

PROGRAMME DESIGN – GUIDANCE AND TIPS

A short guide on developing or revising a programme of study that leads to the award of a qualification.

PREPARATION AND PLANNING

Before getting started, a key resource is the NZQA guidelines for programme approval and accreditation. You can find this here, [Guidelines approval and accreditation NZ Certificates and Diplomas - NZQA](#) take the time to read this and mark up anything within the document that will help you with planning the development or review of your programme.

Programme approval – provides permission for a TEO to deliver a new or revised programme of study to enrolled learners

Programme accreditation – provide permission to deliver an already developed and NZQA approved programme of study or micro-credential. This can include programmes or micro-credentials developed by other TEOs.

Sometimes it can be difficult to determine if you need to submit a programme change or a new programme.

A **type 1 change** is submitted directly to NZQA for approval (qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz). This category is where your programme change is minor and doesn't impact the programme aim, content or outcomes.

A **type 2 change** is submitted to Toitū Te Waiora first for endorsement. This category is where the changes are impacting on one or more components of the programme that will have an impact on the programme as a whole. For example, the change is to meet a new version of the qualification. The new version of the qualification contains changes to the GPOs, or Conditions, or credit values. Other type 2 changes could be where the delivery method is being changed such as moving from face to face to an online delivery mode, or a change to the assessment methods, or structure and length of the programme.

Once you have decided the type of change you will be making to your programme, plan out the time needed and include the submission times to Toitū Te Waiora (20 working days) and then NZQA. This can impact on when you can open the programme for enrolments.

A new programme might be considered, where large and significant changes are required to bring the programme up to date with the qualification, legislative changes, technical methods or a redesign of the learning components. For example, a move from campus-based delivery to a work-based learning model.

Consider other parties that might need to be involved or consulted, for example, graduates, current learners, teaching or assessing staff, industry groups, employers, academic committees and ensuring the time to complete this. Also think about when in the project this should happen to ensure that this is meaningful. A record of any consultation should be kept and included as part of your submission to Toitū Te Waiora and then NZQA.

Are there other considerations you should take note of, such as learner survey responses, graduation data, programme review reports?

Approval Criterion 4: Acceptability of the programme and consultation

There is a written summary of the consultation undertaken, the views expressed, and consideration of the views. The consultation and summary must articulate the need for and acceptability of the programme to the relevant communities (including ākonga, whānau, hapū, iwi and where appropriate, hāpori Māori) and other key stakeholders (including the qualification developer and any relevant academic, employer, industry, professional and other bodies) and any required endorsement by a WDC under section 366(1)(g) of the Act has been obtained.

The purpose of this criterion is to ensure that all learners have equitable access to the programme, will graduate 'work-ready' or equipped for further study, in an area of genuine need.

NZQA requires evidence that relevant stakeholders have been meaningfully involved in the design of the programme. The application must include evidence of engagement, feedback and support from the education organisation itself, relevant industry, employer, community, professional bodies or other interested groups.

For education organisations engaged only in the international market, consultation with communities, industry or employers is still required even though graduates may not be remaining in New Zealand in the long term. Consultation is necessary and beneficial, as learners may be on programmes that have work placement or work experience practicums built into them; and/or learners may remain in New Zealand for longer periods, and their education and qualifications should reflect the New Zealand context.

Education organisations with more than one delivery site should consult with the communities associated with each site where the programme is to be delivered.

MAKING THE CHANGES

It's a good idea to keep a register or list of the changes, and why those decisions were made. This can come in handy later, should any changes require a rationale.

For Type 2 changes Toitū Te Waiora will require a tracked changed programme document. This can accelerate the evaluation process and shorten the time to provide endorsement of the programme.

Learning Outcomes and Verbs

If part of the programme changes or development include learning outcomes, here's a quick guide on writing learning outcomes (or useful if you need to review these):

The standard format of a learning outcome includes an active verb (the learner performs the action of the verb), content and context:

- The learner performs the action of the verb
- Content is the knowledge and/or skills to be demonstrated in the performance.
- Context is the setting or conditions within which the performance is met.

The active verb alone does not determine the level of cognition, the verb must be considered with the content and context.

Apply basic conflict resolution techniques to improve work relationships.

This learning outcome is proposed as a Level 3 outcome. The content and context show that it is appropriate for Level 3 learning.

Apply conflict management techniques to optimise the management of the paediatric operating room.

The same verb is used; however, the content and context make the learning more appropriate for Level 7.

Oxford Online Dictionary Definition	Verb
Give a detailed account of; mark out or draw	Describe
Make (an idea or situation) clear to someone by describing it in more detail or revealing relevant facts.	Explain
Establish or indicate who or what (someone or something) is	Identify
Examine (something) methodically and in detail, typically to explain and interpret it.	Analyse
Explain the meaning of (information or actions)	Interpret
Form an idea of the amount, number, or value of	Evaluate
Show or prove to be right or reasonable	Justify
Talk or write about (a topic) in detail, taking into account different issues or ideas.	Discuss
Understand fully; grasp the full implications of	Appreciate
Evaluate (a theory or practice) in a detailed and analytical way	Critique
Estimate, measure, or note the similarity or dissimilarity between	Compare
State or describe exactly the nature, scope, or meaning of	Define
Bring or put into operation or use	Apply
Advise or suggest (something) as a course of action	Recommend
Give the main features of a subject, leaving out minor details, and using logical arrangement	Outline

Definitions of common verbs

Blooms Taxonomy can also be useful in developing learning outcomes. It's a framework that supports determining the level of complexity of thinking. It was revised in the early 2000's from noun based to verb based.

Remembering

- *(recalling, remembering and recognising knowledge)*
 - state, identify, select, define, name, match, quote, cite, report, deliver, write, relate, perform, identify, indicate, list, recognise, select, illustrate.

Understanding

- *(establishing meaning, making use of the facts or ideas through oral, visual and written messages)*
 - associate, convert, compare, outline, translate, summarise, arrange, defend, discuss, describe, distinguish, estimate, explain, interpret, infer, demonstrate, report, restate, review.

Applying

- *(carrying out or using a procedure through executing and implementing)*
 - apply, determine, illustrate, restructure, solve, develop, construct, demonstrate, interpret, investigate, modify, organise, classify, predict, prepare, produce, sketch, translate.

Analysing

- *(breaking into parts, determining how the parts relate to one another through differentiating, organising and attributing)*
 - analyse, examine, differentiate, distinguish, categorise, summarise, research, compare, critique, select, debate, determine, probe, discriminate, experiment, identify, question, test.

Evaluating

- *(make judgements based on criteria and standards)*
 - evaluate, assess, critique, conclude, criticise, judge, defend, validate, discriminate, estimate, contrast, revise, justify, interpret, measure.

Blooms Taxonomy

Module Descriptors

A module descriptor (also sometimes called a course descriptor or unit descriptor) provides a comprehensive overview of a single module or unit within a larger programme of study.

The module descriptors can also be a "blueprint" for what learners can expect to learn, how they will be taught, and how their understanding will be assessed for that specific part of their programme.

A set of module descriptors also aids in understanding the structure, coherence and sequence of learning within the programme.

Key information typically found in a module descriptor includes:

- **Module Title and Code:** Unique identifier for the module.
- **Level:** Indicates the NZQCF level of the module.
- **Credits:** The number of credits awarded upon successful completion of the module.
- **Prerequisites/Co-requisites:** Any prior knowledge or modules required.
- **Learning Outcomes:** What the module intends to achieve and what learners should know, understand, or be able to do by the end of it.
- **Teaching and Learning Methods:** How the module will be delivered (e.g., lectures, research, practicals, online activities).
- **Assessment Methods:** How learners will be assessed (e.g., assignment, portfolio, controlled test, online assessment).
- **Recommended Reading/Resources:** Essential and supplementary materials.
- **Module Hours:** duration timeframe of the module in weeks.

In summary, module descriptors are crucial for learners to understand what they are signing up for, for staff to ensure consistent delivery, and for internal and external bodies (like an Academic Committee and NZQA) to assess the coherence and quality of a programme.

PROGRAMME CHANGES TO INTEGRATE DISABILITY PERSPECTIVES

Consideration should be given to how accessible the programme and learning is for people with disabilities. The following are some tips and suggestions.

Programme component	Suggested strengthening
The programme/micro-credential aligns with the principles of the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), particularly in fostering a non-disabling society.	<p>The programme does not contain ableist language or assumptions, for example:</p> <p>"Learners with disabilities will require extensive support to meet the standard course requirements due to their limitations."</p> <p>A strengths-based and inclusive alternative could be:</p> <p>"Our program incorporates flexible teaching strategies to ensure all learners, including those with disabilities, can achieve their full potential."</p>
Entry requirements for the programme are broad and do not exclude any potential group of learners.	<p>For example:</p> <p>"Our programme entry requirements are intentionally broad to ensure equity and accessibility for all learners, including disabled learners. We are committed to providing reasonable and tailored support."</p>
Programme documentation provides evidence the TEO is aware disabled learners may access their programme and have processes in place to identify and support them.	<p>For example:</p> <p>Programme documentation included detail of the programme intake interview process, where the TEO undertook to "Identify any disability and learning support needs" and brief the potential learner on their pastoral support options.</p> <p>It also included a specific section addressing supports for disabled learners.</p>
Delivery methods consider the potential needs of disabled learners. Examples of accessibility options are provided.	<p>For example:</p> <p>The programme ensures that learners of all abilities, including disabled learners, can achieve success.</p> <p>This includes indication in the submission that resources and assessment methods will be tailored to individual needs, such as easy-read materials, oral assessments instead of</p>

Programme component	Suggested strengthening
	<p>written ones, the use of reader/writers, and extra time for comprehension.</p> <p>Any learning challenges are identified during the enrolment process, and individualised learner support is coordinated by staff or bespoke team.</p>
<p>Assessments avoid ableist assumptions or stereotypes, instead promoting strengths-based and inclusive narratives about disabled people.</p>	<p>For example: A programme in health and wellbeing includes assessments that recognise alternative but equitable pathways for demonstrating competencies, such as allowing written, oral, or multimedia submissions, such as:</p> <p><i>Standard:</i> Learners may submit evidence of competencies through written, oral, visual, or multimedia formats.</p> <p><i>Examples of Practice:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reflective journal can be written, recorded as a podcast, or presented through a video diary. • A research project can be submitted as a traditional paper, an infographic, or a narrated presentation (e.g., using slides or video). <p><i>Standard:</i> Learners may collect and present evidence of their competencies through portfolios, case studies, or real-world examples.</p> <p><i>Examples of Practice:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A portfolio containing photographs, recordings, and documents showing participation in community health initiatives. <p>Case study documentation where learners outline the application of their skills in real or simulated health scenarios.</p>
<p>Assessment activities reflect diverse abilities and avoid prescribing methods of achievement that could unintentionally exclude disabled</p>	<p>For example: Facilitating Group Activities</p>

Programme component	Suggested strengthening
<p>learners (e.g., specifying "must demonstrate physical skills" when alternative competencies would suffice.</p>	<p>Outcome: Plans, organises, and facilitates group activities that promote positive engagement and personal development for young people.</p> <p>Guidance for Assessors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for evidence of the planning process, including understanding the group's needs and adapting to diverse participation styles. • Assess through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A project portfolio documenting the planning and outcomes of the activity. ▪ Observations of a live or simulated group session. ▪ Written or multimedia feedback from participants. • Avoid requiring live demonstrations unless critical; evidence of competency can be provided through documentation or testimonials. <p>Building Collaborative Relationships</p> <p>Outcome: Establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with young people, whānau, and other stakeholders to support youth outcomes.</p> <p>Guidance for Assessors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence could take forms such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Written accounts or multimedia presentations documenting collaborative initiatives. ▪ Letters of support or feedback from stakeholders. ▪ A recorded or simulated meeting showcasing collaborative approaches. <p>Encourage focus on relational skills and collaborative outcomes rather than how they are presented.</p>
<p>Examples, contexts, and scenarios used reflect a wide range of lived</p>	<p>A unit standard in social work included assessment activities that highlight working</p>

Programme component	Suggested strengthening
<p>experiences, explicitly including disabled people where relevant (e.g., role models, case studies, examples).</p>	<p>with disabled clients, focusing on their rights and autonomy rather than framing them solely as recipients of care, for example:</p> <p><i>Activity:</i> Learners review a specific policy or service (e.g., disability support services) and assess how well it aligns with the rights and autonomy of disabled people. They present recommendations for improvement.</p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates critical analysis of policy effectiveness. • Includes actionable recommendations for enhancing autonomy and inclusivity. • Shows understanding of systemic barriers and advocacy strategies. <p><i>Activity:</i> Learners prepare an advocacy plan outlining how a social worker can support a disabled client facing discrimination in accessing housing or employment.</p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates knowledge of anti-discrimination laws and frameworks. • Emphasises the client's leadership in advocacy efforts. <p>Proposes practical and ethical actions to resolve the issue.</p>

For more information, see the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines - [The UDL Guidelines](#).

Graduate Profile Outcomes and Credit Mapping

This can be difficult to show how the learning outcomes are aligned to the Graduate Profile Outcome (GPO) statement and credits. Sometimes the learning outcomes within a module or component, can cover more than one GPO and therefore a splitting of the credits. Where unit standards are being used to assess a module or component, the unit standard credits might be split across more than one module or component.

Toitū Te Waioira suggests the following layout or something similar, to show how GPOs and Credits are assigned against modules, learning outcomes and the learning outcome credit value. A reminder that credit values reflect the amount of learning in the qualification. One credit represents 10 notional hours of learning and assessment. Notional hours are the amount of time a learner typically spends studying, including self-directed learning, homework and assignments. A learner studying full-time can usually earn 120 credits in a year.

Non unit standard based programme

		GPO1 GPO statement (15cr)	GPO2 GPO statement (15cr)	GPO3 GPO statement (10cr)
Module1 Module title	7 credits	LO 1.1 (2cr) (LO statement) LO1.2 (5cr) (LO statement)		
Module2 Module title	8 credits	LO2.1 (1cr) (LO statement) LO2.2 (1cr) (LO statement)	LO 2.1 (2cr) (LO statement)	LO2.1 (2cr) (LO statement) LO2.2 (2cr) (LO statement)

Unit standard based programme

Module Title	GPO	Module Learning Outcomes	LO credits	Unit Standards
Module1 Module title 7 credits	GPO1 GPO statement (7 of 15cr)	LO 1.1 (LO statement) LO1.2 (LO statement)	2 5	US xxxx 7cr

Module2 Module title 10 credits	GPO2	LO2.1 (LO statement)	4	US xxxx 10cr
	GPO statement (10 of 15cr)	LO2.2 (LO statement)	6	

Programme Duration

This is usually presented as a table and will show the details of how the total credits are aligned to the weeks of the programme and its duration. This should show the total learning hours, the total duration in weeks and the learning hours per week. For example:

Programme Name	New Zealand Certificate in XXX						
Level	4	Version	1	Credits	120	Reviewed	date
Duration	Teaching Weeks		30				
	Holiday Weeks		4 weeks				
	Total Weeks		34 weeks				
Learning Hours	Face to Face		24 hours (3 days x 8 hrs)				
	Online		4 hrs per week				
	Self Directed		4 hrs per week				
	Practicum/Work		8 hrs per week				
	Total hours per week		40				
	Programme Total		1200				

There may be other information or a different layout that you prefer.

Delivery Methods

This information needs to clearly describe how the delivery is undertaken. The delivery might include more than one method, so clarity on how this works is necessary. The programme might have an option of part-time over a longer duration, so this delivery should also be clearly described. Do take the time to consider scheduling and how the subjects are spread across the programme i.e the sequence of learning. It might be necessary to consider the target market of learners, who might be in employment or have other out of study priorities.

Consultation

The purpose of consultation is to ensure that all prospective learners have access to the programme and will graduate with the necessary skills and knowledge, enabling them to commence work. The programme submission should include engagement, feedback and support documentation. This could be from employers, the community

or professional bodies. There should be some evidence of engagement with Māori and Pasifika communities. For more information see page 19 of the May 2024 NZQA Guidelines for Programme Approval and Accreditation.

THE SUBMISSION PROCESS

The Toitū Te Waioira considerations for programme endorsement are different from the NZQA approval criteria. We focus on whether programmes meet both industry and learner vocational education and training needs.

1. Complete [an application form](#)
2. Email us at programmes@toitutewaioira.nz with the following information:
3. Completed [application form](#)
4. Copy of proposed programme
5. Overview of industry and/or community input that went into the programme development, e.g. advisory group composition and process
6. Programme overview (delivery of practicum/theory, assessment and moderation approach)
7. Outline of the resources required to deliver the programme
8. Evidence that guidance in the qualification document has been considered when developing the programme.

Toitū Te Waioira Considerations:

- Do delivery requirements adequately provide for experience of and/or instruction in critical areas? For example:
 - Access to relevant tools, equipment, applications or materials.
 - Appropriate employer scope of work or work placement opportunities.
 - Exposure to, or experience with, relevant methods and practices.
 - Flexible delivery methods to meet a diverse range of learner needs.
- Does the programme comply with relevant industry legislation, regulations or standards (including national regulatory frameworks, health and safety of learners, impact of applicable international agreements, and potential alignment with international standards)?
- Are the assessment methods likely to adequately reflect or simulate workplace conditions?
- Are the requirements for staff involved in training and assessment up-to-date with current industry practice?
- Does the programme align with the strategic purpose of the qualification including the industry, target audience and intended purpose?

- Does the programme meet all requirements included in the qualification specification and relevant conditions?
- Do the assessment standards or outcomes selected align with the qualification Graduate Profile, and/or programme learning outcomes?
- Does the programme consider emerging technologies and developments?
- Is the programme structured in a coherent way to meet the needs of industry?
- Do assessment and moderation processes meet good practice principles?

Mana ōrite mō te hunga ako - Equity for learners

- Does the programme influence equitable outcomes for all learners?
- Does the programme meet the needs of priority learners and not present barriers?
- Does the programme support the individual access needs of a variety of learners?

Torotoronga me te kimi whakaaro - Engagement and consultation

- Is there evidence of industry involvement and support in the development process (including evidence of Māori industry and iwi business support), and/or evidence of meaningful engagement with iwi / hapū and Pacific communities (relative to industry and learner demographics)?

Te ao Māori

- Does the programme encompass te ao Māori in its approaches to learning and assessment?
- Does the programme support the promotion and normalisation of te reo Māori?

Te akoako me ngā reo o Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa - Pacific learning and languages

- Does the programme meet the learning and assessment needs of Pacific learners in support of the [Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030 – Education in New Zealand](#)?
- Does the programme support the promotion and normalisation of Pacific languages?

Tangata Whaikaha - Disabled people

- Does the programme consider the principles of Enabling Good Lives [Enabling Good Lives - Office for Disability Issues \(odi.govt.nz\)](#)?
- Does the programme support the individual access needs of disabled learners?
- Is there evidence of sector involvement and support in the development

process and evidence of meaningful engagement with disabled learners and support organisations?

Contact the QA team if you want to discuss your review or development of a programme or have any questions. Email us at programmes@toitutewaiaora.nz