

The logo for the Academic Quality Agency (AQA) consists of the letters 'AQA' in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The 'Q' is stylized with a white dot in the center.


Academic
QualityAgency
For New Zealand Universities

Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit Auditor Supplement

Sheelagh Matear

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First Edition



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All views expressed in this report, and any remaining errors or omissions, remain the responsibility of the author.

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Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit
Auditor Supplement
Version 1.0

June 2019

Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities
Te Pokapū Kounga Mātauranga mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa

Foreword

Welcome to the first edition of the *Auditor Supplement* for Cycle 6 Academic Audit for New Zealand universities. Peer review is an underpinning principle of quality assurance for New Zealand universities and the calibre and experience of audit panel members is a significant contributor to the quality and value of academic audits for New Zealand universities.

The *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* (Matear, 2019b) sets out the components of Cycle 6, the Cycle 6 Academic Audit Framework, and audit processes and timelines. This *Supplement* accompanies and should be read in conjunction with *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* for New Zealand universities. It provides additional material for auditors, including more detail on audit processes and activities and roles and responsibilities of auditors.

Auditor recruitment and training are ongoing throughout the Cycle, although early application to join the Register of Auditors and Reviewers is appreciated. Auditors are appointed to the Register by the AQA Board. The dates of auditor training workshops will be advertised on the AQA website and by email to members of the Register.

This *Supplement* and the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* are also available online. Feedback to improve this *Supplement* and the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* is welcome and will be incorporated into later editions.

Emeritus Professor Sheelagh Matear
Executive Director

Acknowledgements

This Supplement for Auditors uses sections of the Cycle 5 Academic Handbook for Auditors, as the material developed for that Handbook remains relevant in Cycle 6. The work of Jan Cameron in developing the Cycle 5 Handbook and her permission to use material from it is gratefully acknowledged.

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1 Introduction

This *Auditor Supplement* accompanies the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* (Matear, 2019b). It is designed to be read in conjunction with that *Guide* and provides further information for auditors. Cycle 6 academic audit builds on Cycle 5 and this *Supplement* draws on both the Cycle 5 Academic Audit Handbook for Auditors (Cameron, 2013) and a review of Cycle 5 processes and experiences (Matear, 2018).

The next section of the *Supplement* covers the appointment, responsibilities and contribution of audit panels and the panel chair. It also provides direction on confidentiality and conflicts of interest. Panel meetings and panel interaction and communication between meetings are addressed in Section 3. Section 4 covers assessing the portfolio, examining and seeking further evidence through interviews, drawing conclusions and reporting. Finally, Section 5 covers audit logistics and administration including the roles and responsibilities of AQA staff and the AQA Board.

AQA will seek feedback throughout the audit process (see section 5.5). However, feedback and suggestions for improving this *Supplement* are appreciated at any time and will be incorporated into later editions of this *Supplement*. Later editions of this supplement will also be informed by advice from the Enhancement Theme Steering Group.

2 The audit panel

Section 2 sets out the criteria and processes for appointing an audit panel, the requirements and responsibilities of the chair of the panel, the responsibilities and roles of all panel members, and ways of working.

Academic audit carried out by AQA is extended peer review. 'Peer' is defined as "a person or group with similar knowledge, skills, experience and status in the relevant context" (Woodhouse, 1994). In the context of Cycle 6 academic audit, this definition includes senior members of universities with expertise and interest in teaching and learning, student experience, and outcomes and academic quality. These peers may include academic and professional staff and also appropriately qualified and experienced auditors from outside the university sector. However, in Cycle 6, a student or recent graduate will also be included as a full and equal member of the panel.

Audit panels are appointed from the Cycle 6 Register of Auditors and Reviews. Criteria for appointment to the Register are in Appendix 3 of the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* and published on the AQA website.

Audit panels will normally comprise five members, including at least one international panel member, a student or recent graduate, and a panel member or members able to bring a Māori perspective and, if possible, a Pasifika perspective. The panel chair will normally be a senior New Zealand academic or academic manager. Auditors are selected because of their expertise and experience, as appropriate for the university being audited, and to ensure a balance of skills, experience and expertise across the panel.

2.1 Auditor training

Before undertaking an audit, panel members must have participated in auditor training. This will normally be an AQA auditor training session, but auditors who have been trained and undertaken audits in jurisdictions with similar quality assurance systems and approaches (Matear and King, 2017) may also be appointed. AQA will provide a briefing for international auditors appointed to panels.

The objectives of auditor training are to ensure that auditors:

- appreciate the expectations of academic audit and the importance of context
- are familiar with and understand the Cycle 6 audit framework
- understand audit processes and the role of the panel
- understand how audit panels work together
- can formulate validation and probe questions
- can specify further evidence requirements
- can assess whether guideline statements have been met
- can form conclusions based on evidence
- can identify areas for potential commendation, affirmation or recommendation
- can draft and/or critique sections of an audit report.

AQA will schedule workshops for auditor training. These will be notified via email and on the AQA website.

2.2 Process followed in appointing the panel

Processes for selecting and appointing an audit panel are laid down in AQA's policies, as approved by the AQA Board. Nomination and appointment of New Zealand university audit panels involves the following steps:

- 1) The AQA director submits a shortlist of potential panel members to the Chair of the AQA Board for consideration. Nominees will be auditors on the AQA register or the register of an

overseas tertiary quality assurance agency. From time to time it might be necessary to invite a person not already on such a register to serve on a panel, because of the special expertise they would bring. In such cases that person shall receive individual training from AQA as appropriate.

- 2) If possible, the potential chair of the panel will be identified when the short list is submitted to the Chair of the AQA Board. Occasionally, however, it might be preferable to defer this until all panel members have been confirmed. The chair of the panel will normally be a current or recent New Zealand academic staff member.
- 3) Potential panel members are advised of indicative or confirmed dates for the audit site visit and asked if they would be available and willing to serve on the panel. They are also asked to check that their biographies are up-to-date (and to amend as necessary), and to declare any potential conflict of interest with the university to be audited. They are advised that at this stage they are on a shortlist of potential auditors, with final selection contingent on overall panel composition and to be confirmed after consultation with the university to be audited.
- 4) Having ascertained availability of short-listed auditors, and after consulting the Chair of the Board, the Director will nominate the preferred members of the panel, considering the overall panel composition to ensure a balance of skills, experience and expertise.
- 5) The proposed panel is submitted to the AQA Board for approval.
 - If the AQA Board is not satisfied with the panel composition, the shortlist will be revisited, and alternative panel member(s) identified from the shortlist.
- 6) Once approved by the Board, the panel is submitted to the university for comment and, if justified, for the opportunity to object.
 - A university may object to:
 - the inclusion of an individual panel member on grounds of conflict of interest
 - overall panel composition if it is considered inappropriate for that university.Objections must be justified and will be considered by the Board of AQA, who will make a final decision regarding the panel membership.
- 7) Formal invitations are sent to the panel members, including confidentiality agreements. See Appendix 1: Panel Agreement.
- 8) Any other auditors approached in step 3 above are advised that they will not be required for this panel.

2.3 Responsibilities of auditors

The most important obligations of an auditor are to:

- be thoroughly familiar with the framework for the audit
- read thoroughly and become familiar with the Self-review Report and supporting documents
- be prepared to conduct a robust and fair assessment of the university against the Guideline Statements
- be an active team member, contributing according to his or her areas of expertise and experience to benefit the whole team
- be scrupulously honest, fair and trustworthy, protecting confidentiality at all times
- be free from bias or being influenced by preconceived ideas about the university or knowledge outside the scope of the audit
- be prepared to work beyond the areas of one's own interests (i.e. not confining analysis to narrow areas of special interest).

Auditors should note that AQA uses electronic resources and communication wherever possible.

Audit processes run to a relatively tight timetable. Auditors are therefore asked to ensure they provide responses to AQA and to other panel members by the dates requested.

Auditors will be expected to travel to panel meetings and to the site visit. Site visits of three to four days commonly involve four or five days away from home. Auditors are asked to advise AQA of any matters that might impede their ability to carry out their tasks effectively. If possible, AQA may help. In some cases (e.g. extended illness or absence) a replacement auditor may need to be appointed. Such options will always be discussed with the panel member and with the panel chair.

Auditors must advise AQA immediately if any new conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest arises (see section 2.5).

2.4 Responsibilities of the panel chair

In addition to the responsibilities of a member of the audit panel (see 2.3 above), the chair has the following main responsibilities:

- liaising with AQA staff responsible for supporting the audit, to plan and manage the aspects of the audit process that involve or will involve the panel
- ensuring the panel works as a team (identifying the strengths of individual panel members and the specific contributions each might make)
- in partnership with Māori panel members, supporting tikanga for meetings
- accompanying the AQA staff member on the planning visit to the university, helping identify potential interviewees and carrying out any document checking or initial interviewing decided on by the panel
- with the AQA staff member, setting the agenda for panel meetings and the site visit
- chairing the panel meetings, ensuring the panel members:
 - understand the framework for audit and its rationale
 - understand what kinds of assessments are expected
 - recognise the need to honestly contribute their own experience expertise and skill, and to be sensitive to the contribution of other panel members
 - share their views with each other without any one person dominating
 - understand any constraints or individual circumstances affecting the university that might impinge on the audit process or influence its findings
 - (if relevant) understand the purpose and utility of any visits to other campuses or sites
- with the AQA staff member, ensuring the overseas panel member is aware of any local issues that might affect the university (e.g. national policy or compliance requirements)
- leading the site visit, including:
 - in partnership with Māori panel members, supporting tikanga at the pōwhiri or mihi whakatau. The tikanga for the pōwhiri or mihi whakatau will be determined between the university and Māori panel members.
 - (if appropriate) speaking for the panel at a pōwhiri or mihi whakatau. For some site visits the university might identify an iwi representative to speak on the panel's behalf. This will be explored at the planning meeting the panel chair attends.
 - welcoming interviewees, introducing the panel, outlining the key issues or areas to be covered in the session
 - ensuring the discussion is kept to time, and intervening if discussion on a particular topic wanders or goes on too long
 - if the panel splits to undertake separate interviews, ensuring a debrief on reconvening and a summarised record of findings is made
 - chairing the panel-only meetings, ensuring matters are summarised succinctly, a record made of findings to date, and identifying outstanding issues
 - with the AQA staff member, adjusting interview schedules, interviewees and timing if necessary

- as the site visit progresses, leading the panel towards formulating its conclusions, ensuring each is supported by appropriate evidence
- being the panel’s spokesperson at the exit interview with the Vice-Chancellor
- using his or her experience and expertise to ensure assessment is thorough; analysis is robust and conclusions fair, unambiguous, supported by evidence, relevant to the topics in the audit framework and (in the case of recommendations) feasible
- being prepared to provide careful scrutiny and prompt feedback on the draft audit report as it goes through its various iterations before becoming final
- accompanying the AQA staff member to visit the university approximately one year after the site visit to hear the university’s response to the recommendations the panel has made.

“During the site visit it is the Chair’s responsibility, in conjunction with the ... staff member ... to create an atmosphere in which critical professional discussion can take place, where opinions can be freely and courteously exchanged, and in which justice and clarity prevail. The tone of the visit, and much of its success, depends on the chair’s ability to enable the panel to undertake its work as a team rather than as a set of individuals, and to bring out the best in those whom the panel meets.”

AUQA Audit Manual, 2009, p74.

In acknowledgment of the additional work carried out by the panel chair, an additional honorarium is paid (see 2.6 below).

2.5 Confidentiality and conflict of Interest

All audit panel members sign a statement of confidentiality and a declaration of any conflict of interest as part of accepting appointment as a member of the panel (Appendix 1).

The audit process requires that all personal notes made by audit panel members and all confidential documents obtained as part of the audit process are destroyed after the audit has been completed—usually within three to four months of the site visit. The AQA director will remind panel members of this requirement at the appropriate time.

Conflicts of interest may relate to prior or current personal or professional interactions with the university or to some ideological difference with the university’s values or objectives. The key issue to be considered is whether the potential conflict of interest might influence the audit panel’s assessment of the university, either because of prior knowledge about the institution or because of a personal point of view or because the auditor’s presence might constrain an interviewee’s interaction with the panel. Depending on whether the conflict of interest can be managed within the audit process—for example by the auditor being absent from a specific discussion—an auditor may be stood down. In such cases a replacement would be appointed, through the process outlined in section 2.2. Any unforeseen conflict of interest arises during the audit process must be declared to AQA or to the panel chair, who will discuss with the auditor the best way of managing the situation.

2.6 Honorarium, expenses and insurance

An academic audit for Cycle 6 will normally involve a two-day first panel meeting and a site visit of three to four days. If other panel meetings are required, they will normally be conducted by videoconference. Auditors are also expected to participate in email and other online discussion, audit planning and report writing. AQA auditors receive an honorarium in recognition of their professional contribution for audits undertaken. AQA recognises that an honorarium is not full recompense for time spent by auditors on an audit but, rather, recognises the contribution auditors make to academic quality, as peers of those reviewed.

The current (2019) honorarium is calculated as NZ\$700 per day for the site visit and meeting days plus some recognition of preparation time. Panel chairs receive an additional honorarium payment

(usually \$1,400-\$2,100) in recognition of their additional duties, plus an honorarium payment for the follow-up visit one year after the audit.

AQA does not normally pay an honorarium for training if this is required, though some expenses may be met if agreed in advance.

Honorarium payments may be made to individual auditors or to the auditor's institution/company. If a company or institution is to receive the payment, AQA requires a tax invoice to be submitted. If the payment is to be made to an individual auditor, the tax will be deducted at source on an IR330 tax code declaration. Honorarium payments are normally made in the month following the completion of the site visit.

All travel and accommodation expenses associated with an audit are met by AQA. Airfares are organised and paid for by AQA in advance. Additional reasonable expenses directly associated with the audit (e.g. parking; sustenance) may also be covered. AQA does not pay personal expenses incurred by an auditor to enable him or her to participate in an audit (e.g. childcare).

AQA provides full travel insurance cover for auditors travelling to or from overseas countries.

AQA holds professional indemnity insurance which covers the activities of auditors as well as AQA staff and the members of the AQA Board.

3 Panel meetings

Panels for Cycle 6 academic audits will normally meet twice in person, with an additional meeting by videoconference, if required.

Sections 4.4 and 4.6 of *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* outline the expectations of the panel meetings. This *Supplement* provides additional comments for auditors.

3.1 First panel meeting

The first panel meeting is twelve weeks before the site visit to the university. The panel will have had four weeks to undertake an initial assessment. All members of the panel should have read the self-review report and the chair may have asked individual panel members to focus on specific sections.

The first panel meeting is a two-day meeting. At this meeting panels should identify:

- any matters outstanding from the Cycle 5 academic audit of the university
- guideline statements that appear to be met, including whether they show evidence of embedded or systemic quality
- guideline statements for which further assessment, possibly including the provision of further evidence, is required
- questions that could be asked to either probe a guideline statement further or confirm (triangulate) the material contained in the self-review
- any areas that may give rise to a commendation, affirmation or recommendation.

The first panel meeting is also an opportunity for the panel to understand each other's strengths and contributions and how they will work as a team.

A template to help evaluate the self-review portfolio is contained in Appendix 2 of this *Supplement* and section 4 pays further attention to assessing the portfolio.

3.2 Second panel meeting

The second panel meeting occurs at the time of the site visit. The panel will meet before the site visit starts and at the end of the visit before the exit meeting with the Vice-Chancellor. Panel-only sessions are also scheduled during the site visit.

A meeting to prepare for the site visit interviews usually takes place at the panel's accommodation on the afternoon or evening before the site visit begins.

This meeting includes:

- reminding panel members of the key findings to date and tentative conclusions proposed
- an opportunity for the chair to advise the panel of his or her approach to interview sessions (e.g. how each session will be introduced; how questions will be asked)
- advising the panel of any sensitive issues they need to be aware of (e.g. confidential information; any circumstances within the university that might be considered sensitive)
- rehearsing outstanding issues and confirming who will be interviewed about these and the purpose of the interview (e.g. to gain clarification; to gather more information; to triangulate existing evidence)
- structuring the questions for each interview session, and determining who will take the lead on questions (note: panel members will usually have been asked to submit potential interview questions to AQA before the site visit; this does not preclude other questions being introduced as appropriate)
- prioritising the order of questions to ensure questions of academic risk are asked first
- reminding panel members of their roles in ensuring key points are recorded in the areas for which they have lead responsibility

- advising the panel of important housekeeping issues (e.g. arrangements for security of the interviewing room; arrangements for recording interviews; panel expectations regarding provision of interview notes)
- confirming arrangements for transport to and from the interview venue, including departure times
- advising the panel of arrangements for a mihi whakatau or pōwhiri (and rehearsing waiata if required).

3.3 Panel-only meetings

The schedule for the site visit includes panel-only meetings to allow the panel to reflect on the evidence gained so far and progress towards reaching conclusions on each guideline statement, and to refine approaches for the next interview session(s). In some instances, the panel might also have received additional new documentary information to examine.

If necessary, the panel may also meet in the evenings at its accommodation. Panels should have at least one evening free of commitments.

In the final stages of the site visit, the panel-only meetings are likely to focus more on closure around guideline statements and identifying outstanding issues.

The conduct of the panel-only meetings is for the panel chair to determine. In the later stages, panel members may find it useful to work individually to determine whether there is enough evidence to enable robust conclusions to be drawn for any areas for which they have a lead responsibility. *All* panel members, however, are responsible for the audit conclusions and the audit report.

3.4 Between meetings

Between meetings, panel members will communicate mainly via email and videoconference. Audit documents will be held on a secure shared site for panel members. Other platforms can be explored as appropriate.

4 Assessing the portfolio

The key task of the panel is to assess whether the university meets the outcomes and standards a university of good international standing would be expected to achieve and therefore whether students and the public can have confidence in the academic quality of the university.

It does this by considering self-review materials provided by the university and by further examining conclusions drawn in a university's self-review through interviews with members of the university and other stakeholders, if appropriate.

At an overview level, the panel will assess whether the university has an effective quality assurance system in place and whether the university's self-review processes have been robust.

The audit framework is a key tool in assessing the academic quality of a university at the detailed level. However, it is a framework and universities may adapt it as is appropriate for their context and to support their responsibilities for academic quality (see section 5.2.1). The panel needs to appreciate the context of the university.

The audit framework for Cycle 6 is set out in Section 3 of the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit*. It comprises 30 guideline statements underpinned by the university's obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the interdependence of university research and teaching, and universities' role as critic and conscience of society. The scope of the audit includes all students, all staff who undertake or support teaching or supervision, and all delivery.

Panel members should be aware that any self-review report reflects a university at a point in time. In the time between completion of the self-review report and the audit site visit some things will have changed. Significant changes to key academic processes can be reported to the panel prior to or at the audit site visit. If the university undergoes major changes that might affect activities covered by the audit (e.g. a restructuring or merger) an addendum might be provided to the self-review report outlining the changes and possible areas of impact.

4.1 Portfolio assessment and evidence

Self-assessment by the university and assessment by the panel are both based on evidence. The university should provide evidence that a guideline statement is met, and the panel should evaluate and seek to validate that evidence.

Evidence in Cycle 6 is drawn from:

- a university's self-review portfolio
- additional material provided in response to panel requests
- interviews with university students, staff and other stakeholders.

The expectations for evidence and the university's self-evaluation of that evidence are set out in Section 3.1.1 in the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit*. The development of guidelines for evidence is set out in a 2019 AQA working paper (Matear, 2019a).

Section 3.2 and Appendices 1 and 2 of the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* provide guidance on the types of evidence a university might provide.

More generally, panel members may ask with respect to each guideline statement:

- *Does the university have any specific objective/commitment for this guideline statement?*
- *What does it do to meet—or exceed—this objective/commitment?*
- *Does it meet the objective/commitment?*
- *Does it meet the AQA guideline statement (if this differs from the university's own objective)?*
- *How does the university know? i.e. what is the evidence?*
- *What, if anything, is the university going to do about this objective/commitment?*

- *What more, if anything, does the university appear to need to do to meet this guideline statement or to improve the way in which it addresses it?*
- *Does the university appear to demonstrate practices which are commendable with respect to this guideline statement?*
- *What further evidence does the audit panel need to draw a conclusion about this guideline statement?*
- *Who, if anyone (i.e. what role/s) should the panel interview to help triangulate its evidence about this guideline statement?*

The other major source of evidence for audit panels is interviews with university students, staff and other stakeholders. Further information on interviewing is set out in Section 4.2 below.

The panel should assess whether sufficient evidence has been provided to support the guideline statement being met and whether the evidence reflects all students, all staff who undertake or support teaching or supervision, and all delivery, as appropriate to the guideline statement.

4.2 Interviews and interviewing

Interviews during the site visit provide further evidence of whether the university is meeting the guideline statement in the audit framework. Interviews may seek to elicit further evidence and confirm or validate evidence that has already been provided. Section 4.6 of the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* outlines the three types of questions that are expected in interviews: strategic framing, triangulation or validation and specific probing questions.

Panel chairs lead the interview sessions. They will advise the panel how sessions are to be structured.

In carrying out their interviews, panel members must first and foremost be respectful. Academic audits are evaluations by peers; they are not interrogations by superiors. Panel members should also remember that they are in the university as guests.

To ensure interviews remain focused and efficient, panel members should follow the lead provided by the chair. More generally, panel members should:

- model teamwork. Panel members have often been chosen for a particular panel because they would seem to complement each other in experience, skills and approaches.
- be succinct and incisive in asking questions; avoid lengthy questions and do not ask multiple questions
- be fair. Do not continue to probe a line of questioning when it is clear the interviewee is not equipped to answer it or has said all he or she has to say on it.
- seek clarification when required
- probe when responses are imprecise, perfunctory or unclear
- take care how questions are asked when panel members already have the information (such questions might be asked when the panel is checking for the extent to which quality practices are embedded or broadly understood but panel members recognise that asking for information that has already been provided risks undermining the panel's credibility)
- concentrate on the major issues that have been identified; do not be distracted by relatively unimportant matters, no matter how interesting
- listen, hear and heed what interviewees say
- try to distinguish idiosyncratic experiences that are reported from those that might be more common or the norm
- try to ensure that notetaking is as discrete as possible; ensure that when asking a question, the interviewee has the full attention of the interviewer
- thank interviewees for their response.

During interviews, panel members should *not*:

- deliver lengthy preambles to their questions
- tell stories or anecdotes within their questions
- use examples from their own or any other institution
- cite experiences from other audits
- refer to information gained from previous sessions in the same audit in any way that might identify interviewees
- offer advice
- talk over the top of an interviewee or fellow panel member.

The chair will need to ensure the interview stays on task, does not get diverted by peripheral issues and is not dominated by one or two interviewees (or auditors). It is the chair's responsibility to open and close the interview session.

4.2.1 Interviewing - some reminders for AQA auditors

- Never refer to something you have heard in another interview session in any way which might identify the interviewees. Instead, if you really need clarification you might say, e.g., "We understand that" But be cautious even with this phrasing.
- Do not refer to the portfolio, supplementary documentation and the previous audit report for this university. E.g. "We've read that"
- Do not refer to practices of your own institutions or others with which you are very familiar.
- Do ask about how they know how their policies and practices compare to national and international peers, as appropriate to the context and aspirations of the University.
- Do not praise or criticise the university during the questioning. E.g. do not say "We think X is great" or "We are very concerned about Y". There is a real risk of misrepresenting the panel's opinion before its work is concluded.
- Do not offer solutions. e.g. "You might want to look at..." or "We could provide you with information about that." It is not the role of the panel to offer advice.
- Do not foreshadow responses or ask leading questions, unless this is to achieve a short confirmation of a fact. Don't answer the question for them.
- Do not ask complicated multi-part questions. You may alert interviewees that there is more than one question that you want to ask but keep it clear.
- Do not have long preludes for questions; keep it short and simple. Reword questions to avoid this.
- Do not ask questions when it is obvious that you should know the answer. If necessary, rephrase the question, e.g. "We're interested in your understanding of the requirements on assessment..."
- Do listen carefully to responses of preceding questions; you may not need to ask yours or might need to amend it to accommodate responses already heard.
- Try and avoid eliciting "yes/no" answers unless you are requiring simple confirmation.
- Never disagree with an interviewee. Or with your fellow panel members!
- Always be courteous and respectful. Remember these are peers. It is not an inquisition.

4.3 Drawing conclusions

Before the exit meeting with the Vice-Chancellor, the panel will have reached conclusions on:

- all guideline statements
- the extent to which the university has demonstrated embedded or systemic quality
- how the underpinning components have been reflected
- areas for commendation, affirmation or recommendation
- the university's overall quality management system
- any significant areas of academic risk.

The panel's conclusions are initially presented verbally to the Vice-Chancellor in the exit meeting. This is followed by a feedback letter to the Vice-Chancellor reiterating the points made at the exit meeting. Finally, the audit report presents the panel's conclusions. If the panel has been unable to reach a conclusion in any area, then this should be stated.

4.4 The exit meeting

At the exit meeting, the chair of the audit panel briefs the Vice-Chancellor on the general findings of the panel. They do not normally provide verbatim text of commendations, affirmations or recommendations (even if these have already been decided) but should provide the Vice-Chancellor with an overview of the main areas in which the university should expect comment.

While the exit meeting is an opportunity to provide positive feedback on the things the university is doing well, care must be taken not to mislead the university if the panel has concerns about particular areas.

Participants in the exit meeting do not engage in any discussion other than for points of clarification. The conclusion of the exit meeting includes the leave taking of the panel from the university. The chair of the panel should therefore thank the university for hosting the audit and advise the Vice-Chancellor of the process from here (timeline for production of the draft report and opportunity for a process debrief at the six-week follow-up).

4.5 The audit report

Section 4.7 of the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit* outlines key steps in developing the audit report from the perspective of the university and AQA Board. This section provides additional information for panels on their role.

The panel's conclusions are presented as comments on each of the guideline statements and panels will also respond to or comment on the university's enhancement initiatives. Conclusions may include commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Audit panels may comment (including making commendations or recommendations) on other matters that significantly affect academic quality if these arise during an audit.

The panel may indicate urgency with respect to a recommendation if, in the panel's view, there is a serious risk to the university if the issue is not addressed.

As far as possible, the panel should avoid making recommendations that are unlikely to be feasible for the university. If an issue has been identified—and in the panel's judgement it might be difficult for the university to do anything about it—then a comment in the text is more appropriate than a recommendation.

It is important to note that AQA academic audits are not compliance audits; the panel does not impose requirements, it makes recommendations. If a university decides a recommendation is inappropriate or not feasible it may indicate this to AQA at the time of the six-week follow-up "debrief" after the audit and outline the reasons in its follow-up report. AQA will seek feedback from the university on

the usefulness and difficulty in implementing of recommendations made by the audit panel (Kelo and Huertas Hidalgo, 2019).

4.5.1 Drafting the report

AQA staff will draft the report. However, the panel has a key role in providing input and critiquing drafts.

In the early stages of the assessment, panel members might flag issues to be investigated and/or reported upon; for example, areas which may give rise to a commendation. The main effort from the panel in terms of writing the report will probably come in the latter stages of the site visit when individual panel members may be asked to draft bullet points for any areas for which they have a specific designated responsibility.

The first draft of the report is usually completed by AQA within ten days of the site visit. Once drafted, the report is made available electronically to the panel for comment and further input. Differences of opinion about content will usually be resolved by discussion between AQA staff and the panel chair. If this is not possible, and discussion has not been successful, it might be necessary for the panel to hold a teleconference.

Panel chairs should note that they continue to have an oversight role during report-writing, to ensure the report accurately captures the panel's assessment of the issues. Because of the iterative nature of the report-writing it is difficult to give a precise timeframe for completion. It is AQA's objective, however, to finalise the third draft within ten weeks of the site visit.

For clarity, AQA will refer to the various iterations of the report as it progresses towards a final draft as follows:

1. First draft or Version 1, V1: The document produced by AQA immediately after the site visit
2. Second draft or Version 2, V2: The document submitted to the AQA Board for its approval
3. Third draft or Version 3, V3: The document submitted to the university, as draft, for opportunity to correct matters of fact
4. Final draft or Version 4: The published report.

Iterations between drafts will be labelled, for example, V1a, V1b etc.

4.5.2 Report release

Audit reports are published on the AQA website and copies are deposited with the National Library and sent free-of-charge to all New Zealand universities and key educational agencies. Other people may purchase copies of the report.

Members of the audit panel are provided with a copy of the report, for their personal records.

For AQA, only the Director of AQA and the Chair of the AQA Board are authorised to make any public comment about the audit of a New Zealand university, or the audit report.

5 Audit logistics and administration

This section provides advice on logistical and administrative aspects of academic audit for panel members.

5.1 Health and safety

AQA's Health, Safety and Personal Wellbeing policy (P8) includes responsibilities for the personal wellbeing of auditors/panel members. The policy recognises that health and safety is a shared responsibility. All staff and auditors working for AQA are expected to take responsibility for ensuring their own health and safety and that of others as much as possible within the provisions of the policy. AQA staff and auditors are obliged to ensure that any health and safety issues are reported promptly.

When auditors are carrying out work at universities or other institutions (including overseas institutions), the procedures of those universities or other institutions also apply. A health and safety briefing is included on the first day of the site visit.

AQA staff and others, including auditors, may undertake work from home or in hotels from time to time, including in overseas locations. In these situations, AQA staff and auditors should take responsibility for their working environment and seek appropriate advice if they have concerns.

Panel meetings will include health and safety and personal well-being matters, and they are also included in panel agreements.

5.2 Planning meetings

Planning for the audit, including the site visit, is usually undertaken by AQA staff and nominated staff of the university (often either a person within the Academic Quality Office or a person in the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), or equivalent).¹ The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) is normally involved in discussions about selecting interviewees and timing of the overall visit programme.

5.2.1 First university-AQA planning meeting

The first planning meeting should occur around or prior to 30 weeks before the scheduled site visit. Rather than a formal meeting, this interaction might be a series of communications between AQA and the staff at the university with significant involvement in the university's preparation for audit.

The objective is to discuss general preparation, identify any issues or difficulties in meeting the timeline for the audit, to discuss informally the self-review process and explore any organisational problems that might have arisen. If the university is planning to depart significantly from the expected structure of the self-review report, this should also be discussed at the first planning meeting (see section 4.2.2 in the *Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit*).

5.2.2 Second university-AQA planning meeting

The second planning meeting involves the chair of the audit panel, the director of AQA (or other staff member) and key personnel from the university. This meeting is held at the university and will include:

- confirmation of logistics for the site visit(s)
 - availability of rooms suitable for interviews and for the panel's private meetings
 - inspection of proposed rooms for interviews and other facilities
 - availability of waiting areas
 - catering

¹ All references to a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) should be read as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), or equivalent.

- arrangements for administrative support during the site visit (e.g. for photocopying; providing name labels; IT support; video links, booking taxis etc.)
- health, safety and security arrangements
- (if required) advice on accommodation, parking and local transport.
- an initial discussion about appropriate interviewees
- consideration of any special groups to be interviewed and possible catering arrangements
- arrangements for a pōwhiri or mihi whakatau (if the university wishes)
- confirmation of Vice-Chancellor availability at start of the visit and for an exit meeting
- discussion of the indicative programme for the site visit(s) including timing, and arrangements for the exit meeting with the Vice-Chancellor
- (if possible) a brief visit with the Vice-Chancellor to confirm the audit approach and explore any organisational issues likely to affect the audit
- identification and provision of additional evidence sought by the panel and, potentially, inspection of some of that evidence where the panel seeks documentary evidence.

The panel chair may also wish to speak to specific people about some guideline statements to address any simple points of clarification or confirmation that can be dealt with by an individual conversation.

After the second audit panel meeting, AQA will consult with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or site visit manager to finalise the site visit programme and interviewees.

5.3 Confidentiality and information security

Section 2.5 and the panel agreement in Appendix 1 sets out the requirements for confidentiality in academic audit. This section provides further comment on confidentiality for information security.

At the time of publication, AQA is planning for greater use of cloud-based systems. This planning includes how information security and ways of working for audit panels can be improved.

It is preferred that panel members work mainly online and in cloud folders created for a university audit. Sub-folders can be created for individual panel members who wish to annotate materials or develop working notes.

Panel members may occasionally not have an internet connection and may need to download materials to a device for offline working. In such cases, panel members should:

- ensure the device is password protected and is not accessible by anyone other than the panel member (for example, family members or executive assistants)
- limit the amount of material downloaded
- not download material to shared folders, Google drive, Dropbox or One drive.

Panel members should use professional and non-prejudicial language in all working comments and notes. All working notes and any audit materials downloaded to non-AQA sites or devices should be returned to AQA or destroyed once the audit is complete.

5.4 AQA responsibilities

AQA staff and the AQA Board have a series of responsibilities related to academic audit.

5.4.1 Responsibilities of AQA staff²

The AQA director has overall responsibility for planning and managing the audit, including identifying potential auditors, the audit budget, timing of the site visit and receipt of the portfolio. The director will also normally be responsible for discussions about visits to sites away from the main campus.

² More detailed information about the tasks undertaken by AQA with respect to academic audit may be found in AQA's Operations Manual.

The AQA staff member appointed to support an audit will usually be the director but might be another staff member. The following responsibilities apply to any AQA staff member who is assigned to supporting a particular audit.

The overall role of the AQA staff member is to ensure that the audit is carried out according to AQA policies; it is conducted in a way that will meet the audit objectives; and that interactions with the university being audited are professional and sensitive.

As well as supporting the panel chair, the AQA staff member provides the technical expertise and logistical support to enable the panel to do its work effectively, including:

- briefing the panel on the scope, framework and processes for the audit
- briefing the panel on any distinctive aspects of the university or challenges that might influence the audit panel's work
- alerting the panel to any national issues it should be aware of when assessing
- if required, providing additional material about commonly or internationally considered good practice for particular activities being audited (note: Appendix 1 of the Guide to Cycle 6 Academic Audit includes references to good practice for each guideline statement)
- developing a New Zealand university sector summary for international panel members
- ensuring administrative tasks are managed efficiently and that auditors have the resources they need to do their job effectively, including:
 - preparation and distribution of all audit materials, where possible in electronic form
 - overseeing email interaction between panel members and ensuring a record is kept
 - ensuring a record is kept of panel meetings, whether face-to-face or by other means, and providing summaries of discussion and findings to the panel members
 - ensuring the administrative tasks associated with the site visit are managed thoroughly (including oversight of those tasks undertaken by the university, e.g. security and health and safety arrangements)
- assisting the panel chair to refine the issues for investigation and developing strategies for directing the panel's methods of investigation (including interviews and documentary scrutiny)
- ensuring a record is kept of all discussion during the site visit, including notes from interviews and the panel's private discussions
- helping the panel chair draft the oral statement to be made to the Vice-Chancellor at the exit interview
- drafting the letter to the Vice-Chancellor immediately following the site visit
- drafting the audit report immediately after the site visit and responding to comments from panel members about the draft
- distributing the second draft to the Board of AQA for their comment and approval
- submitting the third draft to the university to consider factual accuracy and appropriate tone
- responding to any issues raised by the university (and if necessary, consulting the Chair of the AQA Board)
- preparing the AQA media release (and sharing this with the audited university)
- preparing the final draft of the audit report, arranging printing and distribution
- managing media releases and any queries from the media
- undertaking an informal debrief on the audit process with the university approximately six weeks after the release of the report
- inviting feedback from panel members and the university on the audit process
- accompanying the chair of the panel to the university one year after the release of the report to discuss the university's response to the audit recommendations.

As well as the AQA staff member referred to above as the audit secretariat, AQA may appoint a person to record all sessions during the site visit. All staff involved in an audit are subject to the same confidentiality expectations as are members of the audit panel.

5.4.2 Responsibilities of the AQA Board

The AQA Board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the reports of academic audits have integrity. Board members' focus will mainly be on ensuring the audit has been conducted within the current approved framework, that conclusions are appropriate to the objectives of the audit and that they are supported by evidence which is robust and relevant. Given that Board members will not have had the experience of the material seen or heard by the panel, their judgment must be based on the final written report.

The AQA Board may not change the conclusions of a panel's report. However, the Board may ask the panel to reconsider the appropriateness of a conclusion if it considers the evidence does not justify it. The Board may also raise issues related to sensitive information.

5.5 Feedback

The review of Cycle 5 processes (Matear, 2018) suggested that "multiple feedback and response points within the audit process, or explicitly recording reflexive feedback at specific time points over the course of the audit process, should be considered". (p3)

Panel members are encouraged to provide feedback and suggest opportunities for enhancing audit processes. These may be provided informally throughout the process. However, AQA will also seek feedback formally at key points in the process.

6 References

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7 Appendix 1: Panel Agreement

Acceptance of invitation to be a member of an academic audit Panel

xxx University

Please complete and sign this form and return to:

*The Director, Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities
P O Box 5787, Wellington 6140, New Zealand*

Email director@aqa.ac.nz

The information provided will be used by AQA only in the legitimate activities associated with the audit process. Please note that information contained in Section 1 may be shared with other members of the panel to facilitate communication between panel members.

Section 1 - PERSONAL

Name: _____

Position: _____

Institution/business: _____

Street address (for courier) _____

Preferred email address: _____

Alternative email address: _____

Preferred phone number: _____

Alternative phone number: _____

Mobile phone number (if not already provided above): _____

Skype Name (if have one): _____

Please check your biographical details on the AQA website www.aqa.ac.nz/about-us/auditors and advise AQA of any amendments to be made before we provide these details and your photograph to the University.

Section 2 - AVAILABILITY FOR PANEL MEETINGS

In accepting the invitation to be a member of this AQA audit panel, it is understood that you expect to be available for panel meetings prior to the site visit, as well as for the site visit. The first panel meeting will be a two-day meeting. Other panel meetings, if required, may be face-to-face or by other means (teleconference or videoconference).

The timing of panel meetings will be negotiated with the panel to ensure the least possible disruption to individual commitments and prior obligations within the overall audit timeframe. If a panel member is unable to participate in a panel meeting, alternative arrangements will be made for that person to provide their contribution to deliberations.

Please indicate below if you have any known constraints on participating in panel meetings (e.g., periods when you might be out of the country or otherwise unavailable):

Section 3 - TRAVEL and ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS related to the audit process

Unless otherwise requested, AQA will make all travel and accommodation arrangements associated with the site visit and with panel meetings.

Please supply your Airpoints number:

Air New Zealand: _____

Other (please specify): _____

International panel members only:

When it is necessary to use transit accommodation to facilitate international travel, AQA will cover this cost. Reasonable cost will be discussed with the panel member. Receipts must be provided for reimbursement. ***Please indicate your preferred option:***

EITHER I would like AQA to make accommodation arrangements within my country where required to meet travel arrangements.

Please indicate any hotel preferences: _____

OR I prefer to make my own accommodation arrangements within my country where required to meet travel arrangements.

Section 4 - OTHER ARRANGEMENTS related to the audit process

Health matters that AQA should be aware of (e.g., allergies requiring the use of an EpiPen, access to an inhaler or important medication)

Any special dietary needs: _____

Any other special needs relevant to the site visit or panel meetings (e.g., mobility needs):

For international auditors, audits or reviews: AQA takes travel insurance that covers overseas travel associated with audits. As part of this insurance, AQA needs to disclose any pre-existing health conditions that may impact on travel insurance. Please advise of any pre-existing health conditions that may affect travel insurance.

Section 4 - PAYMENT OF HONORARIUM

Honorarium payments may be made either to the auditor, or to the auditor's institution or company.

Please indicate the preferred option:

EITHER I would like the honorarium paid directly to me.

Bank account no.: _____

Bank account name: _____

IRD no.: _____

Note: Tax will be deducted at source at the rate applicable to the individual. The tax code declaration form IR330 must also be completed and held by the AQA. The IR330 tax form can be downloaded from <http://www.ird.govt.nz/forms-guides/number/forms-300-399/ir330-form-tax-code.html>

OR I would like the honorarium paid to a business/organisation.

Payment to be made to:

Note: Payments to an organisation or company will require a tax invoice. The honorarium amount is exclusive of GST, where applicable.

Section 5 - STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE

I (name in full) _____ accept

appointment as a member of the audit panel to be established to conduct an academic audit

of **xxx University**

and I understand:

- the AQA expectations of auditors, which are set out in the **Cycle 6 Auditor Supplement** of which I have a copy. (The supplement is available at [on the AQA website](#))
- that I am expected to make myself available to attend meetings at the times required by AQA
- that I have no known conflicts of interest with the university being audited, and that I must declare to AQA any conflict of interest that might arise following the signing of this acceptance
- that I have not been subject to disciplinary proceedings for professional misconduct, nor are any such proceedings pending, and that I am not aware of any claims or circumstances which might give rise to claims³
- that I am bound to respect the confidential nature of the material to be read and discussed during the audit process and that I will not divulge any information, written or oral, to any other party.

Signature _____ Date _____

³ AQA is required by its Professional Indemnity Insurance Policy to know of cases where there have been disciplinary proceedings, or proceedings are pending, or where there are any claims or circumstances which might give rise to claims.

8 Appendix 2: Self-review Assessment Template

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
Preface	Is context set out? How are underpinning components to be addressed?						
A	Leadership and management of teaching and learning and academic quality						
	GS 1. Planning and reporting The university gathers and uses appropriate and valid data and information to establish objectives, plan, assess progress and make improvements in its teaching and learning activities.						
	GS 2. Student voice Improved outcomes for students are enabled through engaging with the student voice in quality assurance processes at all levels, and this is communicated to students.						

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
	<p>GS 3. Teaching and learning environments Teaching and learning activities are supported by appropriate learning environments (infrastructure, spaces, media, facilities and resources).</p>						
	<p>GS 4. Academic delegations Academic delegations support consistent and effective decision making and accountability for teaching and learning quality and research supervision.</p>						
	<p>GS 5. Academic risk management Potential disruption to the quality and continuity of teaching and learning at the university, including risks to infrastructure, is mitigated through effective risk management processes.</p>						
	<p>GS 6. Progress on enhancement theme initiatives and activities for Māori students [placeholder]</p>						

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
	GS 7. Progress on enhancement theme initiatives for Pasifika students [placeholder]						
B	Student life-cycle, support and wellbeing						
	GS 8. Access Access to university, including through recognition of prior learning and credit transfer pathways, is consistent, equitable and transparent for students.						
	GS 9. Transitions Transitions for students are supported at all levels of university study, including transitions beyond study and/or to employment and students are well-equipped to contribute in their chosen fields, and more broadly to the economy and society.						

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
	GS 10. Academic advice Student achievement is supported through consistent and clear academic advice, including course/paper information and programme planning, and guidance for students on completion of requirements.						
	GS 11. Academic complaints, appeals and grievances Academic complaints, appeals and grievances are addressed consistently and equitably. Where appropriate, outcomes of these processes inform improvements.						
	GS 12. Learning support Students have timely and equitable access to appropriate learning support services.						
	GS 13. Safety and wellbeing Student wellbeing is supported through the provision of appropriate pastoral and social support services in safe and inclusive environments.						

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
C.	Curriculum, assessment and delivery						
	<p>GS 14. Programme approval Programme standards and relevance are maintained through internal course and programme approval processes that meet national (CUAP/NZQF) expectations and, where appropriate, expectations for other jurisdictions.</p>						
	<p>GS 15. Course/paper and programme monitoring The quality of academic programmes and courses/papers is assured and enhanced through ongoing monitoring and academic management.</p>						
	<p>GS 16. Review Curriculum relevance and quality is assured and enhanced through regular reviews of programmes and courses/papers and which include input from students, staff, and other stakeholders.</p>						

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
	GS 17. Graduate profile Students are aware of and have the opportunity to achieve the intended attributes in graduate profiles and course/paper learning outcomes.						
	GS 18. Assessment Assessment is appropriate and effective.						
	GS 19. Assessment standards Assessment and outcome standards are appropriately set and moderated.						
	GS 20. Academic integrity Universities promote and ensure academic integrity and demonstrate fairness, equity and consistency in addressing concerns. (cross-ref to GS 5 Academic risk management)						
	GS 21. Assessment in te reo Māori Assessment in te reo Māori, where appropriate, is facilitated by the university.						
D	Teaching quality						

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
	<p>GS 22. Staff recruitment All staff who teach or supervise or support teaching or supervision are appropriately qualified and experienced (including in research as appropriate to role) upon appointment.</p>						
	<p>GS 23. Induction and ongoing expectations New staff who teach or supervise or support teaching or supervision become familiar with academic policies and expectations of the university through effective induction processes and the university has processes to enable all staff to maintain currency with academic policies and expectations.</p>						
	<p>GS 24. Teaching development Staff who teach or supervise, or support teaching or supervision, are supported to take up opportunities to develop their practice, including the use of innovative pedagogy and new technologies.</p>						

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
	GS 25. Teaching quality The quality of all teaching is appropriate and is enhanced by feedback and other processes. Quality shortfalls are addressed proactively, constructively and consistently.						
	GS 26. Teaching recognition High-quality teaching is recognised and rewarded						
E	Supervision of postgraduate research students						
	GS 27. Supervision quality The quality of postgraduate research student supervision is ensured.						
	GS 28. Resourcing of postgraduate research students Postgraduate research students are appropriately resourced and supported to undertake their research.						

Section	Cycle 6 Guideline Statement	Reflect underpinning components?	Preliminary assessment – is GS met?	Evidence of embeddedness	Further evidence required?	Potential CAR	Suggested questions
	<p>GS 29. Postgraduate research student progress Student progress and achievement is monitored and supported through consistent and clear academic advice, and guidance for students on completion of requirements.</p>						
	<p>GS 30. Thesis examination Thesis standards are assured through examination processes that are nationally and internationally benchmarked.</p>						



