



# news

June 2017



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

## Cycle 6 Academic Audit

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The AQA Board has confirmed the components of Cycle 6 Academic Audit and these have been endorsed by the Vice-Chancellors. In brief, the sixth cycle of academic audit for New Zealand universities will:

- A. Maintain an internationally referenced, cyclical, peer-review model of external quality assurance.
- B. Maintain a high-trust, enabling, relationship between the universities and AQA that recognises and respects universities' responsibility and accountability for quality as well as AQA's Terms of Reference and independence.
- C. Maintain the scope of academic audit on teaching, learning, support and outcomes for students.
- D. Build on and refresh the Cycle 5 academic audit framework (guideline statements) and further emphasise outcomes and the use of metrics.
- E. Incorporate a thematic enhancement topic agreed by all universities that will address an issue that is both a strategic priority for universities and of national importance.
- F. Audit universities 7-8 years after their Cycle 5 audit.
- G. Include students or recent graduates in audit panels.
- H. Amend the audit delivery method so that Panels spend more time together initially and that time spent at the university can be more targeted and require meeting with fewer individuals.
- I. Develop audit reports to comment on outcomes and enhancement initiatives, as well as processes.
- J. Include a public report on a university's response to recommendations. A mid-cycle follow-up report on Cycle 5 recommendations will be introduced.

There is further work to do to operationalise these components. The introduction of an enhancement theme and the refresh of the Cycle 5 framework, in particular, will require input from universities.

The Executive Director would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the discussions and development of Cycle 6 to date, and looks forward to their continuing contribution. Further detail will be available on the AQA website shortly and the Executive Director is happy to discuss any aspect.

### 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.

## QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes Conference

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I attended QAA-Scotland's Enhancement Themes conference held in Glasgow at the beginning of June. The Scottish universities and higher education institutes have been working collaboratively on an enhancement theme around student transitions for the last three years and this conference marked the end of this specific theme (although student transitions activity will carry on across the sector) and the launch of the next theme. Conference materials can be found on the conference website at <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/conference/event-resources>.

In addition to the high quality of presentations, I was particularly struck by a couple of things:

- The engagement and contribution of participants from across the sector, including academic staff, students, professional staff and university leaders.
- The contribution of students to leadership of the enhancement theme and their contribution across the conference.
- The clear ethos that quality needs to add value to teaching and learning and consequently the conference being focused on teaching and learning and student experience initiatives rather than quality systems.
- The constructive and collaborative atmosphere of the conference.

Conference presentations covered a wide range of aspects of student transitions. They included transitions for groups of students, for example those from extreme rural environments, those who have had experience of care or who are carers, articulation and pathway arrangements, postgraduate transitions and transitions out of university. Together the presentations and other theme materials present a rich and detailed understanding of student transitions.

The next enhancement theme was launched at the end of the conference. It is 'evidence based enhancements' and the Chair of the Theme Leaders Group is Professor Karl Leydecker, Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching), University of Dundee.

The Scottish environment is obviously different from the environment for New Zealand universities. The decision of the Scottish government not to allow universities to charge fees for Scottish students (and a limited number of students from other parts of the UK) is constraining the funding available to universities, especially in contrast with institutions in England. Although comment included a desire not to increase 'marketisation' of education and a sense of individual institutions having distinctive roles, competition does occur between Scottish universities.

The enhancement theme component for the New Zealand universities can learn from the Scottish experience; however, it will also need to be operationalised in a way that best meets the needs of New Zealand universities.

### Communications Survey

As part of its own commitment to quality enhancement, AQA undertakes a regular review of its various communication activities, including this newsletter. Readers of the AQA newsletter are kindly asked to provide feedback via the following short (nine question) online survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VH39VGT>

Responses by 31 August 2017 would be appreciated.

## Quality Enhancement and Communications

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### Thematic notes

AQA has launched a series of 'Thematic notes' on topics of interest to New Zealand universities. They may be prompted by analysis of audit reports, developments in other jurisdictions or policy initiatives and, in turn, are intended to prompt further consideration among New Zealand universities. A note on Teaching Quality and Teaching Excellence can be found on the AQA website at

<http://www.aqa.ac.nz/node/261>

### Support for Quality

AQA's Support for Quality Conference will be held in Wellington on 28 September 2018 at Te Wharewaka o Pōneke on the Wellington waterfront. The theme of this year's conference is 'Quality assurance and enhancement'. Expressions of interest in presentations that address this theme and sharing of enhancement initiatives are welcomed. Universities New Zealand will be holding a workshop on 'Internal processes for CUAP proposals on the 29th September. Please register for both events in due course on the AQA Website.

## Student Voice

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Contributed by Dr Alistair Shaw, Executive Director, *New Zealand Union of Students' Associations*

The last three months have seen considerable activity for NZUSA in the student voice area. In March Nyk Huntington from Ako Aotearoa and I attended the international conference of Student Partnership in Quality Scotland and presented on the situation and our activities in New Zealand. Naturally the work we are going with the Academic Quality Agency was at the forefront of that, as it was when we met separately with QAA Scotland.

It was satisfying to see in Edinburgh and Glasgow that the work we have been doing is still on track with the best practice internationally, and the best pockets of our work are as good as anything happening anywhere. However, the tasks of addressing the relative resource discrepancy we face and our lack of systematic embedding of consistent student voice practices across the sector remain works in progress.

Another significant recent activity was our hosting of a professional development workshop for students' association staff supporting student representation. Five university students' associations now have dedicated staff working in this area, although they range in their primary focus between building class representative structures and providing policy and other support to provide consistency and effectiveness to higher level representatives.

The next few months will see us developing a workshop to encourage information and resource sharing between incoming and outgoing Academic/Education Vice Presidents. This also serves as a step towards creating a pool of high-level current and immediate past students who could serve as auditors and panellists for external and internal audit. We are also looking to see what we can learn from Australian initiatives to build a National Framework for Student Engagement, and how the process of engagement to develop that might be replicated here.

Ngā mihi.

## Have You Seen This?

Presentations from the QAA-Scotland Enhancement Themes Conference are at <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/conference/event-resources> with more material from the Enhancement Theme itself at <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/current-enhancement-theme>

The University of Pennsylvania Law School has released a report on Quality Assurance in U.S. Higher Education <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/quality-assurance-in-u-s-higher-education/> AQA gets a couple of mentions.

In the UK, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2017 results were released <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/It/tef/>, together with a series of media releases and commentary. See also <http://wonkhe.com/blogs/tag/tef/>

In other data releases in the UK, Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data were released earlier in the month <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-outcomes-for-all-subjects-by-university>

NZQA are consulting on revised 'tertiary evaluation indicators' that form part of their External Evaluation and Review quality assurance process. See <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/consultations-and-reviews/reviewed-teis/>

### Meetings and Conference Calendar

3-4 July in Wellington  
Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) Aotearoa Regional Conference  
<https://www.atem.org.au/conferences/regional-conferences/ao-conference-2017>

13-14 September 2017 in Glasgow  
Breaking the mould: creating an evidence-based enhancement culture  
<http://www.rgu.ac.uk/news-and-events/conferences/heir-conference-2017>

18-19 September 2017, in Melbourne  
Inaugural Assessment and Review Summit  
<http://hes.edu.au/events/assessment-and-review-summit/>

28 September 2017 in Wellington  
**Support for Quality**  
<http://www.aqa.ac.nz/events>

29 November – 1 December 2017 in Dunedin  
Assessing Learning is an assessment conference that will emphasise assessment practice. The conference website will be launched shortly, but in the meantime contact [michelle.barron@op.ac.nz](mailto:michelle.barron@op.ac.nz) for information.

29 November – 1 December 2017 in Melbourne  
TEQSA Conference and Higher Education and Quality Forum <http://hes.edu.au/events/teqsa-conference-and-hecq-forum-2/>

2-4 May 2018 in Mauritius  
The 11<sup>th</sup> biennial INQAAHE forum  
<http://www.inqaahe.org/blog/inqaahe-11th->

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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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