

# news

March 2019

# AQA

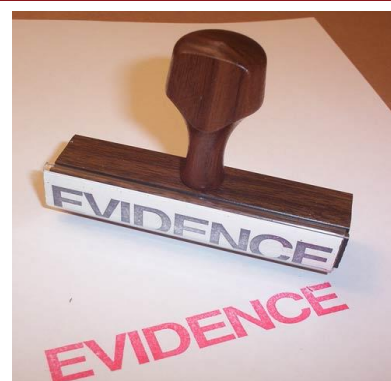
Academic  
**Quality**Agency  
For New Zealand Universities



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

## Cycle 6 Audit – Thinking About Evidence

Cycle 6 differs from previous audits in that it is explicit that the Cycle 6 audit framework applies to all students, all delivery and all staff who teach or supervise or support teaching or supervision. Universities and audit panels will need to consider how evidence reflects this systemic or embedded nature of academic quality. The nature of evidence for Cycle 6 is explored in a **working paper** available on the AQA website. The working paper and a workshop with university quality managers at the end of February have together led to the development of guidelines for evidence in Cycle 6. These are:



1. Evidence in Cycle 6 will be presented in the context of an individual university. What is appropriate evidence for one university may not be for another.
2. Both universities and audit panels should anticipate that the majority of evidence presented in Cycle 6 will be pre-existing evidence.
3. Evidence should be explicit and sufficient, relevant, representative, verifiable, cumulative, actionable, contextual and holistic and able to be triangulated.
4. The most important criterion for evidence is relevance. In Cycle 6 this means relevance of the evidence to the guideline statement and relevance to the embedded or systemic nature of evidence.
5. Evidence can be strengthened by drawing on multiple perspectives and sources from across the university.
6. Tensions are likely to exist between the pre-existing nature of evidence and relevance of that evidence, and universities may need to both explain how the tension has been resolved and use other criteria to determine whether the evidence is indeed appropriate for the guideline statement.
7. Where possible and appropriate, evidence should reflect a longitudinal component so that universities and audit panels can appreciate the direction of change.
8. Universities and audit panels should be open to and expect that evidence may take a variety of forms and some evidence may be based on indigenous knowledge systems.

### AQA | About

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) was established in 1993 to carry out audits of the processes in universities which underpin academic quality. The mission

of AQA is to contribute to high quality New Zealand university education by engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of universities based on high quality, internationally acceptable,

academic practices, and by providing quality assurance and quality enhancement services which assist universities in facilitating excellent student experience and learning outcomes.

## Quality Enhancement

The **report** on the Enhancement Theme Symposium is now available on the AQA website, together with a link to a **video summary** of the day.

The Enhancement Theme Steering Group met in mid-March and universities provided a one-year update on their enhancement theme plans.

### Mid-Cycle Reports

The AQA Board has reviewed and accepted the mid-cycle report from The University of Canterbury.

## New Members of the AQA Board

Three new members were appointed by the Vice-Chancellors to the AQA Board at the start of 2019. They are Professor Emerita Deborah Willis, Daniel Haines and James Heath.

Deborah and Daniel are lay or community members of the Board and James is the member nominated by the National Union of Students' Associations. Deborah, Daniel and James replace Pania Gray (Deputy Chair), Michèle Stanton and Jonathan Gee whose terms ended at the end of 2018. Pania and Michèle had served two consecutive three-year terms and were not eligible for further appointment and Jonathan had completed a single three-year term as the NZUSA nominee. The valuable contributions made by departing Board members were acknowledged at the final Board meeting of 2018.



The AQA Board

*Sitting Left to Right: Professor Emerita Deborah Willis, Emeritus Professor Pat Walsh (Chair), Dr Kaye McAulay*

*Standing Left to Right: Daniel Haines, Professor Neil Quigley, James Heath, Professor Jack Heinemann, Emeritus Professor Sheelagh Matear*

## Interview with Anthony McClaran, CEO TEQSA



*Emeritus Professor Sheelagh Matear (Executive Director of AQA) with Anthony McClaran (CEO of TEQSA)*

Anthony McClaran visited New Zealand last week. Sharon Cuzens (Communications Manager at Universities NZ) interviewed him for the AQA newsletter. TEQSA is the government agency responsible for regulating higher education in Australia. Its functions are a cross between those of AQA, CUAP and NZQA—but on a very much larger scale.

"We cover 170 providers, over 40 of them universities," says Anthony. "We register providers, accredit the programmes of non-self-accrediting providers and also cover higher education provision delivered by Australian providers overseas, which covers up to 70,000 students."

Established in 2012, TEQSA operates a seven-year review cycle, so has just completed its first full cycle. And Anthony is keen to see Australian providers move on from the 'threshold' model of external quality assurance to one where they can improve and enhance the quality of the education they offer—in much the same way AQA is going with its Cycle 6 enhancement theme.

Rigorous risk assessment is part of the TEQSA process, with every provider assessed each year. "We rate all providers as low, moderate or high risk—that's both risk to students and financial risk. On the basis of that, we determine the level of our regulatory engagement over the following year and focus our attention as a regulator on the areas of highest risk.

"The current focus is 'Have you met the threshold?'," he says. "We're increasingly recognising that many providers met the threshold a long time ago and it's now about improving or enhancing. Some of that work we're content to leave to the providers themselves, but we're also called upon to provide advice on good practice, to enable providers to move beyond the threshold."

TEQSA last year produced a good practice guide on combating breaches of academic integrity; and this year will bring out a guide on the most effective methods of putting good systems in place to deal with complaints about sexual assault and harassment. "There will be other areas where we're committed to good practice guides," says Anthony. "One will be on completion and attrition and how a provider can minimise attrition. I think that connects with the kind of concerns and issues being raised with the AQA enhancement there."

"We see types of providers with higher levels of attrition, which are often understandable because of demographic issues. But equally we can see different levels of attrition among providers of a similar type with a similar intake. This indicates that some providers are using methods that are minimising that attrition. We need to understand that and how that practice can be spread."

Adding value and going beyond just meeting the threshold are key concerns for TQSA and Anthony McClaran. "I used to be the CEO of the UK regulatory agency (Quality Assurance Agency)," he says. "After we'd gone through about four cycles, we started asking ourselves, 'What value is there in just doing the same thing again? Are there particular themes we should be focusing on? Because with a system where the providers are mature there's probably some diminishing returns in repeating the same thing—for them and the public.'"

## Communications Survey

As part of its own commitment to quality enhancement AQA seeks feedback on its activities. We would like to ask readers of the AQA newsletter for feedback on the newsletter and AQA communications more broadly. Please tell us what you think about AQA communications and how they could be improved by completing a short survey [here](#).

## Student Voice

***Contributed by James Ranstead (NZUSA President)***

Kia ora koutou katoa,

James Ranstead here, President of the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) for 2019. Having served as President of the Lincoln University Students' Association (LUSA) in 2018, it is my pleasure to step into this role, and continue the strong relationship that AQA and NZUSA have.



One of NZUSA's key ambitions for the year is to continue the 'students as partners' trajectory that student voice is currently on. Student voice in many parts of the country is being given a higher level of importance over time, and NZUSA and AQA are hoping to solidify this across the nation as we continue to lobby for the development of a 'Centre for Student Voice'. This idea has recently been highly recognised by MP's as a key way of improving student voice skills, and meanwhile working alongside changes to Voluntary Student Membership we are currently developing to 'level the playing field' when it comes to student voice across our institutes.

NZUSA is pleased that there are representatives sitting on a variety of national boards, including not only AQA, but also Ako Aotearoa and CUAP, highlighting the importance that student voice is given in Aotearoa New Zealand. With changes to the AQA Cycle system on the way, NZUSA is looking forward to seeing better equipped student participants in future years. We have also been pleased to see the greater level of recognition our partner associations (Te Māna Ākonga, New Zealand International Students Associations, and New Zealand Tongan Tertiary Students Associations) have been given in recent times, and we encourage this to continue.

## Have You Seen This?

The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education have released a series of reports on equity in non-university and third-part providers and a research paper on post-graduation outcomes and employment mobility for first-in-family learners

<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/>

<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/fellowship-sarah-oshea/> They have also launched A long-term strategic vision for student equity in higher education

<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/student-equity-2030-best-chance-for-all/>

Ako Aotearoa have released a synthesis of recent work around the question of professional standards in tertiary education. See <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/synthesis-reports/professional-standards-for-tertiary-teachers/>

TEQSA have provided a report to the Australian Minister for Education on the Australian Higher education sector response to the issue of sexual assault and sexual harassment. See

<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/report-minister-education-higher-education-sector-response-issue-sexual>

The current Scottish Enhancement Theme – Evidence for Enhancement – has developed a webinar series

<https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/current-enhancement-theme/optimising-existing-evidence/webinar-series>

Both Australia and New Zealand are reviewing their respective national qualifications frameworks. Information about the Australian review is available at

<https://www.education.gov.au/australian-qualifications-framework-review-0> and the New Zealand review at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/consultations-and-reviews/nzqf-review/>

Regulatory change is also under consideration in the USA. The President of the WASC Senior College and University Commission provides a summary

<https://www.wscuc.org/news/letter-president-march-2019>

## Meetings and Conference Calendar

7-8 May 2019 in Liverpool

UK Quality Summit – Successful Partnerships

<https://events.qaa.ac.uk/qaaevents/frontend/reg/thome.csp?pageID=1111&eventID=32&traceReDir=2>

3-5 June 2019 in Melbourne

Learning Leaders in Higher Education and Higher Education Quality Network Conference

<https://www.hes.edu.au/events/learning-leaders-higher-education-and-higher-education-quality-network-conference>

5 June 2019 in Glasgow

QAA-Scotland Focus on Graduate Skills

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/focus-on/graduate-skills>

4-5 July 2019 in Auckland

Association for Tertiary Education Management Aotearoa National Conference

<https://www.atem.org.au/conferences/regional-conferences/ao-conference-2019>

Submissions close 4pm, Friday 5 April 2019

7-10 July 2019 in Melbourne

STARS – Students Transitions Achievement Retention Success – conference

<http://unistars.org/>

October 2019 - tbc

Student Voice Summit and AQA Quality Forum

21-23 November 2019 in Berlin

European Quality Assurance Forum

<https://eua.eu/events/33-2019-european-quality-assurance-forum.html>

Submissions close 22 July 2019

24 – 27 November 2019 in Wollongong

Equity Practitioners in Higher Education in Australasia (EPHEA) and the National Association of Enabling Educators in Australia (NAEEA) 2019 EPHEA/NAEEA Biennial Conference “Enabling Excellence through Equity”

<http://enablingequity.com/>

Submission deadline 31 May 2019

**AQA** | Academic  
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For New Zealand Universities

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Executive Director



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We welcome feedback on this newsletter and the AQA website, along with news and suggestions for newsletter items.

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