00 for 2020.

AQA is located on the same floor as UNZ in a building in Wellington's central city. This facilitates interaction with CUAP and other UNZ staff and other stakeholders located nearby. An SLA between UNZ and AQA provides for access to meeting rooms and support for meeting logistics, staff room facilities, photocopying and printing, and administrative support. UNZ also provides payroll services for AQA.

These arrangements do not affect the operational independence of AQA and AQA considers that it has adequate physical and financial resources to fulfil its purpose.

[AQA Policies](#)  
P5 – Schedule  
A, p15  
[KD-B1]

[2019-20 Service  
Level  
Agreement](#)  
[sd-F4]

## F5. AQA provides systematic opportunities for the professional development of its staff. (1.4.3)

Professional development opportunities are discussed regularly with staff and included in annual reviews. For the Executive Director, most professional development takes the form of attendance at conferences and other fora. Conference attendance is also important in terms of developing and maintaining professional relationships.

Professional development for other staff has included training in specific functional areas (website management, finance systems) and attendance at workshops or other events to learn more about AQA and quality assurance.

Given the scale and scope of its activities, AQA considers that professional development is appropriately provided for.

## F6. AQA has in place mechanisms that enable it to review its own activities in order to respond to the changing nature of higher education, the effectiveness of its operations, and its contribution towards the achievement of its objectives. (2.1.2)

AQA seeks feedback on all its activities and, where warranted, responds to that feedback. Feedback of experiences of Cycle 5 audit processes was captured in a process review of Cycle 5 (Matear 2018a). This process review informed the development of Cycle 6.

AQA seeks feedback on all events it delivers and specifically on its communications. Feedback is available for:

- Support for Quality 2016 and 2017
- Quality Forum 2018 and 2019
- Student Voice Summit 2018 and 2019
- Enhancement Theme Symposium [2018](#) and 2019 (*in prep.*)
- Self-review workshops 2019-20.

AQA also undertakes a biennial review of its communications and seeks feedback on its events and workshops. The last communications feedback survey was conducted in 2019 and reported in the June 2019 newsletter. The response rate to the survey is low (around 14%) but did improve for the 2019 survey, where respondents felt that AQA communications were helpful in terms of keeping them up to date on audits, other AQA activities and New Zealand quality news and professional development opportunities.

AQA also monitors the changing nature of higher education and quality assurance and summarises its understanding of these changes in the 'Have you seen this?' column in the AQA newsletter and, from time to time, in conference papers. An analysis of factors contributing to adoption of different models of quality assurance systems was presented at the 2017 INQAAHE conference.

The Executive Director reports to the AQA Board at meetings throughout the year on progress on the Statement of Performance Expectations. This enables the AQA Board to monitor progress towards objectives.

[Matear \(2018a\) Process review](#)  
[KD-A5]

[SfQ feedback](#)  
[sd-F6]  
[QF 18 feedback](#)  
[sd-F7]  
[QF 19 feedback](#)  
[sd-D4]  
[SVS 18 feedback](#)  
[sd-F8]  
[SVS 19 feedback](#)  
[sd-F9]  
[2018 Symposium report](#)  
[Self-review WS](#)  
[sd-F10]

[June 2019 newsletter](#)

[AQA newsletters](#)  
[Matear and King \(2017\)](#)  
[sd-B3]  
[March 2020 SPE progress report](#)  
[sd-F11]

AQA considers that its mechanisms for monitoring its own activities are well developed. Evidence for this can be found in the development of Cycle 6 and in progress reporting to the AQA Board.	
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**F7. AQA periodically conducts a self-review of its own activities, including consideration of its own effects and value. The review includes data collection and analysis, to inform decision-making and trigger improvements. (2.1.3)**

<p>Following the completion of Cycle 5 academic audit, AQA conducted a series of whole-of-cycle reviews with the first focusing on processes, the second on analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations, and the third (in progress) on universities' responses to recommendations.</p> <p>These 'self-review' reports, particularly the process review, were used extensively in the development of Cycle 6. Extracts from the analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations have been used by both AQA and other groups to respond to queries on, make submissions, or provide a basis for further examination of practice. For example, the UNZ Committee on Student Administration and Academic Services used the analysis of the Cycle 5 guideline statement on course advising to shape some of their work.</p> <p>Although not strictly AQA activity, AQA commissioned an interim review of the Enhancement Theme after universities had been working on their individual plans for a year. This review assisted universities in focusing their activities for the remaining period of the enhancement theme.</p> <p>The comments above demonstrate that AQA does conduct both self and commissioned reviews of activities and uses these to inform future development and improvement.</p>	<p><i>Matear (2018a)</i> <a href="#">Process review</a> [KD-A5] <i>Matear (2018b)</i> <a href="#">Cycle 5: Analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations</a> [KD-A6]</p> <p>See ToR B5, Table 2, p21</p> <p><a href="#">Interim review and response</a></p>
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**F8. AQA is subject to external reviews at regular intervals, ideally not exceeding five years. There is evidence that any required actions are implemented and disclosed. (2.1.4)**

<p>This is the fifth external review of AQA since its establishment (Table 1,p5). The previous review was in 2015. As set out in the introduction to this self-review (p4), both the external review report and the one-year follow-up report are published on the AQA website. They are also communicated through the AQA newsletter.</p> <p>AQA's response to recommendations in its 2015 external review were set out in section A6 (p11). They are also available on the AQA website.</p> <p>Therefore, AQA clearly meets this ToR.</p>	<p><a href="#">AQA External Reviews</a></p>
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## G. International activities

International activities are important for AQA to maintain its currency with developments in quality assurance theory and practice and, associated with this, professional development for AQA staff. AQA's international framework was motivated by recommendations made in the 2015 external review of AQA. A preliminary plan was considered at the July 2018 meeting of the AQA Board and expanded into an International Framework aligned with AQA's strategic framework.

The objectives of the International Framework are to ensure that:

1. AQA's good international reputation is maintained
2. AQA remains fully apprised of international trends and developments in quality assurance
3. AQA reflects international best practice and international perspectives in its activities.

The alignment between the strategic framework and international framework ensures the international framework contributes to progress towards AQA's Goals particularly through the Leadership, Best Practice, Communications, Relationships and Capability strategies. These strategies already have an international dimension, which is amplified through initiatives in this international framework. The framework also intersects with the Auditor Recruitment and Training Plan. In turn, this framework informs annual Statements of Performance Expectations and the Executive Director's KPIs.

[International Framework](#)  
[sd-A5]

See Figure 4,  
p58

### G1. AQA gains value from international engagement (SPE 2019-20 3.2)

As part of its own quality enhancement activities, the 2019-20 Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) for AQA included a measure that AQA gained or added value from international engagement. Evidence for this would be demonstrated through practice change, invitations to undertake work internationally, provide advice or contribute to conferences.

The rationale for including this measure is to retain a focus on the reason for international engagement. It also demonstrates how the international framework informs planning through the SPE.

AQA reports on whether it is achieving these measures in progress reports on the statement of performance expectations at Board meetings and in the Statement of Performance in its Annual Reports. In 2019-20, AQA has been asked to undertake a programme review for an overseas university and was invited to contribute to a plenary session at the 2020 Scottish enhancement themes conference.

Other value gained from international engagement has been presented in ToR B2 (p17), B3 (p18) and D1 (p44).

[SPE 2019-20](#)  
[sd-G1]

[March 2020 SPE progress report](#)  
[sd-F11]  
[Annual reports FNU Programme review](#)  
[sd-G2]



**G2. The EQAA (AQA in NZ) in a sending country makes clear that the awarding institution is responsible for ensuring the equivalent quality of the education offered, that the institution understands the regulatory frameworks of the receiving countries, and that the institution provides clear information on the programmes offered and their characteristics. (6.1.1)**

This term of reference is not currently relevant for AQA. However, the Cycle 6 audit framework does address equivalence in that it extends to all students, all delivery and all staff undertaking or supporting teaching or supervision. Therefore, any offshore delivery that leads to a qualification from a New Zealand university would be included within the scope of audit.

Further, GS 3.1 in the Cycle 5 audit framework and GS 14 in Cycle 6 address academic programme approval and standards. These are currently New Zealand-centric, but if a university delivers a programme to be recognised in another jurisdiction, the implication is that it would also meet local requirements for programme.

[Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework](#)  
[KD-C1]

[Cycle 5 Audit Framework](#)  
[Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework](#)  
[KD-C1]

**G3. Students and other stakeholders receive clear and complete information about the awards delivered. (6.1.2)**

This term of reference is primarily the responsibility of the universities and the programme approval process undertaken by CUAP. The programme approval criteria used by CUAP include assessment of the clarity of programme information.

The Cycle 5 and 6 audit frameworks assess the information available to students through GS as follows:

#### Cycle 5

- GS 2.1 Universities' admission and selection policies and practices should be clear and publicly available to students.
- GS 3.2 Universities should have clearly defined intended graduate outcomes (graduate attributes) which are publicly available and are accessible to students and staff.

#### Cycle 6

- GS 8. Access to university, including through recognition of prior learning and credit transfer pathways, is consistent, equitable and transparent for students.
- GS 17. Students are aware of and have the opportunity to achieve the intended attributes in graduate profiles and course/paper learning outcomes.

Few commendations, affirmations and recommendations were made with respect to GS 2.1 in Cycle 5 academic audit reports, but GS 3.2 was an active area for universities in Cycle 5 with audit panels making recommendations for three universities and affirming enhancement initiatives for three universities (Matear, 2018b).

[Cycle 5 Audit Framework](#)

[Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework](#)  
[KD-C1]

*Matear (2018b)*  
[Cycle 5: Analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations](#)  
[KD-A6]



**G4. AQA cooperates with appropriate local agencies in the exporting and importing countries and with international networks. This cooperation is oriented to improve mutual understanding, to have a clear and comprehensive account of the regulatory framework and to share good practices. (6.2.1)**

<p>This activity is outside AQA's scope in terms of exporting and importing education.</p> <p>However, AQA does cooperate with local agencies to develop mutual understanding of 'regulatory' requirements and share good practices. As set out in B3 (p18), this cooperation includes:</p> <p>Memoranda of understanding with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Australian Government Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2019)</li> <li>• Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (renewed 2019 – but not signed)</li> <li>• Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA) (renewed 2019).</li> </ul> <p>AQA has developed good working relationships with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QAA-Scotland</li> <li>• The Samoan Qualifications Authority.</li> </ul> <p>AQA also maintains a range of good relationships with other agencies internationally fostered through INQAAHE, APQN and other quality assurance or quality enhancement conferences and visits.</p>	<p><i>Signed copies of MOUs are held in the AQA office</i></p>
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**G5. AQA seeks ways to cooperate in the external quality assurance in transnational education provision, for example through mutual recognition. (6.2.2)**

<p>AQA has not to this point been approached or sought mutual recognition agreement with any other agency. As noted above, AQA's engagement in external quality assurance would only be reflected in the extent to which New Zealand universities are engaged in transnational education and ensuring that these students, delivery and staff were reflected in the university's self-review portfolio.</p>	
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## H. Conclusions and recommendations

This self-review report has been guided by the objective of the review, which, as set out in the Introduction (p1), is to assess how effectively AQA assists the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee to discharge its responsibilities for quality assurance matters in universities through:

- delivering on its purpose in line with its terms of reference
- meeting or exceeding INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice
- transacting core business processes efficiently and effectively.

AQA's purpose statement has provided the overall structure for this self-review. Sections B to E have addressed the components of AQA's purpose statement. Section B has addressed how AQA engages as a leader and advocate in the development of academic quality, Sections C and D have addressed how AQA applies quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that assist universities, respectively, and Section E has addressed how AQA supports confidence in the quality of New Zealand universities. Section F has considered efficiency and effectiveness of AQA's core business processes and Section G has explored international activities.

Mapping the INQAAHE GGP to the components of AQA's purpose and the efficiency and effectiveness of its core business has provided a means to assess that AQA is delivering on its purpose, is meeting or exceeding the INQAAHE GGP and is operating efficiently and effectively. The GGP have provided the detailed ToR for this review. An overall assessment of the extent to which AQA meets the GGP is presented in Table 5 below. This is followed by summaries of how AQA meets its purpose and operates efficiently and effectively using the GGP as a framework for assessment. Recommendations for improvement are expressed as enhancement initiatives.

Enhancement initiatives do not include work that is already planned or underway. For example, an enhancement initiative to ensure that the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers reflects diversity and, in particular, that the Register includes Māori auditors and Pasifika auditors could have been developed for ToR C12 (p35). However, this issue is already known and is included in AQA planning and monitored by the AQA Board. Similarly, staffing, which is addressed in ToR F3 (p59), could have given rise to an enhancement initiative. Again however, this is already subject to ongoing monitoring and review.

AQA's terms of reference have been referenced throughout the report. How AQA delivers on its purpose in line with its terms of reference is summarised in section H2 (p69).

### H1. AQA purpose, efficiency and effectiveness and INQAAHE GGP

As indicated above, this section begins with a summary assessment of the extent to which AQA delivers on the components of its purpose, operates efficiently and effectively and meets the INQAAHE GGP. Summaries of each of the components of AQA's purpose and the efficiency and effectiveness of its operation follow and, where appropriate, enhancement initiatives identified.

Table 5 Summary assessment of purpose, efficiency and effectiveness and meeting GGP

B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1
B2	C2	D2	E2	F2	G2
B3	C3	D3	E3 E3	F3	G3
B4	C4	D4	E4	F4	G4
B5	C5	D5	E5	F5	G5
B6	C6		E6	F6	
	C7		E7	F7	
	C8		E8	F8	
	C9		E9		
	C10		E10		
	C11		E11		
	C12		E12		
	C13		E13		
	C14		E14		
	C15		E15		
	C16		E16		
	C17		E17		
	C18				

Key:

	Evidence that GGP is met
	Evidence that GGP is met for C5, expectation it will be met for C6
	Limited evidence, but not a major part of AQA activities
	Limited evidence and a major part of AQA activities
XX	Enhancement initiative

### Leadership and advocacy (Section B)

Section B discussed ToR that examine whether AQA provides leadership and advocacy in support of its purpose. AQA's self-assessment is that it has provided evidence that it meets the six ToR in this section and considers therefore that AQA does provide leadership and advocacy.

In assessing its performance against the ToR in this section, AQA considers that its mechanisms for publishing integrated reports could be improved and has identified this as an enhancement initiative:

EI 1 Review publication formats and channels. (B5)

### Quality assurance (Section C)

Quality assurance was a major section of the review and was assessed against eighteen ToR. It is not yet possible to fully assess the effectiveness of the Cycle 6 Audit Framework. However, as the Cycle 6 framework builds explicitly on the Cycle 5 framework and has incorporated lessons from a comprehensive review of Cycle 5, plus analysis of international developments and advice gained from engagement with universities, AQA is confident that it will continue to meet the ToR in this section.

However, to ensure that Cycle 6 audit processes are working as anticipated, AQA will undertake an interim review following completion of the audit for the second university in the Cycle.

EI 2 Undertake an interim review of Cycle 6 audit processes to confirm they are functioning as planned. (C16)

### Quality enhancement (Section D)

Terms of reference needed to be developed to assess AQA's quality enhancement activities as the INQAAHE GGP did not explicitly address quality enhancement activities. A conclusion that could be drawn from this is that AQA undertakes a greater quality enhancement role than many EQAAs, recognising that QAA-Scotland remains the globally leading example of an enhancement-led EQAA. A second conclusion is that while the enhancement theme has been a significant undertaking over the last three years, it is by no means the only quality enhancement activity that AQA is engaged in.

Although the topic of the enhancement theme has not been a new one for universities, the approach to it in the enhancement theme is novel in two respects. First, the explicit framing of the question of "access, outcomes and opportunities for Māori students and for Pasifika students" as an academic quality issue prompts the question of 'What does the university need to do to address this issue?' and shifts the question from potentially deficit-framing students. Second, the ways of working in the enhancement theme, including the creation of Māori-led and Pasifika-led spaces and events in the enhancement theme symposia, have been novel. Enhancement theme activities have also helped increase student voice(s) in universities, particularly the development of a national voice for Tauria Pasifika.

The impact of the enhancement theme is expected to be seen in the Cycle 6 audit reports for universities. The enhancement initiative identified above (EI 2) will pay particular attention to whether the guideline statements arising from the theme are generating the sorts of evidence of quality and progress that are expected.

### Confidence (Section E)

Section E, addressing how AQA supports confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities, is another section with a higher number of ToR. The ToR address AQA's basis for its activities, its planning and reporting framework and its own quality processes. For AQA to be able to support confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities, it must be able to demonstrate that it is a well-performing EQAA.

AQA considers that it has presented evidence that it meets the ToR in this section. The exception to this is E13 and, as AQA is not a regulator, a lack of evidence here is consistent with this not being part of AQA's activities.

Five enhancement initiatives have been identified in this section.

EI 3 Review audit policy and revise to include previous association. (E3)

<p>EI 4 Review and revise feedback processes in audit (E3)</p> <p>EI 5 Consider publishing agendas and minutes of Board meetings on the AQA website. (E7)</p> <p>EI 6 Strengthen the commitment to public reporting for international reviews (E8)</p> <p>EI 7 Review and revise if warranted mechanisms for improving public understanding of academic audit reports and possibly academic quality more broadly. (E9)</p>	
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### Efficiency and effectiveness (Section F)

<p>This section assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of AQA by focusing on its business processes. As a small agency, it is important that AQA's business processes are fit for purpose and commensurate with the size of the organisation. AQA concludes that it is an efficient and effective EQAA.</p>	
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### International activities (Section G)

<p>International activities are not a major part of AQA's activities but are important for AQA to maintain its currency with developments in quality assurance theory and practice. While AQA can respond to the ToR in this section, they are not currently relevant to AQA's activities. They have been useful however in prompting AQA to consider whether it should be more involved in the sorts of activities covered by these ToR. AQA's assessment is that it does not currently need to seek to extend its activities in this direction.</p>	
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## H2. AQA Terms of Reference

<p>This final section reflects on how AQA demonstrates that it is delivering on its purpose in line with its own terms of reference.</p>	
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According to its terms of reference, AQA will:	This is demonstrated in:
<p>acknowledge the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 4.1 of the AQA Constitution, which specifies that the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee will take account of Māori representation on the AQA Board.</li> <li>• support for the Cycle 6 enhancement theme.</li> <li>• inclusion of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as an underpinning component of the Cycle 6 audit framework.</li> <li>• inclusion of a principle that quality assurance activities acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles of partnership, protection and participation in the joint principles for quality assurance with CUAP and included in the Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit (p2).</li> <li>• commitment to publish key materials to te reo Māori.</li> </ul>
<p>maintain consistency with international expectations, standards and developments in external quality assurance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• component A of Cycle 6</li> <li>• ToR B2 and B3.</li> </ul>

advise the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee and Universities New Zealand on quality assurance matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ToR B6</li> </ul>
reflect areas of importance to universities with respect to their teaching, learning, student experience and student outcomes activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cycle 6 Components C and E</li> <li>• ToR C3</li> </ul>
undertake quality assurance reviews (currently in the form of an academic audit) that are robust, fair and perceptive and that assist universities and their students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQA Quality Assurance Goal</li> <li>• overall objectives of the Cycle 6 Audit Framework,</li> <li>• ToR C3, C10</li> </ul>
acknowledge and respect the individual contexts of universities in undertaking quality assurance reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cycle 6 Component B</li> <li>• ToR C1, C4</li> </ul>
make provision for appeals regarding the content of a quality assurance review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ToR C14</li> </ul>
publish quality assurance reviews of universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cycle 6 Components I and J</li> <li>• ToR E8</li> </ul>
identify and promote good practice in quality assurance and enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ToR B3, B5, C2, D1</li> </ul>
support the contribution of an effective student voice in quality assurance and enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section A5 – Student voice</li> <li>• an MoU with NZUSA</li> <li>• inclusion of a principle that students are partners in quality assurance in the joint principles for quality assurance with CUAP and included in the Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit (p3)</li> <li>• component G of Cycle 6 Academic Audit, which provides for students or recent graduates to be members of audit panels in Cycle 6.</li> <li>• support for an annual Student Voice Summit</li> </ul>
recognise other accountabilities and responsibilities of universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ToR C1, C2</li> </ul>
maintain a constructive relationship with the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) that recognises the responsibilities of CUAP and AQA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint principles for quality assurance with CUAP</li> <li>• ToR A2, A3, B3, F4</li> </ul>
contribute to the development of quality assurance in New Zealand and internationally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the innovative development of Cycle 6</li> </ul>
undertake contract work as is compatible with its purpose and terms of reference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section A2</li> <li>• ToR B3</li> </ul>

The above analysis demonstrates that this self-review and terms of reference can also be used to demonstrate that AQA is meeting its own terms of reference. A final enhancement initiative arising from consideration of AQA's terms of reference and identified in Section A5 (p11) is:

EI 8 consider enduring models for advice and guidance on giving effect to the term of reference that AQA will acknowledge the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (A5)

### H3. Final comments, summary of enhancement initiatives and next steps

AQA has used INQAAHE's GGP to undertake its self-review. These have provided a comprehensive framework for AQA to assess the activities it undertakes to deliver on its purpose. AQA is confident that it can demonstrate it is meeting the GGP. AQA recognises that for some GGP, full evidence of effectiveness in Cycle 6 cannot be gained until the cycle is complete. However, evidence does exist that AQA met these guideline statements in Cycle 5 and expects that it will continue to do so in Cycle 6.

Finally, AQA has returned to its own Terms of Reference and provided summary evidence that these are also met.

AQA's strengths over this review period have been the development of a novel composite model for Cycle 6 academic audit, increased attention to quality enhancement and support for student voice(s) in academic quality. The reflection undertaken as part of this self-review has identified the following potential areas for enhancement:

EI 1 Review publication formats and channels. (B5)

EI 2 Undertake an interim review of Cycle 6 audit processes to confirm they are functioning as planned. (C16)

EI 3 Review audit policy and revise to include previous association. (E3)

EI 4 Review and revise feedback processes in audit (E3)

EI 5 Consider publishing agendas and minutes of Board meetings on the AQA website. (E7)

EI 6 Strengthen the commitment to public reporting for international reviews (E8)

EI 7 Review and revise if warranted mechanisms for improving public understanding of academic audit reports and possibly academic quality more broadly. (E9)

EI 8 consider enduring models for advice and guidance on giving effect to the term of reference that AQA will acknowledge the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (Section A5, p11)

#### Next steps

This self-review report will be submitted to the external panel for the 2020 External Review of AQA on 1 April 2020. The external panel is scheduled to meet the week of 15 June 2020 and its final report is expected to be released by the end of 2020. The external panel's report will be available on the AQA website.



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## Appendix 1 Terms of Reference for the 2020 External Review of AQA

Terms of reference and process for the 2020 external review of AQA are set out below.

The objective of this review is to assess how effectively AQA assists the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee to discharge its responsibilities for quality assurance matters in universities<sup>2</sup> through:

- delivering on its purpose in line with its terms of reference<sup>3</sup>
- meeting or exceeding INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice
- transacting core business processes efficiently and effectively.

The framework for the review is as follows:

- A. Introduction and context.
- B. AQA demonstrates leadership and advocacy in the development of academic quality.
- C. AQA undertakes quality assurance processes that assist universities.
- D. AQA supports quality enhancement processes that assist universities.
- E. AQA contributes to confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities.
- F. AQA transacts its core business efficiently and effectively.
- G. AQA undertakes appropriate international and other activities.
- H. Conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

Detailed criteria, utilising the INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice as a basis, follow.

### **Detailed criteria for Review Framework**

(numbers in parentheses refer to GGP criteria)

- A. Introduction and context
  1. Response to recommendations in 2015 external review
- B. AQA demonstrates leadership and advocacy in the development of academic quality. This will be demonstrated by meeting the following criteria:
  1. AQA operates with transparency, integrity and professionalism and adheres to ethical and professional standards. (2.1.1)
  2. AQA is open to international developments in quality assurance and has mechanisms that enable it to learn about and analyse the main trends in the field. (2.2.1)
  3. AQA collaborates with other QA agencies where possible, in areas such as exchange of good practices, capacity building, and review of decisions, joint projects, or staff exchanges. (2.2.2)
  4. AQA discloses to the public the decisions about the EQAA resulting from any external review of its own performance. (4.2.1)
  5. AQA prepares and disseminates periodically integrated reports on the overall outcomes of QA processes and of any other relevant activities. (4.2.2)
  6. AQA is sought as a credible commentator on matters of academic quality
- C. AQA undertakes quality assurance processes that assist universities. This will be demonstrated by meeting the following criteria:

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<sup>2</sup> New Zealand Education Action 1989 (Reprint as at 14 May 2019), Section 159AD

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.aqa.ac.nz/sites/all/files/AQA%20Constitution%20Approved%20April%202018\\_0.pdf](https://www.aqa.ac.nz/sites/all/files/AQA%20Constitution%20Approved%20April%202018_0.pdf)

1. AQA recognises that institutional and programmatic quality and quality assurance are primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions (HEIs) themselves, and respects the academic autonomy, identity and integrity of the institutions and programmes. (3.1.1)
2. AQA promotes the development and appropriate implementation of IQA processes in accordance with the understanding that the primary responsibility for assuring quality resides with the institutions and its programmes. (3.1.2)
3. AQA bears in mind the level of workload and cost that its procedures will place on institutions, and, strives to make them as time and cost effective as possible. (3.1.3)
4. AQA recognises and values institutional diversity and translates this valuation into criteria and procedures that take into account the identity and goals of higher education institutions. (3.2.1)
5. The standards or criteria developed by AQA have been subject to reasonable consultation with stakeholders and are revised at regular intervals to ensure relevance to the needs of the system. (3.2.2)
6. Standards or criteria take into consideration the specific aspects related to different modes of provision, such as transnational education, distance or online programmes or other non-traditional approaches to HE as relevant to the context in which they operate. (3.2.3)
7. Standards or criteria explicitly address the areas of institutional activity that fall within the AQA's scope<sup>4</sup>, and on the availability of necessary resources (e.g., finances, staff and learning resources). (3.2.4)
8. Criteria or standards and procedures take into account internal follow up mechanisms, and provide for effective follow up of the outcomes of the external reviews. (3.2.5)
9. AQA procedures specify the way in which criteria will be applied and the types of evidence needed to demonstrate that they are met. (3.2.6)
10. AQA carries out an external review process that is reliable and based on published criteria and procedures. It follows a self-assessment or equivalent, and includes an external review (normally including a site visit or visits), and a consistent follow up of the recommendations resulting from the external review. (3.3.1)
11. AQA has published documents, which clearly state what it expects from higher education institutions, in the form of quality criteria, or standards and procedures, for self-assessment and external review. (3.3.2)
12. The external review process is carried out by teams of experts consistent with the characteristics of the institution/programme being reviewed. Experts can provide input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students, employers or professional practitioners. (3.3.3)
13. AQA has clear specifications on the characteristics and selection of external Reviewers, who must be supported by appropriate training and good supporting materials such as handbooks or manuals. (3.3.4)
14. External review procedures include effective and comprehensive mechanisms for the prevention of conflicts of interest, and, ensure that any judgments resulting from external reviews are based on explicit and published criteria. (3.3.5)

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<sup>4</sup> Examples in parentheses not included

15. AQA's system ensures that each institution or programme will be evaluated in a consistent way, even if the external Panels, teams, or committees are different. (3.3.6)
  16. AQA carries out the external review within a reasonable timeframe after the completion of a self-assessment report, to ensure that information is current and updated. (3.3.7)
  17. AQA provides higher education institutions with an opportunity to correct any factual errors that may appear in the external review report. (3.3.8)
  18. AQA provides clear guidance to the institution or programme in the application of the procedures for self-evaluation, the solicitation of assessment/feedback from the public, students, and other constituents, or the preparation for external review as necessary and appropriate. (3.4.1)
- D. AQA supports quality enhancement processes that assist universities. This will be demonstrated by meeting the following criteria (adapted from GGP QA criteria):
1. AQA encourages and assists universities in ongoing improvement of academic quality, including a commitment to flexibility and appropriate innovation in promoting academic quality (CHEA 10F)
  2. AQA recognises that quality enhancement is primarily the responsibility of the higher education institutions (HEIs) themselves, and respects the academic autonomy, identity and integrity of the institutions and programmes.
  3. AQA promotes the development and appropriate implementation quality enhancement processes in accordance with the understanding that the primary responsibility for quality enhancement resides with the institutions and its programmes.
  4. AQA bears in mind the level of workload and cost that its procedures will place on institutions, and, strives to make them as time- and cost-effective as possible.
  5. AQA recognises and values institutional diversity and translates this valuation into criteria and procedures that take into account the identity and goals of higher education institutions.
- E. AQA contributes to confidence in the academic quality of New Zealand universities. This will be demonstrated by meeting the following criteria:
1. AQA has an established legal basis and is recognised by a competent external body. (1.1.1)
  2. AQA takes into consideration relevant guidelines issued by international networks and other associations in formulating its policies and practices. (1.1.2)
  3. AQA has a clear and published policy for the prevention of conflicts of interest that applies to its staff, its decision-making body, and the external Reviewers. (1.1.3)
  4. AQA has a written mission statement and a set of objectives that explicitly provide that external quality assurance of higher education is its major concern, describe the purpose and scope of its activities and can be translated into verifiable policies and measurable objectives. (1.2.1)
  5. AQA has a governance structure consistent with its mission and objectives, and, adequate mechanisms to involve relevant stakeholders in the definition of its standards and criteria. (1.3.1)
  6. The composition of the decision-making body and/or its regulatory framework ensure its independence and impartiality. (1.3.2)
  7. AQA provides full and clear disclosure of its relevant documentation such as policies, procedures and criteria. (4.1.1)

8. AQA reports its decisions about higher education institutions and programmes. The content and extent of reporting may vary with cultural context and applicable legal and other requirements. (4.1.2)
  9. AQA has mechanisms to facilitate the public a fair understanding of the reasons supporting decisions taken. (4.1.3)
  10. AQA decisions take into consideration the outcomes of both the institution's self-assessment process and the external review; they may also consider any other relevant information, provided this has been communicated to the HEIs. (5.1.1)
  11. AQA decisions are impartial, rigorous, and consistent even when they are based on the reports of other quality assurance bodies. (5.1.2)
  12. AQA decisions are based on published criteria and procedures, and, can be justified only with reference to those criteria and procedures. (5.1.3)
  13. Consistency in decision-making includes consistency and transparency in processes and actions for imposing recommendations for follow-up action. (5.1.4)
  14. AQA's reported decisions are clear and precise. (5.1.5)
  15. AQA has procedures in place to deal in a consistent way with complaints about its procedures or operation. (5.2.1)
  16. AQA has clear, published procedures for handling appeals related to its external review and decision-making processes. (5.2.2)
  17. Appeals are conducted by a Panel that was not responsible for the original decision and has no conflict of interest; appeals need not necessarily be conducted outside AQA. (5.2.3)
- F. AQA transacts its core business efficiently and effectively. This will be demonstrated by meeting the following criteria:
1. AQA's organisational structure makes it possible to carry out its external review processes effectively and efficiently. (1.3.3)
  2. AQA has a strategic plan that helps assess its progress and plan for future developments. (1.3.4)
  3. AQA has a well-trained, appropriately qualified staff, able to conduct external evaluation effectively and efficiently in accordance with its mission statement and its methodological approach. (1.4.1)
  4. AQA has the physical and financial resources needed to fulfil its goals and carry out the activities that emerge from its mission statement and objectives. (1.4.2)
  5. AQA provides systematic opportunities for the professional development of its staff. (1.4.3)
  6. AQA has in place mechanisms that enable it to review its own activities in order to respond to the changing nature of higher education, the effectiveness of its operations, and its contribution towards the achievement of its objectives. (2.1.2)
  7. AQA periodically conducts a self-review of its own activities, including consideration of its own effects and value. The review includes data collection and analysis, to inform decision-making and trigger improvements. (2.1.3)
  8. AQA is subject to external reviews at regular intervals, ideally not exceeding five years. There is evidence that any required actions are implemented and disclosed. (2.1.4)
- G. AQA undertakes appropriate international and other activities. This will be demonstrated by meeting the following criteria (GGP not captured above including cross-border education):
1. AQA gains value from international engagement (SPE 2019-20 3.2)

2. The EQAA (AQA in NZ) in a sending country makes clear that the awarding institution is responsible for ensuring the equivalent quality of the education offered, that the institution understands the regulatory frameworks of the receiving countries, and that the institution provides clear information on the programmes offered and their characteristics. (6.1.1)
  3. Students and other stakeholders receive clear and complete information about the awards delivered. (6.1.2)
  4. AQA cooperates with appropriate local agencies in the exporting and importing countries and with international networks. This cooperation is oriented to improve mutual understanding, to have a clear and comprehensive account of the regulatory framework and to share good practices. (6.2.1)
  5. AQA seeks ways to cooperate in the external quality assurance in transnational education provision, for example through mutual recognition. (6.2.2)
- H. Conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

## Appendix 2: Complete list of supporting evidence

Section	Key documents	Supporting documents	Website links
A	[KD-A1] <a href="#">AQA Constitution</a>	[sd-A1] <a href="#">Minute of 19 November 2019 meeting of the AQA Board, Item 13</a>	<a href="#">UNZ – About the University sector</a>
	[KD-A2] <a href="#">Cycle 5 Handbook</a>	[sd-A2] <a href="#">MPI Review Report</a>	<a href="#">Recognition of alignment with INQAAHE GGP</a>
	[KD-A3] <a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6,</a>	[sd-A3] <a href="#">Matear (2019) Reconsidering evidence</a>	<a href="#">INQAAHE GGP</a>
	[KD-A4] <a href="#">Matear (2018c) Evolving Quality</a>	[sd-A4] <a href="#">AQA Submission to TSV</a>	<a href="#">Cycle 4 Audit Manual (2007)</a>
	[KD-A5] <a href="#">Matear (2018a) Process review</a>	[sd-A5] <a href="#">International Framework</a>	<a href="#">AQA 25 Years</a>
	[KD-A6] <a href="#">Matear (2018b) Cycle 5: Analysis of commendations, affirmations and recommendations</a>	[sd-A6a] <a href="#">Induction materials: Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Review of CUAP (2017)</a>
		[sd-A6b] <a href="#">Induction materials Presentation</a>	<a href="#">Academic Quality Assurance of New Zealand universities</a>
		[sd-A7] <a href="#">Cameron and Kirkwood (2015) C5 mid-cycle review of processes</a>	<a href="#">AQA website – Cycle 6</a>
		[sd-A8] <a href="#">Cycle 6 Discussion paper</a>	<a href="#">Matear et al. (2018) - STARS</a>
		[sd-A9] <a href="#">Summary of key steps in development of Cycle 6</a>	<a href="#">NAAC/APQN Good Practices</a>
		[sd-A10] <a href="#">Auditor Recruitment and Training Plan</a>	<a href="#">MoU between AQA and NZUSA</a>
		[sd-A11] <a href="#">2019/20 AQA workshops Introduction to Cycle 6 and Self-review</a>	<a href="#">Student Voice Summit 2019</a>
			<a href="#">AQA newsletters</a>
			<a href="#">Jennings (2004)</a>
			<a href="#">UNZ (2018) parity analysis</a>
			<a href="#">Enhancement Theme website</a>
			<a href="#">Education and Training Bill</a>
			<a href="#">AQA one-year follow-up report</a>



Section	Key documents	Supporting documents	Website links
			<a href="#">2017/18 Statement of Performance (Annual report)</a>
			<a href="#">Spargs</a>
			<a href="#">AQA Previous events</a>
B	[KD-B1] <a href="#">AQA Policies</a>	[sd-B1] <a href="#">ED KPIs March 2019</a>	<a href="#">Annual reports</a>
	[KD-B2] <a href="#">Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement</a>	[sd-B2] <a href="#">Cycle 6 Devt WS (Aug. 17)</a>	2017 <a href="#">Support for Quality Conference</a>
		[sd-B3] <a href="#">Matear and King (2017)</a>	<a href="#">TEQSA academic integrity workshop</a>
		[sd-B4] <a href="#">TEQSA CEO visit programme</a>	<a href="#">Booth (2018). Higher Education Pacific Quality Benchmarking Project</a>
		[sd-B5] <a href="#">Academic Integrity workshop flyer</a>	<a href="#">AQA External Reviews</a>
		[sd-B6] <a href="#">Course advising Thematic note</a>	<a href="#">Teaching quality Thematic note</a>
		[sd-B7] <a href="#">Productivity Commission</a>	<a href="#">AQA working paper – Evidence</a>
		[sd-B8] <a href="#">Kōrero Mātauranga</a>	<a href="#">Quality Forum Report 2018</a>
		[sd-B9] <a href="#">Micro-credentials</a>	<a href="#">Symposium 2018</a>
		[sd-B10] <a href="#">ROVE</a>	
		[sd-B11] <a href="#">NZQF</a>	
C	[KD-C1] <a href="#">Guide to Cycle 6 Audit Framework</a>	[sd-C1] <a href="#">Statement of Performance Expectations 2020-2021</a>	<a href="#">ESG</a>
		[sd-C2] <a href="#">AQA Board recommendation to VCs</a>	<a href="#">Criteria for auditor appointment</a>
			<a href="#">Cycle 5 Audit Framework</a>
			<a href="#">CUAP Handbook</a>
			<a href="#">OAG briefing on 2018 audits</a>
			<a href="#">AQA Newsletter, September 2019</a>
			<a href="#">Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviewers</a>
			<a href="#">2015 External Review of AQA</a>
D		[sd-D1] <a href="#">ETSG Terms of Reference</a>	<a href="#">CHEA Recognition of Accrediting Organizations</a>

Section	Key documents	Supporting documents	Website links
		[sd-D2] <a href="#">2019 Symposium workbook (large file)</a>	<a href="https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/quality-enhancement-framework/enhancement-themes">https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/quality-enhancement-framework/enhancement-themes</a>
		[sd-D3] <a href="#">12 March 2020 ETSG meeting notes</a>	<a href="#">New Zealand Enhancement Theme</a>
		[sd-D4] <a href="#">QF 19 Feedback</a>	<a href="#">AQA Enhancement Theme page</a>
		[sd-D5] <a href="#">ETSG response to interim review and report to VCs (June 2019)</a>	<a href="#">Interim review of the Enhancement Theme</a>
			<a href="#">ET frameworks</a>
			<a href="#">Synthesis of ET plans</a>
			<a href="#">2018 Symposium workbook</a>
			<a href="#">2018 Symposium report</a>
			<a href="#">Interim review and response</a>
			<a href="#">ETSG response to Interim review</a>
E		[sd-E1] <a href="#">Mapping against QC and HESF</a>	<a href="#">New Zealand Education Act (1989), Section 159AD</a>
		[sd-E2] <a href="#">International Comparisons Working Notes 1 file</a>	<a href="http://www.aqa.ac.nz">www.aqa.ac.nz</a>
		[sd-E3] <a href="#">Register of interests</a>	<a href="#">Cycle 5 Academic audit reports</a>
		[sd-E4] <a href="#">ED Employment agreement</a>	<a href="#">University of Waikato</a>
		[sd-E5] <a href="#">Policy management schedule</a>	<a href="#">Auckland University of Technology</a>
		[sd-E6] <a href="#">Example of report release comms plan</a>	<a href="#">University of Otago</a>
		[sd-E7] <a href="#">Example of one-year follow-up report</a>	<a href="#">Lincoln University</a>
			<a href="#">2017 Review of CUAP.</a>
			<a href="#">AQA website</a>
			<a href="#">MPI website</a>
F	[KD-F1] <a href="#">AQA Strategic Framework</a>	[sd-F1] <a href="#">2018-19 SPE</a>	<a href="#">2018-19 Annual Report</a>
		[sd-F2] <a href="#">C6 Op plan</a>	<a href="#">June 2019 newsletter</a>

Section	Key documents	Supporting documents	Website links
		[sd-F3] <a href="#">2020/21 SPE paper to March Board meeting</a>	
		[sd-F4] <a href="#">2019-20 Service Level Agreement</a>	
		[sd-F5] <a href="#">Contingency Support Agreement</a>	
		[sd-F6] <a href="#">SfQ feedback</a>	
		[sd-F7] <a href="#">QF 18 feedback</a>	
		[sd-F8] <a href="#">SVS 18 feedback</a>	
		[sd-F9] <a href="#">SVS 19 feedback</a>	
		[sd-F10] <a href="#">Self-review WS</a>	
		[sd-F11] <a href="#">March 2020 SPE progress report</a>	
G		[sd-G1] <a href="#">SPE 2019-20</a>	
		[sd-G2] <a href="#">FNU Programme review</a>	







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