REPORT OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION
STRATEGIC REVIEW OF PATHWAYS AND STAIRCASING

7 SEPTEMBER 2006

Norman Kingsbury
Chair of the Review
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Chair’s foreword

This Strategic Review of Pathways and Staircasing was established by the Tertiary Education Commission Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua (TEC) in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). I was appointed to provide independent leadership of the Review, and from the start I have chaired a Project Management Team on which all three agencies are represented.

This is the first such Strategic Review set up by the TEC. Consequently, there have been protocols and relationships to be worked through. The balance between consultation with the agencies and the independence of the Review is of necessity a delicate one. I have found the whole experience both challenging and rewarding.

I have always had a strong commitment to the aims of the Review. Both in the personal terms of learners’ needs and in the interests of a well-educated and innovative society, New Zealand needs to make it as easy as possible for people to go in and out of formal tertiary education without unnecessary barriers or repetition of things already accomplished. We have used the wide definition of tertiary education set out by the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission in 2000–01.

We have had great support from the tertiary education sector. The meetings of the reference group have been extremely valuable. We have had informal meetings with members of tertiary education organisations, quality assurance bodies, people involved with industry training, learner groups, the Council of Trade Unions and Business New Zealand. Co-operation has been really good – frank and open and helpful. Once again I have rejoiced in the fact that we can operate as a single tertiary education sector with the various parts making their distinctive contribution within it.

From very early in the Review, we decided that we should not be advocating separate national structures to achieve its objectives. Rather, we should work within existing systems and leave room with providers and qualification owners to exercise initiative and innovation.

The aim of this report is to recommend adequate processes to ensure that pathways and staircasing, credit transfer and recognition of prior learning are high on the agendas of providers and the education agencies in an ongoing way.

In the report’s introduction I acknowledge the work of many people. At this point, I wish to express my appreciation of the work of David Choat. Not only has he drafted the report, he has brought to it an extraordinary understanding of the whole sector and a mind agile in seeing the inter-relatedness of all its components.

In recent months, Hon Dr Michael Cullen, Minister for Tertiary Education, has set out significant changes in the tertiary education sector. Detailed proposals for implementation are now being worked on. Our Review has tried to work within the scope of the changes pre-figured so far. The intent of our recommendations is clear, even if some changes to the implementation of them may be needed.

If the role of each tertiary education organisation is to be more clearly defined and agreed with government, then the need for well-defined pathways and recognition of credit across providers becomes even more vital. Our proposals are integral to the Minister’s aims, not peripheral or optional to them.

Norman Kingsbury
Chair of the Review
Schedule of propositions and recommendations

Propositions

1. That the policy of open admission for all persons aged 20 years or older, as provided for in section 224(3)(a) of the Education Act 1989, be endorsed and upheld as a key foundation-stone of ‘pathways and staircasing’ in New Zealand.

2. That, for every qualification, students and prospective students should have access to meaningful information about the subsequent programmes of study, if any, for which this qualification will assist them to meet the admission or selection criteria.

3. That the design of all new or revised qualifications ought to take into consideration how best to link with other quality-assured qualifications in the same subject area, throughout the sector, so as to facilitate student movement between qualifications.

4. That the student support system ought not to create incentives for students to enrol unnecessarily in courses for which they could have received credit on the basis of previous study or prior informal learning.

5. That the Tertiary Education Commission should consistently include the need to foster and maintain good pathways and staircasing in tertiary education, alongside other considerations, when developing and implementing strategic resourcing, monitoring and capability development processes.

6. That the government and the tertiary education sector need to come to a consensus about whether the approach taken to recognition of prior learning should be an ‘extensive’ one or an ‘intensive’ one, and that the regulatory environment will need to reflect the approach taken.

7. That, further to the principles and objectives set out in the 2002 Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy, students holding a ‘national qualification’ and wishing to undertake a local qualification in the same subject area have a legitimate expectation that the amount of credit they can expect towards the latter based on the former has been arranged in advance and does not require an individual assessment.

8. That the principles, propositions and policies relating to ‘pathways and staircasing’ apply to the relationships between all quality-assured qualifications in New Zealand, including at every level of the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications, in every subsector and in every cultural context.
### Recommendations

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<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>Responsibility:</th>
<th>Process for consideration:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Fostering a climate of lifelong learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>That the marketing of careers information and guidance services to learners takes the opportunity to frame learning as a lifelong endeavour.</td>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>As part of its ongoing work programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>That some careers information and guidance material be produced that is specifically aimed at people aged 25 and older who are considering returning to study.</td>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>As part of the ongoing development of its range of publications and guides.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>That the services, guidance material and decision-making tools it offers to prompt learners to think about progression options when choosing a programme of study be maintained and enhanced.</td>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>As part of its ongoing work</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>That the use of the Studywise financial information service for new borrowers and its website to encourage learners to access Career Services’ services, guidance material and decision-making tools be maintained and enhanced.</td>
<td>Studylink</td>
<td>As part of its ongoing work</td>
</tr>
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<td>Chapter 6: Placing pathways on the register</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>That the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications (the Register) be used to improve the amount of accessible and reliable information available to learners and other interested parties on a qualification’s outcomes in terms of pathways available for further study, either by more specific guidelines on how this should be covered within the ‘Outcome Statement’ field or by introducing a new ‘Further Education Pathways’ field.</td>
<td>NZQA</td>
<td>As part of the further implementation of the Register</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>That the Career Services website be set up so as to allow users to automatically see Register information when they click on a qualification (as well as the provider website information currently seen).</td>
<td>NZQA Career Services</td>
<td>Stand-alone information technology task</td>
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<td>Chapter 7: The role of quality assurance</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>That issues relating to articulation and credit recognition and transfer be included in the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance.</td>
<td>NZQA TEC</td>
<td>As part of the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>That a new expectation be added into the course approval process that articulation with existing programmes in the tertiary education system be built into programme design</td>
<td>NZQA TEC</td>
<td>As part of the proposed inclusion of issues relating to articulation and credit recognition and transfer within the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance (recommendation 7)</td>
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<td>Chapter 7: The role of quality assurance [cont.]</td>
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<td>Recommendation:</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>That, before the new expectation (referred to in recommendation 8) is implemented in course approval processes, joint regional workshops are undertaken for providers (across subsectors) to discuss this new expectation and how to meet it.</td>
<td>CUAP ITPQ NZQA (AAA)</td>
<td>Through the Inter-institutional Quality Assurance Bodies Consultative Group</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>That guidelines for tertiary education organisations on credit recognition and transfer, and examples of best practice, be developed, circulated and promoted.</td>
<td>NZQA (in consultation with CUAP and ITPQ)</td>
<td>Already part of NZQA’s work programme</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>That the wording of the course approval requirements around credit recognition and transfer be revised, using the Committee on University Academic Programmes’ wording as a model, to make explicit a requirement that processes be documented, explicit and challengeable.</td>
<td>NZQA TEC</td>
<td>As part of the proposed inclusion of issues relating to articulation and credit recognition and transfer within the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance (recommendation 7)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>That it be a recognised requirement of audit that all tertiary education organisations implement policies that are consistent with the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy.</td>
<td>NZQA TEC Individual quality assurance bodies where relevant</td>
<td>As part of the proposed consideration of articulation and credit recognition and transfer within the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance (see recommendation 7), if changes are required</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>That it be made explicit in the Quality Assurance Standard for Industry Training Organisations that the same requirements regarding credit recognition and transfer that apply to providers also apply to Industry Training Organisations.</td>
<td>NZQA TEC</td>
<td>When next revising the Quality Assurance Standard for Industry Training Organisations</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>That Summary Audits, when made publicly available, report on the audit’s finding in relation to credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning rather than on an exceptions basis, ie. when policies and practices are adequate as well as when they are deficient.</td>
<td>ITPQ NZQA (AAA)</td>
<td>As part of the regular audit process</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>That credit recognition and transfer practices (in relation to the 2002 Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy) and recognition of prior learning practices be covered as themes in the next cycle of university audits.</td>
<td>NZAAU</td>
<td>When making decisions on the next cycle of university audits</td>
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<td>Chapter 8: Providing appropriate student support</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>That thematic reports on credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning be compiled, including coverage of interventions by the quality assurance body and the effect these have had.</td>
<td>IT&amp;PQ NZQA (AAA)</td>
<td>Discussions will need to be held with NZQA about how such thematic reports should be financed, and there may need to be specific government funding provided to support this.</td>
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<td>Chapter 8: Providing appropriate student support</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>That part-time part-year students should be treated consistently, in terms of eligibility for student loans for fees, and no distinction should be made for students who are only part-time part-year because the student had some credit conferred.</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Ministry of Social Development</td>
<td>No decision needed – continuation of status quo.</td>
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<td>Chapter 8: Providing appropriate student support</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>That the student loan contract be changed to include charges for credit recognition and recognition of prior learning/recognition of current competency as part of the allowable tuition costs that can be borrowed, so long as the student would have been eligible to borrow for tuition costs without these charges.</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Ministry of Social Development</td>
<td>Advice to ministers, possibly as part of the Budget process.</td>
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<td>Chapter 9: The role of the Tertiary Education Commission</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>That no changes to incentivise ‘pathways and staircasing’ be included in the funding formulae for tertiary tuition.</td>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>As part of further development of the Next Steps programme.</td>
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<td>Chapter 9: The role of the Tertiary Education Commission</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>That Register information on the lack of clear opportunities for onwards progression be used as an indicator of the need to undertake assessment of strategic relevance discussions about a course, particularly where further education has been stated as an intended outcome of the course.</td>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>As part of the development of its risk monitoring framework.</td>
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<td>Chapter 9: The role of the Tertiary Education Commission</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>That ‘pathways and staircasing’ be included as a performance dimension against which tertiary education organisations make commitments and are monitored, within the Investing in a Plan approach, with a particular focus on the educational diversity of the incoming student population.</td>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>As part of further development of the Next Steps programme.</td>
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<td>Chapter 9: The role of the Tertiary Education Commission</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>That provision be made for ‘pathways and staircasing’ activities to be supported through the Tertiary Education Organisation Component, particularly in areas such as facilitating greater amounts of articulation between qualification and pre-arranged credit transfer.</td>
<td>TEC (in consultation with the sector)</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the Next Steps programme.</td>
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<td>Chapter 9: The role of the Tertiary Education Commission</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>That the important contribution that bridging courses, particularly bridging courses into degrees, can play in supporting ‘pathways and staircasing’ be taken into account by those designing and implementing the approach to reinforcing the ‘distinctive contributions’ of different parts of the sector.</td>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>As part of further development of the Next Steps programme.</td>
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<td>Chapter 9: The role of the Tertiary Education Commission [cont.]</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>That ‘portfolio analyses’ (and, where appropriate, vocationally-oriented reviews) should include consideration of whether there are gaps that prevent a lower-level qualification from progressing onto a higher one, either because the design of the two qualifications is not compatible or because there is the need for an intermediate qualification between the two.</td>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>In the course of individual reviews</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>That consideration be given as to whether it would be practical to include a question on learner experiences with credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning in the learner survey.</td>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>As part of further development of the Next Steps programme</td>
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<td>Chapter 10: Recognition of prior learning</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>That a programme of work be undertaken on the future direction of recognition of prior learning, and that additional funding be provided for this work.</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, NZQA and the TEC for advice to government.</td>
<td>As part of the overall negotiation of the tertiary education work programme with the government</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>That a process of sector engagement be undertaken to develop common expectations about when and to what extent recognition of prior learning ought to be offered, (ie. whether to adopt an ‘extensive’ or ‘intensive’ approach), and that these expectations subsequently be reflected in the gazetted criteria.</td>
<td>NZQA with support from the Ministry of Education and the TEC</td>
<td>As part of the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26)</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>That a set of national principles and guidelines for recognition of prior learning be developed, including agreed terminology and definitions.</td>
<td>NZQA (in consultation with tertiary education organisations and quality assurance bodies)</td>
<td>As part of the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26)</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>That, if a decision is taken to adopt an ‘intensive’ approach to recognition of prior learning, funding be provided (possibly though the TEO Component) to help resource a small number of expert ‘assessment centres’ within providers.</td>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>Policy decision subsequent to the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26)</td>
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<td>Chapter 10: Recognition of prior learning [cont.]</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>That recognition of prior learning within industry training continue to operate an ‘extensive’ approach with funding per credit at the same rate as for training.</td>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>No decision needed – continuation of status quo</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Chapter 10: Recognition of prior learning [cont.] | 31 | That a research and information-gathering programme be developed and implemented in relation to recognition of prior learning, covering:  
• Commissioned research into issues and practices relating to recognition of prior learning in New Zealand;  
• The collection of periodic numerical information on recognition of prior learning at tertiary education providers funded through the Student Achievement Component; and  
• The development, in consultation with the Industry Training Federation, of a means of collecting periodic numerical information on recognition of prior learning within industry training. | Ministry of Education  
TEC  
NZQA | As part of the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26) |
| Chapter 11: Some specialised areas | 32 | That support be made available for a conference or forum bringing together recognition of prior learning practitioners from across the sector to share best practice and discuss issues and challenges. | National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence | As part of the prioritisation of its work programme |
| Chapter 11: Some specialised areas | 33 | That consideration is given as to whether there is value in programmes that teach recognition of prior learning applicants what they need to know in order to undertake the process, and, if so, to what extent the funding system might present barriers to providers offering programmes of this kind. | Ministry of Education  
TEC  
NZQA | As part of the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work. (recommendation 26) |
| Chapter 11: Some specialised areas | 34 | That the national qualifications that are the top priority for achieving standardised credit transfer arrangements with local qualifications offered by tertiary education providers be identified, and that active negotiations be undertaken with relevant providers to achieve this. | NZQA  
Industry training organisations | As part of NZQA’s ‘national qualifications’ work programme |
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<td>35</td>
<td>That, where a qualification-owner intends for a qualification to relate exclusively to other qualifications within the same cultural context (such as where a Māori qualification is designed to articulate solely with other Māori qualifications), there should be an expectation that this be made explicit in the Register information on further education opportunities (proposed in recommendation 8).</td>
<td>NZQA</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority’s Māori Strategic Framework and the further implementation of the Register</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 11: Some specialised areas [cont.]</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>That quality assurance bodies be responsive to any concerns raised by owners of Māori qualifications about providers not consistently applying their credit recognition processes in relation to Māori qualifications, or being willing to consider articulation with Māori qualifications when designing or revising their programmes.</td>
<td>CUAP AAU ITPQ NZQA (AAA)</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority’s Māori Strategic Framework, and as individual issues are raised with quality assurance bodies</td>
</tr>
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<td>37</td>
<td>That the Māori national qualifications that are the top priority for achieving standardised credit transfer arrangements with local qualifications offered by tertiary education providers be identified, and active negotiations with relevant providers be undertaken to achieve this.</td>
<td>NZQA</td>
<td>In concert with the process in relation to other national qualifications proposed above, and as part of the implementation of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority’s Māori Strategic Framework</td>
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<td>Chapter 12: Recommendations to the sector</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>That tertiary education organisations continue to work together to develop mutual arrangements for pre-arranged credit transfer wherever practical, including making use of regional and other pre-existing networks, which should be expanded to include compatible PTEs as opportunities permit.</td>
<td>All tertiary education organisations</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>That existing mutual arrangements cross-reference so that they can be extended to indirect credit arrangements where practical.</td>
<td>The sector</td>
<td>(With CUAP, ITPQ and NZQA (AAA) playing a co-ordinating role as required)</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>That consideration be given to adopting a standard template for use by providers seeking to pre-arrange credit recognition for a course by another provider, drawing on material already in use as part of current multi-provider arrangements.</td>
<td>Universities and institutes of technology and polytechnics</td>
<td>(In consultation with other subsectors)</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>That the moratorium on applications for recognition of ‘university foundation programmes’ offered outside universities where these are offered to domestic students be removed.</td>
<td>The Vice-Chancellors’ Committee</td>
<td>As part of its scheduled review of the moratorium</td>
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<td>Chapter 13: Some related issues</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>That providers consider the option of offering national qualifications rather than local qualifications wherever possible.</td>
<td>Providers currently offering a local qualification in areas also covered by a national qualification</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>That an agreement be reached on the appropriate thresholds and formats for quality assurance bodies to provide information on issues arising during the quality assurance process to the Tertiary Education Commission.</td>
<td>NZQA, TEC (working together with CUAP, NZAAU and ITPQ)</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>That the idea of developing a Record of Learning for the full Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications and promoting this to learners in a way that reinforces the idea of learning as a lifelong endeavour be investigated.</td>
<td>Tertiary education organisations, in concert with government agencies</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>That student representatives be consulted about whether further work is needed on student complaints mechanisms.</td>
<td>NZQA, in its overarching quality assurance role, with involvement from CUAP if further work proceeds</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>That all education and training programmes purchased by government agencies be externally quality assured.</td>
<td>Government agencies, for advice to the government</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>That a consistent approach be developed for financing the production of thematic reports compiled from the findings of quality assurance audit.</td>
<td>NZQA, TEC</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
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<td>Chapter</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Process for consideration</td>
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<td>Chapter 14: Conclusion</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>That a joint multi-year work programme be developed for implementing the recommendations of this Strategic Review, and that at the end of the period of this work programme, pathways and staircasing be reviewed again, to assess what has been achieved and whether further initiatives are needed.</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, TEC, NZQA</td>
<td>As part of the overall negotiation of the work programme for tertiary education (including the tertiary education reforms) with the government</td>
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Part One: INTRODUCTION
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 ‘Pathways and staircasing’ is a phrase that has gained currency and a certain amount of emotional resonance in the tertiary education sector in recent years. It refers to the ability of learners, once they have entered the tertiary system, to continue their studies, where and when they need, to the full extent of their potential.

1.2 In broad terms the aim of this Strategic Review is to improve the tertiary education sector in New Zealand in ways that make it easier for individual learners to progress into further study.

1.3 The overarching principle behind this Strategic Review is that the systems and processes within the tertiary education sector should facilitate lifelong learning and achievement through seamless pathways and adequate recognition of previous learning and experience.

1.4 This is articulated in the current Tertiary Education Strategy (2002–07). Objective 7 specifically states “a coherent and reliable system of qualifications, learning recognition and credit transfer” and Objective 17 specifies “… improved staircasing for learners within tertiary education”. Objective 17 also expresses the aim that “learners who access the available foundation education opportunities will be able to build on the skills they learn and progress into higher-level qualifications and employment, with the skills necessary to succeed in those environments”.

1.5 This Strategic Review also builds on the Supporting Learning Pathways – Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy released by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in 2002. This policy, which was developed by the Credit Transfer Working Party in consultation with the tertiary education sector, is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Background

1.6 The origins of this particular Review go back to February 2004, when the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) approved the use of Strategic Reviews as one of the mechanisms to provide an evidence base for changes required to the portfolio of tertiary education delivery. Following limited consultation with the sector in October 2004, the Commission decided on ‘pathways and staircasing’ as a priority area for review.

1.7 Key reasons for selecting ‘pathways and staircasing’ as the first review topic included:

- the issues impact on all tertiary students, providers and agencies
- the specific issues relating to pathways are well defined
- a Strategic Review of this area could build upon a number of projects currently underway or recently completed, and
- if a review of issues and obstacles to progression paths was not undertaken, government might risk wasting some of the current investment in tertiary education, in particular, that in foundation-level courses.
1.8 This Review has benefited from widespread support and assistance from the sector, which indicates the level of consensus in the sector on the importance of pathways and the need to strengthen them. When, initially, the TEC consulted the key stakeholders on the preferred topic of its first strategic review, most stakeholders identified pathways and staircasing as the most strategic and urgent area needing review. Once the Review was commissioned, the tertiary education organisations, quality assurance bodies and learners readily offered to participate in the Review. This support indicates the sector’s understanding and appreciation of the importance of pathways.

**What this report is not about**

1.9 It can often assist a clear understanding of the parameters of a project to outline what it does not cover. ‘pathways and staircasing’ relates to movements that occur within the tertiary education system. It therefore does not cover:

- pathways from school into tertiary education
- how to encourage adult learners into the system
- retention and completions, or
- employability.

1.10 These are all important issues for the tertiary education system. They are also linked to ‘pathways and staircasing’ in that they contribute to tertiary education’s role in fostering equality of opportunity for all. Nonetheless, they are outside the scope of this particular Strategic Review.

1.11 It was also decided, in order to keep the scope manageable, not to try to cover the following areas:

- international qualifications evaluation, and
- the English Language School sector.

1.12 The interests of international students are covered by the Review insofar as they are served by the same processes of credit recognition, etc as domestic students. But this report does not pretend to have identified any of the specific characteristics or issues that may pertain to the ‘pathways and staircasing’ of international students.

**Approach of the Review**

1.13 This Strategic Review was commissioned by the TEC and was carried out in collaboration with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the Ministry of Education. At the time of commissioning the Review the TEC recognised that the topic of the review significantly overlaps with the responsibilities of the Authority and the Ministry and invited them to take part. The Authority and the Ministry of Education contributed substantially to the project management of the Review.

1.14 The Review team’s findings and recommendations have been significantly assisted by information gathered through survey and interview of and consultation with key stakeholders. The stakeholders surveyed and/or consulted include learner associations, peak bodies, tertiary education organisations and quality assurance bodies.
A reference group was also established and actively participated in the Review. The reference group consisted of officials from quality assurance bodies, members from the TEC’s Learner Advisory Committee and other learner organisations, representatives of business and unions, and tertiary education organisation peak bodies. It met on two occasions in May 2005 and May 2006. At the second meeting, the group considered a working paper that covered, in an early form, the findings of the Review. Feedback provided by reference group members, at the meeting and subsequently, has helped to shape this report. The membership of the reference group is set out in Appendix 1.

The Review also included surveys of quality assurance bodies and tertiary education organisations. In particular, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority completed an online survey of tertiary education organisations focused on the implementation of their 2002 Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy.

However, this should be seen primarily as a policy review. It would not have been within the resources of the Review to have undertaken in-depth qualitative research.

It is also worth noting that while it is important to undertake studies on specific topics like ‘pathways and staircasing’, it is important to keep in mind that this is just one goal (however important) amongst many currently faced in tertiary education. In particular, it is important to view this work in the context of the far-reaching set of changes that make up the Next Steps phase of the tertiary education reforms. The Review has been careful to recognise this, particularly in its recommendations.

Responsibility for this report rests with the Review team: Norman Kingsbury (Chair of the Review), assisted by David Choat (drafter). The Review team wishes to express its gratitude, however, to all of the people in the sector and central agencies without whom this work would not have been possible, including the reference group, the project management team and the staff of the Tertiary Education Commission, in particular: Amy Fitzgerald, the project co-ordinator of the Review; Mani Maniparathy, the first manager of the Review, who together with Jay Ocampo also undertook interviews, analysis and initial drafting; Robert Burgess and Paul Pearson who in turn succeeded Mani as manager; and Colin Webb, who was project sponsor throughout.

Structure of the report

‘Pathways and staircasing’ is an umbrella concept, rather than a single policy issue. There are a number of elements of the qualification system that combine together to facilitate movement within the system. The main elements are:

- articulation – the relationship that one qualification has to another
- admission and selection – the ability of a student to gain entrance to further study
- credit recognition and transfer – the extent to which previous study counts towards a new qualification, and
- recognition of prior learning – the extent to which knowledge and understanding gained outside the formal education system is counted.

These concepts, and the current arrangements in the New Zealand tertiary education system with regard to each of them, are covered in the following chapter.

Looked at another way, ‘pathways and staircasing’ is an activity; the movement of a student from one part of the system to another. This activity can be measured in terms of the volume of movements within the sector. These measures, and the complexities they highlight, are the focus of Chapter 3.
These two chapters form the second part of this report (following this introductory chapter), as between them they describe the current situation.

Part three of the report covers Chapter 4, which sets out in broad terms an agenda for further progress on ‘pathways and staircasing’, including a series of propositions that will underpin the remainder of the report.

Part four of the report comprises Chapters 5–13, which carry forward the agenda in Part three through discussion and a series of specific recommendations. In order to aid consideration within the wider policy work programme, much of this part of the report is structured in terms of the different central agency functions that have the ability to affect ‘pathways and staircasing’:

• Chapter 5 recognises that whether a learner progresses on to further learning will reflect the choices made by the learner, as well as the opportunities offered by the system, and focuses in particular on the role of Career Services.

• Chapter 6 looks at the stewardship of the role of the qualifications system, and in particular the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications.

• Chapter 7 looks at the related area of the quality assurance process, and the extent to which that reinforces a concern for strong ‘pathways and staircasing’.

• Chapter 8 covers the contribution that the student support system can make.

• Chapter 9 focuses on the regulatory and funding responsibilities of the Tertiary Education Commission, particularly in light of the Next Steps changes.

Chapter 10 focuses more generally on the area of recognition of prior learning and makes the case for some fundamental decisions about what approach to take, going forward.

The other three chapters address a range of issues:

• Chapter 11 looks at some specialised areas of ‘pathways and staircasing’ – national qualifications, the role of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement, Māori qualifications, and the diversity of learner populations.

• Chapter 12 contains a series of recommendations directed towards tertiary education organisations rather than agencies.

• Chapter 13 discusses a range of wider issues that have arisen from the Review team looking at ‘pathways and staircasing’.

Finally, Part five concludes the report with Chapter 14, which looks at the process of setting up a unified work programme to ensure that the issues covered in this report are advanced over the years to come.

Use of terminology in this report

Before proceeding, it is worth saying a few words about the use of terminology. Tertiary education terminology can be complex to follow and is not always used precisely. The usage in this report attempts to be consistent with accepted practice in New Zealand and with legislative definitions. A number of terms that relate to specific aspects of ‘pathways and staircasing’ are explained in the following chapter, while terminology relating to quality assurance is covered in Chapter 7. The following paragraphs, therefore, focus on some of the more general tertiary education terms.
1.30 Tertiary education is used in this report to refer to all learning throughout life beyond the school system. This contrasts with primary and secondary education, which occurs through the school system. Tertiary education includes both formal and non-formal learning. The focus in this report is on formal education that has been through a quality-assurance process (see Chapter 7) and leads to a qualification, but the report also deals with the interface between informal education and formal education by means of recognition of prior learning.

1.31 Tertiary education in New Zealand also encompasses both what is often called higher education, i.e. university and/or degree-level provision, and what is alternatively referred to as ‘training’, ‘further education’ or ‘vocational education and training’ in other jurisdictions. These terms will occur from time to time, however, when the Review team is referring to overseas practices or quoting from overseas sources. The report avoids the term ‘post-compulsory education’, which covers both tertiary education plus secondary education beyond the age of compulsory schooling.

1.32 The phrase tertiary education organisations is used in this report as a broad category that covers public tertiary education institutions (universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics, colleges of education, wānanga), private training establishments (including community providers such as Rural Education Activities Programmes) and industry training organisations.

1.33 Where the term providers or tertiary education providers is used, this is intended to encompass institutions and private training establishments, but not industry training organisations, which operate primarily as purchasers and standard-setting bodies, and are indeed prohibited from offering education and training provision themselves.

1.34 From time to time the term qualification-developer or qualification-owner is also used – this refers to tertiary education organisations operating in this capacity, and also covers standard-setting bodies that are not tertiary education organisations (standard-setting bodies are covered further in Chapter 11).

1.35 Finally, it is worth explaining the approach taken to the use of the terms ‘qualification’, ‘course’ and ‘programme’, which is complicated because of diverse approaches within the system.

1.36 Qualification refers to the formal award that a student receives upon successful completion of study, rather than to the study itself.

1.37 The body of study leading to that qualification is alternately described as a course (as in ‘course approval’), in the qualifications system; and as a ‘programme’, in the funding system. Furthermore, the funding system tends to use the term ‘course’ to refer to the individual components that make up an overall ‘programme’ leading to the ‘qualification.

1.38 The general approach in this report is to use the term programme to describe the body of study leading to that qualification. When directly discussing the ‘course approval’ process, however, the report uses the term course as a synonym for ‘programme’.
Part Two: THE CURRENT SITUATION
Chapter 2. An outline of existing arrangements

2.1 This chapter describes in broad terms the current systemic arrangements (and some noteworthy specific arrangements) relating to learning pathways within New Zealand’s tertiary education system.

2.2 The description covers the following components:

- articulation between qualifications
- admission and selection procedures for further study
- credit for previous learning within the formal education system, and
- credit for previous learning outside the formal education system.

Articulation between qualifications

2.3 By articulation, we are at this stage referring only to the comparison between the content in one programme of study (and resulting qualification) with that of another. How does the content in the former line up against that in the latter, in terms of overlap, being more or less complex, one developing skills or knowledge that is useful in the other, etc? This relationship may happen by chance or by design. The elements of the relationship could be readily self-evident or they may require a certain amount of close scrutiny of each programme.

2.4 Articulation in this sense precedes and forms the basis for the other components of ‘pathways and staircasing’ – the credit that can be awarded or the admission granted depends on the amount of articulation between qualifications.

2.5 There is a range of different levels at which the articulation between qualifications operates. These might broadly be categorised into three main ‘layers’:

- The relationship between qualifications may be ‘encoded’ into common understandings as to the mission and purpose of those qualifications and/or the providers offering them – for instance, in the United States there is an expectation that many students will study for two years at a two-year college and then transfer (with credit) to complete their studies at a four-year college; indeed, ‘transfer’ is formally prescribed as a key mission for the two-year colleges.

- The relationship between qualifications may be guided or regulated by a set of protocols that have either been mandated by the government or negotiated by the sector, or a combination of the two – for instance, the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee and Australian National Training Authority worked together to develop a set of ‘Policy Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages’.¹

- The relationship between qualifications may be enabled by a set of underlying system rules that allows study in one part of the system to be easily understood by another part of the system, and for students to move between the two with a minimum of hurdles.

¹ Available at www.avcc.edu.au/documents/policies_programs/teaching_learning/credit_transfer/AVCC_Guidelines.pdf and www.aqf.edu.au/cs.htm respectively. Both sets of guidelines were developed jointly by AVCC and ANTA in 2002 and, while tailored to their respective owners, share identical wording for the most part, except that the latter guidelines have subsequently been expanded to include the schools sector. Inevitably, the guidelines extend beyond articulation issues into the related areas of selection, admission and credit transfer.
2.6 New Zealand has very little in the way of system-wide arrangements in the first two of these ‘layers’, although there are some arrangements within subsectors or between individual providers. In this sense, we might say that the articulation process in New Zealand is largely unregulated.\textsuperscript{2}

2.7 Instead, however, New Zealand has a very strong set of enabling arrangements for articulation between qualifications. Perhaps most important is that, at a fundamental level, New Zealand has a system of qualification types with a clear relationship to one another. This includes an agreed hierarchy in terms of relative complexity.

2.8 This system involves 10 recognised qualification types and ten levels of complexity, which interrelate as shown in the chart below. The descriptors for each level and the detailed definitions of each term can be found in Appendix 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Qualification Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Doctorates</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Masters</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelors with Honours</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bachelors Degrees, Graduate Diplomas</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Diplomas</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Certificates</td>
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2.9 The consistent use of nomenclature and level definitions are part of the arrangements around the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications (the Register), which has been the culmination of many years of work in the sector. That work has been led by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, in keeping with the object of the provisions of the Education Act 1989 relating to the Authority, which is “to establish a consistent approach to the recognition of qualifications in academic and vocational areas” [s. 247].

2.10 Pre-dating the Register, and continuing to exist alongside and within it, is the National Qualifications Framework. Older descriptions of the qualifications system, therefore, tend to refer to the Framework rather the Register. The former, however, only ever had coverage of a portion of the formal qualifications in New Zealand, whereas from August 2006, all quality-assured qualifications in New Zealand have been included on the Register.

2.11 The sector’s willingness and ability to agree to and implement such a comprehensive approach reflects well on their general commitment to a qualification system that students and the wider public can understand and navigate their way through. This in turn reinforces the impression of a general sympathy for ensuring strong opportunities for ‘pathways and staircasing’ are in place.

2.12 But the Register also provides a more direct underpinning for articulation between qualifications. It is easy for achievements of this type to become invisible – indeed, that is often a measure of their success. So it is worth emphasising how important it is for pathways between qualifications that there be general agreement on the standard relationship that each qualification type has to the others.

\textsuperscript{2} Note that this refers specifically to articulation. As we will see, there are regulations relating to admission and selection, and to the provision of credit.
2.13 The Register makes clear to learners how the full learning ‘staircase’ progresses. You start off with a certificate – which may be a tertiary qualification or may be the National Certificate of Education Achievement delivered through the school system; then you do a diploma; then a degree; then a postgraduate qualification and/or honours; then a masters; and finally a doctorate.

2.14 Of course, very few students will set foot on every step in the staircase. Some may stop half-way up; many will jump a step or two; others may set foot on the same step more than once; some may even choose to move down the staircase at some point. Nonetheless, having a standard progression structure creates an important context for each of these variations.

2.15 It also provides a basis for understanding the relationship between the qualification a student has just completed and where they want to go next. For instance, if a student has been awarded a diploma with components at levels 5, 6 and 7 of the Register, they might expect to have been prepared for bachelors-level study at level 7 in the same subject and may even have already covered some aspects of the bachelors programme.

2.16 This may not, of course, always be the case in practice. It may be that the aspects of the subject covered by the two qualifications, or the approaches taken, are too disparate for there to be much cross-over between them. Nonetheless, the Register provides a ‘default’ expectation.3

2.17 On the other hand, students who have been awarded a certificate with components at levels 1, 2 and 3 will have some basis to assume that progressing directly to a level 7 bachelors programme will entail a bit of a jump in complexity. That need not necessarily mean they should not attempt it – after all, a shift from level 3 to level 7 is the standard route for school-leavers commencing university – but students do need to be aware of that gap.

2.18 It is worth noting at this stage that, while most qualifications are associated with a specific level of complexity, certificates and diplomas are variable in this regard. It is possible for a certificate to combine credits4 from across levels 1–7, whereas a diploma can have credits from levels 5–7 (and may in some cases include credits from below that level). A certificate or diploma is said to be at a particular level if the credits in it are predominantly at that level or above.5 For instance, a certificate with 10 credits at level 5, 10 credits at level 4, 20 credits at level 3 and 10 each at levels 2 and 3 is considered to be a ‘level 3 certificate’.

2.19 New Zealand is hardly unique in having a ‘qualifications framework’, of course, but it was one of the first countries to embark on one in a formalised way. Moreover, it is unusual in the breadth of coverage – all formal qualifications from senior secondary school onwards are part of the Register.

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3 Another possibility is that one of the qualifications is not fully compliant with the Register: the diploma may have been pitched at a lower level than claimed, or the degree pitched at a higher level than claimed. If so, the quality assurance body should be notified and should follow up the matter.

4 Credits denote the amount of learning and assessment that is typically required in gaining a qualification, measured in terms of ‘notional learning hours.’

5 This means 40 credits for a certificate and 72 credits for a diploma. A certificate must have 40 credits or more, and a diploma must have at least 120 credits (equivalent to a year’s full-time study). An assessed programme of less than 40 credits is known as a ‘short award’, which is not considered to be a formal qualification.
2.20 This is important for the unitary character it gives to New Zealand’s qualifications system. We do not have, for instance, one set of ‘higher education’ qualifications governed by one set of definitions and norms and another set of ‘vocational education’ qualifications governed by a different set of definitions and norms. Different qualifications have their own distinct character but they all relate to one another, at this fundamental level, in a readily understandable way. There is not a need to ‘translate’ the terminology when moving from one part of the system to another.

2.21 And, importantly, this is not just true of the rules relating to qualifications policy. We also have a common funding system that relates to almost all provider-based provision. This too is important for creating a system that interacts readily and facilitates passage from one part to another. A recent Australian report looking at cross-sectoral collaboration found that “The existence of two systems accountable to, and funded by, different levels of government was perceived as a major problem”.

2.22 It is worth noting that the funding system for industry training operates quite differently from that for providers, and there are also other funding systems relating to particular types of provision (such as Training Opportunities). And there are some indications (such as the ongoing ‘overlapping provision’ debate) that these differences do create complications from time to time. Even here, however, the fact that all tertiary education is now funded through the same government agency (the Tertiary Education Commission) does facilitate better integration than might otherwise be the case.

2.23 Even the fact that students studying institute of technology/polytechnic certificates, private training establishment diplomas and university degrees are all covered by the same student allowance arrangements and eligible for the same Student Loan Scheme helps reinforce a unitary system where students can move freely throughout.

2.24 Before moving on to discuss admission and selection, it is worth discussing the relative lack of the other two layers of articulation arrangements: common understandings and protocols. Does this represent a weakness in New Zealand’s system for ‘pathways and staircasing’?

2.25 To some extent, the lack of a standard pathway along the US lines has been a deliberate choice that New Zealand has made over time. In the 1970s, for instance, when the network of institute of technology and polytechnic provision was being widened with a second wave of establishments, there was some discussion about whether there ought to be a standard arrangement based on the US model whereby students commenced their degree study there before proceeding to university. This approach was not supported by the 1975 Advisory Council on Educational Planning report, Directions for Educational Development, and was not undertaken, although the report did suggest that universities might consider “advanced institute qualifications as a basis for proceeding to higher degrees”.

2.26 Many years later, the choice not to place institutes of technology and polytechnics in a particular sequential relationship with universities was supplemented by the decision to authorise non-university providers to offer degrees. This moved the system even further away from one where different subsectors had assigned roles for different stages of the learning ‘staircase’.

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In other ways, however, the proliferation of pathways was not anticipated when the current qualifications system was designed in 1989–90. The original concept was that there would be fairly standardised programmes of study, leading to ‘national qualifications’, in most areas, although delivered by a range of providers. However, perhaps in part because the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in the early 1990s took an overly-restrictive approach to how much flexibility providers would have in delivering national qualifications, there arose a marked tendency for providers to prefer to deliver their own local qualifications instead of the national qualifications.

Thus, a system that was envisaged as a range of providers whose offerings would have had standard length and coverage ended up as something far more disparate. The inclusion of large numbers of private training establishments from the late 1990s onwards also added to the complexity, although in fact private training establishments were often more willing than public institutions to deliver national qualifications.

This has increased the number of individual qualification pathways, even within a particular subject area, which has made articulation a much more complex proposition. On the other hand, New Zealand’s rather unregulated arrangements also give it greater flexibility and freedom for innovation.

It can be argued that the lack of standard qualification paths more accurately reflects the diversity of different directions that students actually take in practice (see the following chapter). This diversity is something that has become more widely acknowledged in countries where more standard paths do exist. In the United States, for instance, the term ‘reverse transfer’ is being used to acknowledge the not-uncommon practice of students moving from four-year colleges to two-year ones, rather than the other way around. And in Australia, according to one account, the number of students moving from university to Training and Further Education (TAFE) colleges out-numbers the number moving in the opposite, more ‘standard’ direction by at least three times.

**Admission and selection**

After articulation, the next step in the ‘pathway’ process is that of gaining entrance to a programme. This is governed by admission criteria and selection criteria. The difference between these two is essentially that the former are absolute measures, whereas the latter are relative measures.

Admission criteria refer to the attributes without which a student cannot gain entry to a programme. However, in addition to this, many programmes are ‘restricted programmes’ – in other words, only a finite number of students may be admitted in any given intake.

The selection criteria are the attributes that are used to choose between students if a restricted programme is over-subscribed. If the programme is not over-subscribed, a person need not be assessed against the selection criteria, but they will still not be admitted if they do not meet the selection criteria.

In New Zealand, admission processes are regulated by section 224 of the Education Act 1989 (‘Enrolment of Students’) subsections (2)–(4), and selection processes are regulated by subsection (4). These provisions are reproduced in the box overleaf, with the key elements highlighted in **bold** lettering.

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Education Act 1989 provisions in relation to admission and selection

(2) Subject to this section, a person is eligible to be enrolled as a student at any institution in a course of study or training provided by the institution if, and only if,—

(a) One of the following subparagraphs applies:
   i) The person is a domestic student:
   ii) The person is an exempt student:
   iii) The Council of the institution consents; and

(b) The person holds the minimum entry qualifications for the course determined by the Council; and

(c) The person has attained—
   (i) If the institution has fixed a minimum age for enrolment at the institution, the age so fixed; and
   (ii) If the institution has fixed a minimum age for enrolment in the course, the age so fixed.

(3) Paragraphs (b) and (c) of subsection (2) of this section do not apply to a person if—

(a) The person has attained the age of 20 years; or

(b) The Council of the institution is satisfied that the person is capable of undertaking the course of study or training concerned.

(4) Where an eligible person applies for enrolment in a course of study or training at an institution, the person is, subject to this section, entitled to be enrolled in that course.

(5) Where the Council of an institution is satisfied that it is necessary to do so because of insufficiency of staff, accommodation, or equipment, the Council may determine the maximum number of students who may be enrolled in a particular course of study or training at the institution in a particular year.

(6) Where—

(a) The maximum number of persons who may be enrolled at an institution in a particular course in a particular year is determined by the Council of the institution under subsection (5) of this section; and

(b) The number of eligible persons who apply for enrolment in that course in that year exceeds the maximum number so determined—

the Council may, in the selection of the students to be enrolled, give preference to eligible persons who are included in a class of persons that is under-represented among the students undertaking the course.

2.35 The distinctive characteristic of New Zealand’s approach to tertiary admission lies in the arrangement currently set out in section 224(3)(a), as shown above, whereby admission restrictions do not apply to adult students (those aged 20 or over).

2.36 Complementing this is the tradition of making widespread use of ‘open entry’ programmes, ie. programmes that are not ‘restricted’ with a selection process for entry but admit all students who meet the admission criteria. That, of course, means any person aged 20 or over may automatically enrol.

2.37 This ‘open entry’ tradition is reflected and reinforced by the wording of section 224(5), which makes it clear that limitations on enrolments should only occur out of necessity and not simply as a matter of policy.
2.38 The tradition of ‘open entry’ for adult students has a long history in New Zealand. It can be traced back to the end of the First World War, when ex-servicemen were allowed entrance to university without examination. This was later extended to all adults over 30, and the age was subsequently lowered to 21 and then 20.9

2.39 This policy has not been without controversy, although it has proved to be “a difficult concept for either government or universities to cast away”.10 The Hughes Parry Committee of 1959 (which led to the break-up of the University of New Zealand) cautioned against over-generous use of provisional admission (as the practice was known) but concluded that, rather than recommend restrictions, “we prefer to seek ways of improving the performance of those who fail in order to convert their failure into success”.11

2.40 Though moderated by increased use of selection for particular programmes, particularly in the professions,12 ‘open entry’ has continued as a feature of New Zealand’s tertiary education system through the Learning for Life reforms (which gave it its present legislative expression) and into the present day.

2.41 The most recent debate on ‘open entry’, at least insofar as it relates to degrees, was initiated by the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) of 2000–01 (which led to the establishment of the Tertiary Education Commission). The Tertiary Education Advisory Commission advocated “the introduction of relatively extensive rationing by merit of all under-graduate degree places”, and argued that:

Current provisions for open entry for mature learners are inconsistent with the Commission’s proposals, and require further consideration. Options that might be considered include: requiring every learner (irrespective of age) to meet the national standard; setting a quota of places for mature learners; raising the age to (say) 25 years; or requiring providers to negotiate exemptions (in profiles) with the TEC. Some options may allow an alternative pathway to the NCEA for mature learners, without undermining the objective of boosting quality.13

2.42 This proposal was not accepted by the government, however. The Cabinet paper setting out its response to TEAC’s recommendations on funding noted parenthetically, “The TEAC recommendation of a merit-entry test to under-graduate degrees was extremely unpopular amongst those who submitted comments on the fourth TEAC report, and is not suggested as part of the integrated funding framework.”14

2.43 The continued existence of this admission provision for students aged 20 and over is primarily intended to make it easier for adult students to enter tertiary education for the first time. Yet it also has major implications for students arriving from other tertiary study. For many adult students this means the particular characteristics of their previous programme of study are not important for entry purposes.

2.44 Take the example of the pathways between a certificate and a degree, for instance. Around 2,000 students each year make this transition, and there is no prospect of credit transfer (as explained in para 2.51 below).

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10 Ibid., p. 26
11 Committee on New Zealand Universities (Hughes Parry Committee), Report of the Committee on New Zealand Universities, 1960, p. 31, cited in ibid., p. 30.
12 Ibid., p. 80.
If these students have turned 20 and are not seeking entry to a restricted programme (and that is likely to be the case for the majority of them), then the existence of the adult admission provision means that there is no need for their certificate programme to be assessed for entry purposes.

This is in clear contrast with the situation in Australia, for instance, where a great deal of effort goes into ensuring that previous study at sub-degree level is able to be appropriately taken into account in the admission and selection process.

As indicated in the legislation presented above, the selection criteria for programmes that have been designated as ‘restricted’ and the admission criteria for students aged under 20 are largely unregulated. These are left largely to individual tertiary education organisations to decide. The main collectively-agreed provision is the University Entrance standard, which applies to school-leavers (at least primarily – see Chapters 11 and 12). This is in contrast with the complex array of government guidelines (or requirements) and/or multi-laterally negotiated protocols that can be found in most other jurisdictions to manage admission relationships between tertiary qualifications.

Adult admission provision covers a large number of students seeking entry after previous study (and, in particular, of the students likely to be considered more disadvantaged than others). The continued acceptance of this provision, as a result of a positive experience with it over many years, is likely to be an important part of the explanation why New Zealand’s approach to other aspects of admission and selection is less regulated than in other countries. Moreover, the adult admission provision has become part of the fabric of New Zealand society.

Credit for previous learning within the formal education system

Having moved from one qualification and been admitted into another, a learner may in some circumstances feel that they should receive some credit for their previous learning within the formal education system. The process by which this occurs is known formally as ‘credit recognition and transfer’ (in practice both ‘credit recognition’ and ‘credit transfer’ are used).

Credit transfer is a process whereby credit already achieved is recognised towards a new qualification. This may occur on a case-by-case basis between providers/qualifications developers and individuals or as a structured agreement between two or more organisations or providers.15

The Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) includes in its Functions and Procedures a useful discussion on credit recognition and transfer. It says:

Credit transfer arrangements must recognise the distinctive differences among providers and the integrity of their programmes. The aim is to facilitate access, and promote new study opportunities, without compromising the quality or standards of qualifications. A consistent approach to the recognition of papers and qualifications does not mean rigid uniformity: codified minimum credit arrangements for all students who have passed a paper or completed a qualification may be supplemented by grants of additional credit/exemptions to high achievers.

Credit recognition and transfer is integrally bound up with the building-blocks of articulation that are provided by the Register, particularly assignment of qualification content to levels. After all, the transfer of credit can only occur when the credit levels of two qualifications overlap. By definition, one cannot gain credit towards a degree, with credits at levels 5–7 of the Register, on the basis of level 4 credits gained studying a certificate.

2.52 The credit gained as a result of previous study may also take a variety of different forms. The Canterbury Tertiary Alliance in its credit transfer framework identifies four types:

- **block or arranged credit** – guaranteed credit on commencement of a course of study on the basis of previous study, e.g. articulation to 300 level MusB after completing two years of the three year Diploma of Jazz at CPIT

- **specified credit** – process of transferring whole-course credits to a specified course within a different programme of study, e.g. course equivalence, credit for COSC 121

- **unspecified credit** – process of transferring whole-course credits for courses which are not part of the schedule of a qualification but which are judged to be relevant to the objectives of that qualification as a whole, e.g. equivalence within a subject area, credit for 6 points in Commerce at 100 level

- **no credit but exemption and right to advance (RTA)** – exemption from a block of study with right to advance to next level on basis of previous study, e.g. exemption from intermediate and first professional year of BE(Hons) on basis of completed National Diploma in Engineering.\(^{16}\)

2.53 The recognition of one another’s qualifications in this way is well-entrenched within the university subsector, dating back to the days when they were colleges of the University of New Zealand. And even credit recognition across sectors is not a new phenomenon: as early as 1974 the Working Party on Organisation and Administration, which, while encouraging further cross-sector cooperation on cross-crediting, could acknowledge that “significant progress had been made there”.\(^{17}\)

2.54 Within the modern tertiary education system, credit recognition has its basis in the introduction of a common framework for qualifications, which has evolved into the Register (see above in para 2.51).

2.55 A further impetus occurred in 2001 with the establishment of a Credit Transfer Working Party by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. This was one of the sector-wide initiatives the Qualifications Authority led as part of its overarching quality assurance role. The working party comprised nominees from across the education sector, including universities, polytechnics, wānanga, colleges of education and private training establishments. It also included representatives from the Industry Training Federation, students’ associations, the Ministry of Education and the Transition Tertiary Education Commission.

2.56 During 2001 and 2002 the Credit Transfer Working Party developed a credit recognition and transfer policy and implementation plan in consultation with the tertiary education sector. This was published in March 2003 as *Supporting Learning Pathways: Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy*.\(^{18}\) This work forms an important starting point for much of this report and is cited throughout as ‘the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy’.

2.57 The importance of credit recognition and transfer was also reflected in objective 7 of the *Tertiary Education Strategy 2002–07*, “a coherent and reliable system of qualifications, learning recognition and credit transfer”.

2.58 The Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy sets out a series of principles, objectives and intended outcomes, which the Review endorses; these are listed in Chapter 4. It is worth adding, however, that the policy also put timelines in place for implementation, with the following key milestones for January 2004:

- providers have credit recognition and transfer processes in place


\(^{17}\) Butterworth and Tarling, *A Shakeup Anyway*, p. 47.

\(^{18}\) Available at [www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications/credit.html](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications/credit.html).
• providers have appropriate appeal processes in place, and
• quality assurance bodies start checking processes.

2.59 In light of this, it is worth asking: to what extent do providers now have policies and appeal processes in accordance with this policy?

2.60 Therefore, in August 2005, in support of this Review, the Qualifications Authority and the TEC contracted an external computer consultancy (E-xpert) to manage an online survey on credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning. The survey was sent to all tertiary education organisations. The voluntary survey took place over a 9-day period from the end of August through to early September and 266 responses were received. The breakdown of responses was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutes of technology/ polytechnics</th>
<th>Industry training organisations</th>
<th>Private training establishments</th>
<th>Wānanga</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.61 Eighty percent of respondents stated they had a written credit transfer policy and formal procedures in place to manage applications, and 70 percent of these organisations reviewed these policies annually. Fifty-six percent reported having written criteria for decision-making of credit transfer. Fifty-four percent of organisations reported they had review procedures in place for credit transfer and 50 percent reported having an independent review process or panel for credit transfer decisions.

2.62 In terms of reducing barriers to access for applications, 66 percent said that they provided advocacy/support for learners, but only 33 percent included information in their academic calendar and 20 percent had information available on their website.

2.63 In addition to the individual efforts of tertiary education organisations, sector collaboration can be effective in advancing credit recognition and transfer. There are, increasingly, examples of tertiary education organisations working together to develop enhanced credit transfer arrangements. This generally happens within an existing collaborative arrangement, usually within a particular subsector or within a particular region.

2.64 One example of work on credit recognition that is well-documented and widely available is the Canterbury Tertiary Alliance, which was mentioned earlier in this chapter. The Alliance was formed in 2001 and comprises the University of Canterbury, Christchurch College of Education, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and Lincoln University. In 2004 its Credit Transfer Working Party published Credit Transfer Pathways – “Making Choices Happen”, which outlines a policy framework for credit recognition and transfer, a list of current arrangements and templates for Canterbury Tertiary Alliance articulation arrangements.19

2.65 Of course, we should not assume that the efforts of New Zealand’s tertiary education organisations and the government to support credit recognition and transfer are unique. There are a number of instances around the world where initiatives are being put in place to make credit recognition operate more smoothly and fairly.

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19 Canterbury Tertiary Alliance Credit Transfer Working Party, op. cit.
One jurisdiction where measures around credit transfer are particularly visible is the Canadian province of British Columbia. A specific body, the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) has been set up solely to facilitate admission, articulation and transfer arrangements among tertiary institutions. BCCAT was established in 1989 in the wake of a comprehensive ‘Access’ report that recommended several initiatives to improve student access to and success within the province’s post-secondary system. Specifically, the Council:

- encourages institutions to develop policies and practices regarding the transferability of post-secondary credit courses so that credit granted at one institution can be applied toward credentials at other institutions, and
- examines issues pertaining to capacity, demand and student mobility, and recommends policies and practices related to the admission process for direct entry and transfer students.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in a ‘Country Note’ on Canada says of the Council:

The British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer has created a series of articulation committees, in virtually all program areas, that establishes the criteria for transferring courses and credits among institutions. It provides a great deal of information to students about admissions policies in all British Columbia postsecondary institutions, and about the conditions for transfer as well, making the system as a whole more transparent.  

Perhaps the most ambitious undertaking in relation to credit and recognition and transfer, though, is the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). According to a report for the European Universities Association, this “once controversial tool” is “clearly emerging as the European credit system. In many countries it has become a legal requirement, while other countries with national credit systems are ensuring their compatibility with ECTS”. A diagram below shows the pattern of take-up by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

![Figure 2.1: Use of ECTS for credit transfer by HEIs, according to the HEIs](image-url)
Moreover, the use of ECTS is continuing to evolve: “While in many places the system is still applied in a very rudimentary or haphazard fashion to student exchange and credit transfer only, the European discussion is now focusing on its use also for credit accumulation”.

Credit for previous learning outside the formal education system

It is not only previous formal learning that can give rise to credit, however. There is also provision within the system for credit to be conferred on the basis of previous experiences outside the formal education system.

This is generally referred to in official documents as ‘recognition of prior learning’. There are, however, a lot of different terms in this area, which can often be rather off-putting – particularly to individual learners. It can also be confusing for researchers, particularly since recognition of prior learning (RPL) is known by different names in different countries. Recognition of prior learning is largely an Australasian term, though it is sometimes used in South Africa. In the United States and Canada it is called Prior Learning Assessment, or Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLA or PLAR). In the United Kingdom and Ireland it is Assessment of Prior Learning, or Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APL or APEL). ‘Assessment of prior learning’ is also a term that is Favoured by some practitioners in New Zealand, and was indeed deemed as the ‘official’ term by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority for some years during the 1990s.

As well as ‘prior learning’, there is also some use in New Zealand (and Australia) of the concept ‘current competency’ These two terms are often used interchangeably, and there is no official account of how they differ. However, ‘prior learning’ is more often used in relation to broader, more holistic understandings, whereas ‘current competencies’ more often relates to particular tasks that the learner knows how to accomplish, often in a vocational context. On the whole, one would expect to encounter the term ‘recognition of prior learning’ more often in a university context and ‘recognition of current competency’ more often in industry training.

Ibid., p. 67.
Recognition of prior learning is considered a tertiary education pathway for the purposes of this Strategic Review, but the sense in which this is the case is worth explaining. In many cases, recognition of prior learning may be the process that allows a student to progress from a cluster of learning that has occurred informally outside the education system (often called 'experiential learning'), to further learning that occurs within the formal system and which is intended to lead to a qualification. This formal learning may occur within an institution or other provider, or be formalised learning within the workplace through industry training.

However, it may also be a process that occurs instead of the learner undertaking formal study. In this case the recognition process serves to formalise what has already been learnt into a qualification. One might question whether such occurrences count as 'pathways and staircasing', but, arguably, this is a pathway that leads from informal learning to a formal qualification. In any case, it seems preferable to deal with recognition of prior learning altogether, rather than making distinctions between processes that might be identical but lead to different outcomes.

The following account of the characteristics of recognition of prior learning and its development in New Zealand and abroad draws heavily upon the work of the Auckland Institute of Technology team that undertook the Assessment of Prior Learning Research Project for NZQA in 1996–7.

The project team describes recognition of prior learning as:

. . . a process through which an individual seeks formal recognition for achievements of past learning and experience, whether these achievements be the result of formal experience or training, on-the-job training, work experience or life experience (Ker, 1993a).

RPL operates from the premise that it is not relevant how and where people do their learning, but rather what they have learned. The focus, therefore, is on learning outcomes, on what has been achieved, or on the competencies acquired; not on learning processes; nor on the learning experiences per se (Ker, ibid). Auckland Institute of Technology.

This is a broad definition of recognition of prior learning that also encompasses credit recognition and transfer within it. The project team notes, however, that there is some variance in the literature about whether or not this should be included. The approach taken in this report is to treat recognition of prior learning and credit recognition and transfer as distinct categories.

There are a variety of assessment methods that can be used for the recognition of prior learning. According to work undertaken in the 1990s for the New Zealand Council of Educational Research, the methods most in use in this country were portfolios, challenge assessment, a structured interview and attestation. Each is described below.

- The portfolio involves a variety of supporting information in a file and is probably the most popular method internationally. The applicant identifies the level of learning required to be demonstrated, and then provides evidence of equivalent learning. The applicant assembles the portfolio and prepares a case, with or without the aid of a

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23 The team comprised Maureen Reid, Margaret Horsburgh, Phil Ker and Mary Melrose. They produced *four Assessment of Prior Learning Research Project* progress reports to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in June 1996, November 1996, June 1997 and December 1997. The Auckland Institute of Technology became the Auckland University of Technology in 2000; and Phil Ker is now chief executive of Otago Polytechnic. Unless otherwise identified, all of the material used in this chapter is from the November 1996 progress report, Appendix Two: “Overview of the Literature on Recent and Current Recognition of Prior Learning Practice”, unpaginated.


facilitator. An assessor measures the prior learning and evaluates the credit value of the learning if it meets an acceptable standard, but only after the applicant has reflected and self-assessed their own learning. The process can be seen as a vital learning experience itself if the assessment methods are carefully chosen.

- **Challenge assessment** involves testing student knowledge and skills. A conventional or specially designed written or oral examination or practical test is set for the applicant who is assessed under the normal examination or test conditions for that subject or module. This is probably the most conventional way of approaching recognition of prior learning in that it aligns the recognition of prior learning assessment method closely with the assessment methods that teachers in the programme use.

- In a *structured interview or discussion* the applicant offers prepared or impromptu answers to questions or presents a verbal history of past learning to one, two or a panel of assessors. This method may be particularly suitable for candidates who have better oral skills than written ones. One variant is to involve the applicant’s whanau or support group in the discussion, although the applicants themselves are required to clearly describe their own learning. This method is sometimes used as an optional extra to one of the other methods.

- **Attestation** involves a knowledgeable, trustworthy and authoritative person or group with knowledge of the applicant’s competencies or past learning giving evidence in support of their claim. This evidence is usually written but can be oral. As with structured interviews, this method is often combined with another for evidence. Both methods have also been seen as appropriate ways of assessing Māori applicants for te reo or tikanga.

2.79 Internationally, recognition of prior learning has become a focus within education systems over the last three decades. In the United States it originated in the mid-1970s as a Princeton research project aimed at increasing colleges’ accessibility for adults. It gained increased importance when it was used as a means to give returning Vietnam veterans access to courses in a way that did not disadvantage them compared with their peers who had remained at home. Guidelines were established for the award of credit based on work in military services, government agencies and voluntary associations.

2.80 In the United Kingdom, recognition of prior learning began in the early 1980s funded by the Training Agency to improve access to higher education for adults. The move also appears to have been motivated by a desire to maintain national competitiveness and foster lifelong learning.

2.81 In Australia a Recognition of Prior Learning Assessment Model was developed in 1989 to link industry training and experience with college-based learning. A number of joint ventures arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s between industry and tertiary education providers. One of these joint ventures, involving the Broadmeadows College of TAFE and Ford Australia, developed a model of training for recognition of prior learning practitioners that was briefly to have an influence on New Zealand. In 1993 *Recognition of Prior Learning in Australian Universities* was published as an extension of an Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee project on credit transfer.
Meanwhile, in New Zealand, pockets of recognition of prior learning activity have existed since 1990. A number of the early adopters were institutes of technology and polytechnics including: Auckland Institute of Technology, Central Institute of Technology, Manawatu Polytechnic, Nelson Polytechnic, Southland Polytechnic, Taranaki Polytechnic, Wairarapa Community Polytechnic and Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic. Almost all of the colleges of education were also involved in recognition of prior learning projects during this period, as were Victoria University of Wellington, Massey University and the University of Waikato.

During this period, according to the Assessment of Prior Learning Research Project team, “the driving force behind the recognition of prior learning was the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, which was charged with the task of creating a more open and feasible qualifications framework”. The Authority was established by the Education Amendment Act 1990 with the responsibility to develop a qualifications framework where “there is a flexible system for the gaining of qualifications with recognition of competency already achieved” (Education Act 1989 section 253(1)(c)(ii)).

As early as 1991 the Authority was referring to recognition of prior learning as being “formally acknowledged” in its policy document booklets. In 1993 it approved a formal policy on the recognition of prior learning. It was framed very much in terms of the almost exclusive focus the Authority had at that time on the subset of qualifications covered by the National Qualifications Framework. Therefore, the policy was published as The Recognition of Prior Learning Quality Assessment for the National Qualifications Framework, and recognition of prior learning was defined as “a process for awarding credit for units in the National Qualifications Framework where the learning outcomes have been acquired outside the Framework”.

The policy stipulated that providers and national standards bodies “must provide evidence of commitment to RPL principles”. They were encouraged to appoint a manager to “coordinate and oversee the administration of the RPL process from start to finish including of staff training and development”. The policy also stated that “providers can have their accreditation extended to include RPL, when their applications demonstrate appropriate procedures”.

The Framework orientation of the NZQA policy excluded the university subsector. However, at Victoria University of Wellington, Jenny Harre-Hindmarsh had (with funding from NZQA) been researching university practices in relation to recognition of prior learning, and had developed a set of guidelines for universities. Harre-Hindmarsh advocated the use of unspecified credit (see para 2.51), rather than the formal award of credit, as an option for recognising higher level outcomes of learning such as debate, analysis and critical thinking.

The general impression is that this period was characterised by a flurry of activity in relation to recognition of prior learning. This included a number of research projects and the development of models of practice. Much of this was commissioned by NZQA, which had appointed Nancy Mills as RPL project officer, or undertaken by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. The Education and Training Support Agency (later Skill New Zealand and now part of the TEC) also funded a recognition of prior learning pilot in the Training Opportunities Programme.

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26 All of these institutions have since changed names or merged with other institutions. They are now, respectively: Auckland University of Technology; part of the Wellington Institute of Technology (WelTec); the Universal College of Learning (UCOL); Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology; Southern Institute of Technology; Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT); and part of UCOL.

27 As well as the Assessment of Prior Learning Research Project, this paragraph and the following also draw upon Dave Hornblow, Recognition of Prior Learning in New Zealand: What Has Been, What Is, and What Might Be, Open
Mills, who later went on to establish a private training establishment called RPL Services Ltd, coordinated a Recognition of Prior Learning conference for NZQA in 1993. The 150 participants at the conference unanimously supported a recommendation that NZQA seek an urgent meeting with the Ministers of Education, Labour and Employment “to set up a task force to investigate the resourcing and funding of the implementation of RPL”.28 No such taskforce eventuated, however.

NZQA provided recognition of prior learning training for different groups during this period including institutes of technology and polytechnics, private training establishments and Industry Training Organisations. Recognition of prior learning training was being offered by providers as well.

A series of ‘RPL Institutes’ were also held in 1995, run by RPL Services Ltd with involvement from NZQA. These involved seminars to disseminate some of the results of research into recognition of prior learning that had been carried out.

The climate had begun to change, however. In October 1994, the Authority formally revised its approach to recognition of prior learning. The board of the Authority approved a policy statement on ‘Assessment within the Qualifications Framework’, which decreed that recognition of prior learning was:

. . . absorbed into the Framework assessment model; all assessors are required to have the skills needed for collecting and judging evidence which demonstrates what people know and can do.

Essentially the Authority was putting forward the view that recognition of prior learning was best seen as an educational assessment process like any other. The Assessment of Prior Learning Research Project team notes, however, “It may be that this is an oversimplification of the recognition of prior learning process, given the difficulties with implementing prior learning assessment that have been reported”.29 They also point out that this approach had the effect of reducing any explicit resources for recognition of prior learning implementation.

But there were also wider changes occurring. Writing in 2000, the members of the project team talk about “a strategic realignment of the role of NZQA to being a policy monitoring agency only, thus bringing to an end NZQA’s active involvement in RPL”.30

One of the casualties was the Assessment of Prior Learning Research Project itself, which had been commissioned by NZQA as a three-year project but cut short after two years. This meant that the national guidelines for recognition of prior learning that the team was working on were never finalised. A draft version was produced, however, and since the publication they were included in is no longer easily available, these are reproduced in Appendix 3 of this report.

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28 Hornblow, op. cit., p. 6.


2.95 It is worth noting that a collaborative project where Auckland Institute of Technology used these guidelines to assist Bay of Plenty Polytechnic (BOPP) with recognition of prior learning processes also “revealed the high cost of establishing an RPL process in smaller organisations. For an institution like BOPP the costs are arguably prohibitive”. 31

Bay of Plenty Polytechnic had around 1,000 equivalent full-time students at the time.

2.96 Prior to this, in 1996, the project team had conducted a survey of recognition of prior learning activity. The respondents came from a variety of subsectors (though the survey was not administered to universities). Some of the results are presented below.32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th># of respondents</th>
<th>Conduct prior learning assessments</th>
<th>Support services for applicants</th>
<th>Assessors’ training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct prior learning assessments</td>
<td>Help re opportunities</td>
<td>Help re submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private training establishments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Training Organisations</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges of Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.97 Based on a follow-up survey in 1997, the team felt that growth in recognition of prior learning activity was modest but steady. They identified the following barriers to increased activity:

- lack of co-ordination within the provider organisation
- lack of good publicity for potential RPL applicants
- failure to link RPL policy to sound operating procedures
- lack of support for RPL applicants, and
- problems with unit standards, especially the problem of recognising performance holistically.33

2.98 Reflecting on the state of recognition of prior learning at that time towards the end of their work, the project team concluded that:

Progress is unlikely to be sustained in the absence of significant institutional resourcing which in itself is unlikely to be prioritised in the absence of national commitment and support. The original requirement of NZQA, that the assessment of prior learning be available is no longer perceived as binding, if indeed it ever was. If there is no compulsion nor any support at a national level, it is unrealistic to expect that the assessment of prior learning will continue at an organisational level. Even though organisations may have a philosophical commitment to the concept of recognition of prior learning, this will not be enough if they are put at a financial disadvantage when they offer the service.34

2.99 Dave Hornblow, who had worked with Mills at NZQA and RPL Services Ltd, offered a similar assessment. A person with prior learning that they want recognised, he says:

... can now find polytechnic institutions in New Zealand that will allow them to proceed through formalised RPL processes. That is an improvement on the early 1990s (when

34 December 1997 progress report, p. 22.
opportunities were few and formalisation was not always in place), but the institutions take some finding and the situation is far from ideal. Some candidates get RPL opportunities; most do not. The RPL movement itself is driven primarily by an enthusiasm that exists in scattered pockets.\textsuperscript{35}

2.100 Looking from an outsiders’ perspective, a recent report for the International Labour Office (ILO) on recognition of prior learning in five countries painted a somewhat rosier picture of the New Zealand situation:

New Zealand is arguably the most mature international example of RPL. This is located in a philosophy that accepts wide forms of learning and a qualifications system that is more oriented towards outcomes than most others. Within this structure and culture there is acceptance of variation at the industry, workplace and provider levels, and, as in most cases, the strength of RPL lies with the practitioners.

... If there is a key lesson from the New Zealand experience, it might be that the key issue for RPL is assessment. In essence, the New Zealand model does not separate RPL and assessment. Consequently, heavy demands are put upon assessments. They need to be rigorous to ensure standards, flexible to ensure access and relevance, cost effective, and accessible.\textsuperscript{36}

2.101 It has now been nearly ten years since there was any significant research or policy development at government level on recognition of prior learning. The state of recognition of prior learning practice has not stood still during that time.

2.102 One development described by Hornblow as “significant and heartening” has been the establishment of the Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning (CAPL) model. Beginning at Otago Polytechnic in 1999, the model has since been extended to other members of the Tertiary Accord of New Zealand (TANZ). There are now CAPL Centres at Otago, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, Christchurch Institute of Technology and Manukau Institute of Technology. Each centre involves a centralised office to coordinate assessment applications, and also operates a formalised procedure to assess candidates for employment based training. According to the manager of the Manukau centre:

The unique feature of the CAPL service is that it is designed to provide the service to a new target group, those who may not otherwise have chosen to participate in formal education.\textsuperscript{37}

2.103 Another development has been the increasing importance of Industry Training Organisations (ITOs). The team that had worked on the Assessment of Prior Learning Research Project identified this in 2000, predicting that ITOs “could be a significant force for implementation of RPL”.

2.104 Indeed, in 1997 they had undertaken a survey of workplace assessment and its relationship to prior learning assessment in 1997. The survey had 25 respondents including 6 ITOs, 17 workplaces, one polytechnic and one union. At that stage, 40 percent of respondents across 10 different industries indicated that experienced employees were assessed on their prior learning. The researcher commented:

Policies and processes regarding the assessment of prior learning in workplaces are being developed by some Industry Training Organisations. However, most prior learning assessment

\textsuperscript{35} Hornblow, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 13.


in industry is being implemented by on-site workplace assessors and moderated using established procedures.38

2.105 Since then, Industry Training has grown significantly overall, but ITOs also seem to have increased the focus on recognition of prior learning amongst their activities. Indeed, the Retail Industry Training Organisation was, until an internal review in 2004, an ‘assessment only’ ITO; it purchased no training at all. While this is a unique case, many other ITOs offer recognition of prior learning and/or assessment services as an important part of their business.

2.106 This increase in focus on RPL has undoubtedly been reinforced by the fact that, unlike providers, ITOs can and do claim funding for recognition of prior learning. Similarly, they can also be funded for providing assessment in relation to an enterprise’s own training processes, even if they are not involved in that training.

2.107 In other words, whereas recognition of prior learning is not counted in the calculation of Student Component funding,39 it is for the Industry Training Fund – and at the same rate as for training. That is because equivalent full-time students (EFTS – the unit of measure for the Student Component) are calculated on the basis of the course-load for which a student is enrolled. If a provider confers credit on a student on the basis of recognition of prior learning, then they must deduct this from the EFTS-value they claim for that student.

2.108 The Standard Training Measure (the unit of measure for the Industry Training Fund), on the other hand, is calculated on the basis of credit value. This credit achievement must occur in the context of a formal arrangement called a ‘training agreement’. However, in practice, this ‘training agreement’ can comprise credits conferred either on the basis of formal training or on the basis of recognition of prior learning or on a mixture of the two.

2.109 The balance between formal training and recognition of prior learning in a training agreement may also change in an organic fashion over the duration of the agreement. In most cases, the trainee’s current competencies will be assessed in some way at the commencement of the training agreement. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for additional competencies to become apparent (and therefore be recognised through additional credit) as training proceeds.

2.110 The Standard Training Measures data required by the TEC does not, however, distinguish between credits that involve formal training and those that reflect recognition of prior learning; nor does the credit data reported to NZQA. Even in terms of ITOs’ self-determined reporting activity, such as Annual Reports, the Review did not find any instances where data on the incidence of recognition of prior learning was provided.

2.111 As a result, while it is apparent to the Review that recognition of prior learning by ITOs is a significant component of their activity, it is difficult to state with confidence how important, because the data is not collected.


39 Soon to become Student Achievement Component funding as a result of recently-announced funding changes.
As with credit recognition transfer, some information has been collected on current recognition of prior learning practices in the tertiary education sector through the survey commissioned by NZQA and the TEC in 2005. Eighty-three percent of respondents had a policy for recognition of prior learning and formal procedures in place for managing this, and 71 percent of organisations reviewed these policies annually. Seventy percent reported having written criteria for decision-making for recognition of prior learning policy. Sixty-four percent reported they had review procedures in place and an independent review process or panel for recognition of prior learning policy decisions.

In terms of reducing barriers to access for applications, 69 percent said that they provided advocacy/support for learners and 43 percent included information in their academic calendar, but only 25 percent had information available on their website.

**Integrated qualifications**

It is worth noting at this point an additional form of qualification linkage that is not covered in this report: the integrated cross-sector qualification. An Australian report produced as part of the process of developing national guidelines on cross-sector linkages, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, described integrated cross-sector qualifications as:

... involving the development of a jointly designed and delivered qualification with a dual-sector outcome. Whereas articulated dual-sector awards involve a sequential learning pathway from VET to HE, combined awards are undertaken as concurrent studies in both sectors.40

The focus of this report is on the former (sequential learning pathways), rather than the latter (concurrent studies). Nonetheless, integrated cross-sector qualifications have long been in place in New Zealand and it is likely that in practice their development will accompany and reinforce co-operation between tertiary education organisations to support ‘pathways and staircasing’.

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Chapter 3. Information on student movements

3.1 This chapter brings together some statistics collected by the Ministry of Education about student movement between programmes of study to illustrate some of the complexities around student pathways in practice.

3.2 As noted in the previous chapter, the decisions students actually make about further study often do not conform to anybody’s preconception about how the system ‘works’. We need to acknowledge that the reality of lifelong learning is a messy business that does not fit tidily into policy models, or official statistics. Much of the progression that occurs within the tertiary education system is actually accidental. Students rarely commence tertiary study with a plan to study qualification A, then move on to qualification B, take two years off while they establish themselves in a career and then study part-time for qualification C.

3.3 An exception to this is the route from bachelors to masters (and in some cases on to PhD), which as a recognised career path in which the only way a student can gain access to the latter qualification(s) is via the former.

3.4 In other cases where students move directly from one qualification to another (often without finishing the first one), it is often because they have come to the conclusion that they had made the wrong choice the first time. Perhaps the earlier qualification did not have as many job opportunities as they initially thought. Or, more positively, perhaps once they began studying they realised they could actually handle a more advanced course than they had initially been confident to undertake.

3.5 More deliberate progression often occurs over longer periods, as people reach points in their career where they feel they need to complement their work experiences with more advanced qualifications in order to progress. This sort of progression is much less visible to policy-makers. We have statistics on progression to further study but they tend to focus on direction progression – ie. further study the year after completing a previous qualification – or else progression over a period of three or perhaps five years. Progression after 10 years tends not to be picked up in these measurements.

3.6 We therefore have an interesting situation where the visible progression that we can measure is not just an incomplete picture. It may actually in many cases be dysfunctional progression – in the sense that it reflects mistaken decisions. Of course, part of the function of a good system of ‘pathways and staircasing’ is to reduce the costs of such mistakes for the learner (and the taxpayer) by salvaging as much credit as can be justified from the earlier qualification.

3.7 Nonetheless, we should also draw some caution from this in always assuming that an increase in progression rates is a good thing and a decline is a bad thing. The fluctuations may, at least partly, reflect changes in the quality of people’s initial study choices.

3.8 This chapter presents data from two related sources. The first is the rate of progression onto further study for students completing qualifications. This data is reported on regularly by the Ministry of Education’s Tertiary Sector Performance Analysis and Reporting (TSPAR) unit as part of its annual Profile and Trends publication. It was also a key focus of that unit’s 2004 report Retention, Completion and Progression in Tertiary Education.41 This report also contains detailed information about the methodology of this dataset.

The progression information in this chapter is based on a dataset provided for this project by TSPAR, additional to what has previously been reported on publicly. It breaks down the progression information by various demographic characteristics, as described below. The data shows progression in the first three years after completion of study – for students completing study in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001. This is the longest time series available for three-year progression: data for 2005 (ie. three years after 2002) was not available at the time of writing and data is not available for years earlier than 1998. Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind that, as noted above, a great deal of student progression occurs over periods of longer than three years, so this can only be seen as a partial picture. (The full dataset is available on the TEC website www.tec.govt.nz for those who are interested.)

The aim in presenting this data is to highlight difference in the progression rates of different groups of students. The focus therefore is on progression to study at a higher level (staircasing), as that is the kind of progression most universally regarded as a positive phenomenon. Progression to further study at the same (or lower) level is just as common, but this is sometimes viewed with caution by policy-makers.

There are some important complexities of student ‘pathways and staircasing’ that this data does not cover, however. It does not show what kind of further study is being undertaken. Also, it only shows the further study of people who actually complete their previous qualification, whereas in fact a great deal of the progression in tertiary education is on the part of those who did not complete their previous qualification.

For this reason, the second part of this chapter compiles data from a related dataset on student pathways. This data was the basis of the 2004 TSPAR report Pathways in Tertiary Education 1998–2002. It has been used to present some illustrative depiction of the diversity of student movements from particular qualification levels.

### Progression to further study for different groups

**Overall rates of progression**

*Figure 3.1: Where did students completing in 2001 go over the next three years?*

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3.13 Figure 3.1 shows that, of the 77,000 students completing a qualification in 2001, slightly less than half of them went on to some form of further study over the next three years (2002–04). Of these, around half (18,588) studied at a higher level and half (18,071) at the same (or lower) level.

Figure 3.2: Destination of completing students 1998–2001 by number

3.14 Figure 3.2 shows that, when compared with the previous four years, it is clear there has been a significant increase in the number of students going on to further study. The number of students studying at a higher level has risen from 13,260 for those who completed in 1998 to 18,588 for 2001. The number of students studying at the same (or lower) level has increased even more rapidly.

Figure 3.3: Destination of completing students 1998–2001, by proportion
3.15  However, when we look in proportional terms we can see in Figure 3.3 that the increase in the number of students studying at the same or lower level largely reflects an increase in the overall number of completions. There has been a modest decrease in the proportion of completing students who do no further study, mainly because more people are going on to study another qualification at the same level as their previous one.

Students in different parts of the sector

3.16  One of the main differences in progression rates is based upon the level of the qualification just completed, as shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Proportion of students going on to further study at a higher level, by qualification completed

3.17  This is unsurprising, as one would expect qualifications at a lower level of the register, with more opportunities for study at a higher level, to have higher rates of progression to higher-levels that those at the upper end. Reassuringly, that appears to be the case, with certificates having clearly the highest rates of upwards progression and masters the lowest. In most cases the upwards progression rate for each qualification level seems quite stable over time, but there appears to be a marked decline in progression rates for diplomas.

Figure 3.5: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001, by subsector
As shown in Figure 3.5, there are less marked differences between subsectors. The three more established subsectors (universities, polytechnics and institutes of technology, and colleges of education) have similar upwards progression rates overall.

Figure 3.5 also shows that private training establishments and the small Other Tertiary Education Providers (OTEPs) subsector have somewhat lower upwards progression rates (data on these subsectors is only available from 2000), while the wananga subsector has significantly higher upwards progression rates.43

Figure 3.6: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001 – main funding sources for domestic students

We also have some ability to look at different parts of the integrated funding framework. The information on industry training shown in Figure 3.6 should be treated with caution, however. These figures only cover trainees who undertook off-the-job training at a provider, so they may not be reflective of trainees overall.

Insofar as they do indicate anything, the progression rates for industry trainees in more recent years seem to be similar to that of students at Student Component-funded providers. If this is so, it reflects positively on how well integrated the system is across quite different educational settings and funding mechanisms.

Unfortunately, the progression rates of students in the targeted funds (Training Opportunities, Youth Training and Skill Enhancement) shown in Figure 3.6 do not seem nearly as positive.

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43 It is important to note that the data only covers completions up to 2001, so it does not cover the period of massive growth of Te Wananga o Aotearoa. Data showing the impact of this growth on three-year progression rates is not yet available.
Figure 3.7: Progression to further study at a higher level for students completing in 2001, by field of study and reflecting relative size of cohorts involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, hospitality and personal services</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed field programmes</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and related technologies</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural, environmental and related studies</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and commerce</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and physical sciences</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society and culture</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative arts</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and physical sciences</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society and culture</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.23 As shown in Figure 3.7, there are some interesting differences in progression rates between different fields of study (although only 2001 data is available). Science, creative arts, information technology and society and culture (which includes many foundation certificates) form a high-progression cluster, whereas fields like education and, particularly, architecture/building, have lower rates.

Male students and female students

Figure 3.8: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing in 1998–2001, by gender

3.24 Figure 3.8 shows that male students have a consistently lower rate of upwards progression than females, though only by a few percentage points. Given the much higher participation and completion rates of women, one might if anything have thought the progression gap might also be wider.
Ethnicity

Figure 3.9: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001, by ethnicity

Māori students

3.25 Figure 3.9 shows that Māori students have consistently higher progression rates than any other major ethnic group. Further disaggregation of this data shows that this trend is not explained by any of the particularities of Māori students’ participation profile, eg. that they are over-represented in wānanga and certificate courses. Rather, Māori have a higher progression rate at all qualification levels, all subsectors, for both men and women and in almost every subject area.

3.26 The one note of caution is that Māori have a lower completion rate than non-Māori so there is some possibility that there is an element of ‘selection bias’ at work here, ie. because it is a smaller subset of Māori who complete a qualification they are more similar to the most motivated non-Māori students and therefore have a higher likelihood of progression.

Pacific students

3.27 Pacific students have over time a similar upwards progression rate to Europeans (as shown in Figure 3.9). The rate is sometimes a little higher and sometimes slightly lower. (However, this is in the context of a much lower overall progression rate than Europeans).

Asian students

3.28 Progression by domestic Asian students (as shown in Figure 3.9) is slightly higher than for most other groups, but still noticeably lower than that of Māori.
Mature students

Figure 3.10: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001, by age

3.29 As shown in Figure 3.10, mature students are at 4–5 percentage points less likely to progress upwards than the ‘core tertiary age-range’ (18–24), with those aged 40+ slightly less likely again to progress.

Figure 3.11: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001, by prior activity

3.30 To some extent the findings on mature students are reflected also in the findings on prior activity. Students coming directly from school are more likely to carry on to a higher qualification, as are those coming from other tertiary study.

3.31 Those who had previously been out of the workforce (including beneficiaries and full-time caregivers) are less likely to progress, but those who had previously been in employment were less likely again.
Students with disabilities

Figure 3.12: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001, by funding source

![Graph showing progression to higher study by funding source]

3.32 Interestingly, as shown in Figure 3.12, students with a disability are more likely to progress than those without a disability. This may reflect that students with a disability may not have as many labour market options.

Students leaving school without qualifications

Figure 3.13: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001, by highest school qualification

![Graph showing progression to higher study by highest school qualification]

Figure 3.13 shows that students who enrol in and complete a tertiary qualification having left secondary school without qualifications, are less likely to go on to higher levels of study than those with secondary qualifications, although the gap does seem to close in 2001.
Extramural students and part-time students

3.34 One might expect that students who study on-campus and full-time have fewer competing priorities than extramural and/or part-time students, and are therefore more likely to go on to higher-level study.

Figure 3.14: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001, by mode of study

In fact, as Figure 3.14 shows, the progression rates for extramural students are not much less than for those studying intramurally.

Figure 3.15: Three-year progression to further study at a higher level for students completing 1998–2001, by study load

On the other hand, Figure 3.16 shows that there does appear to be a clear association between study load and upwards progression, with those with the smallest loads having only half the likelihood of upwards progression as that of full-time students.
Pathways between different qualification levels

3.37 However, as noted above, these figures tell only part of the story. Where do these students progress to? And what about students that do not complete? Figure 3.16 presents a different way of looking at student pathways, in this case focusing on the single largest source of progression in the system – the institute of technology/polytechnic certificate qualification.

3.38 We can see from the bottom part of Figure 3.16 that nearly 27,000 students started an institute of technology/polytechnic certificate in 2000. By the end of 2002, most of them were no longer in study. A total of 15,516 (58%) had left without completing and not done any further study, while another 3,791 (14%) had finished their certificate but not done anything else. Another group of 1,742 students (6%) were still studying their certificate course.

3.39 That left about one in five of these students (5,822 or 22%) who had embarked on further study by the end of 2002.

3.40 The first key point to note about that group is that this included nearly as many students (2,611, or 45%) who had not completed their initial certificate as those who had (3,211, or 55%).

3.41 The second point to note is the diversity of different destinations. These are laid out in the diagram by subsector and qualification level, with the destinations of non-completing students on the left and those of completing students on the right.

3.42 Some of these results reflect relatively conservative choices. The most common destination was another institute of technology/polytechnic qualification, most likely a certificate. In fact, 85 percent of progression by completing students was within the same subsector, and 60 percent of it was the same subsector and at the same level. The other major destinations were a university degree (158 students) or a private training establishment certificate (135 students).

3.43 Interestingly, students who left their initial certificate without completing it were more likely to wander further afield. Only 54 percent of this group chose another institute of technology/polytechnic programme, and of those that did they were more likely to try a diploma than another certificate. More non-completers than completers could be found in a certificate at a private training establishment (405 students) or wānanga (244 students), or a university degree (231 students).

3.44 Figure 3.17 presents a similar diagram for a university degree. The findings are less revealing in this case, as, after two years most students were still doing their degree. Nonetheless, the number of other destinations that can be found even in this short time reinforces the general point that tertiary students follow an unpredictable array of pathways.

3.45 These diagrams also emphasise the importance of student movements that occur within the same subsector. This point has also been stressed recently in the Australian context where it was noted that:

In both major post-secondary sectors [ie. universities and TAFE colleges], intra-sectoral traffic, involving retraining or re-credentialing in the same sector, exceeds inter-sectoral traffic.

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44 Of course this reflects the fact that the non-completing population is a much larger one. The propensity to commence a second qualification was substantially higher for those who completed (46% compared with 14%).
by a factor of approximately five. The largest movement and potential efficiencies are therefore likely to lie within rather than between sectors.45

3.46 It is important that, in focusing on strengthening linkages between subsectors, we do not overlook the need for ease of movement between organisations within the same subsector.

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45 Golding and Vallence, *The university – VET transition*, p. 32.
Figure 3.16: Destinations during 2001 and 2002 of students commencing an institute of technology or polytechnic certificate in 2000

Number of Commencing Students: 26,871
Figure 3.17: Destinations during 2001 and 2002 of students commencing a university degree in 2000

- **Private & Other Providers**
- **Wananga**
- **College of Education**
- **University**
- **Polytechnic**

**Number of Commencing Students:** 14,259

- **Still Studying:** 7,575
- **Do Not Complete Qualification:**
  - University: 2,724
  - Polytechnic: 2,520
Part Three: AN AGENDA FOR FURTHER PROGRESS
Chapter 4. A set of propositions

4.1 In the previous part of this report, we saw how the various aspects of ‘pathways and staircasing’ operate in New Zealand today, both in terms of the systems that are in place and the behaviour of students.

4.2 There are many good aspects to the current system in New Zealand and there are no obvious signs that it is causing any particular group of students to be systematically disadvantaged. Around half of the students who complete a qualification go on to do some form of study and there are also significant and diverse flows of students from unfinished qualifications who go on to do some form of study.

4.3 Nonetheless, there are frequent occasions where the system does not work for individual students (a point we return to in Chapter 7). Having talked to a number of people in the sector (both tertiary education organisations and students) and carefully considered the various arrangements in place, the Review has reached the conclusion that there is more that could valuably be done. It is time to become more ambitious about having strong ‘pathways and staircasing’ arrangements in places throughout the system.

4.4 First, we need to make sure that the aims that the sector and the government agreed upon in the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy are being realised.

4.5 And, secondly, we have put forward a set of propositions for further strengthening the other aspects of the system: articulation, admission and selection, and recognition of prior learning. These are the ‘next steps’ in the area of ‘pathways and staircasing’ to complement the Next Steps of the overall tertiary education reforms, which the sector is now embarking upon. In particular, our aims with this report are:

- to put in place as a standard expectation that, alongside processes for appropriate credit recognition and transfer, there will also be well-defined articulation and admission/selection arrangements between qualifications, and
- to set the scene for a wide-ranging dialogue about what can and should be achieved in the area of recognition of prior learning, and how to go about doing so.

4.6 This chapter reiterates the aims of the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy and then outlines eight propositions that extend the agenda for ‘pathway and staircasing’. This then forms the basis for the discussion and recommendations in Part four of the report.

Approach to credit recognition and transfer issues

4.7 Set out following are the principles, objectives and intended outcomes of the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy. It is worth prefacing this discussion by saying that the Review sees credit recognition and transfer as essentially a student rights issue. The assumption should not be made that this policy is primarily about access. The main reason to ensure that students receive appropriate recognition for their previous study is because they are entitled to expect this.

4.8 Good credit recognition and transfer systems are likely to have some positive effects in terms of helping disadvantaged students to get a surer footing as they move through the system. But the vast majority of students who benefit will not be disadvantaged students at all. In fact, in many cases they are not even progressing from one qualification to another but rather seeking to continue their current course of study (or the nearest equivalent) at a different provider. This ‘change of address’ credit recognition and transfer is at least as common as ‘progression’ credit recognition and transfer, particularly amongst university students.
4.9 It is also appropriate to set out an important caveat. This issue should not be regarded as one where the desirable end-point is always to achieve the greatest amount of credit transfer. There has to be a balance between the aims of credit recognition and transfer and other academic considerations.

4.10 That is why the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy was careful to talk about ‘appropriate’ recognition of credit. There will often be some previous study that a student would like credit for, but instances where it would not be academically valid for the provider to grant that. The point is put well in the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP’s) Functions and Procedures 2005–06:

Credit transfer arrangements must recognise the distinctive differences among providers and the integrity of their programmes. The aim is to facilitate access, and promote new study opportunities, without compromising the quality or standards of qualifications. (p. 39)

4.11 In the end these are academic decisions and they need to be made by academics. Sympathetic administrative staff will be a necessary ingredient for good credit recognition and transfer processes at provider level, but they are not a sufficient ingredient. It is only by gaining the buy-in of academic staff that we can be assured of good results in this area.

The aims of the credit recognition and transfer policy

Principles

- Qualification, course and programme development and design should promote and facilitate credit recognition and transfer.
- The key focus of credit transfer decisions should be on the benefit for learners and supporting effective learning pathways.
- Transparency in credit recognition and transfer decision-making across the education system is a critical factor in supporting and encouraging the ongoing involvement of learners in education and training.
- Credit transfer and recognition should be able to operate across different cultures and national borders, and robust policies and procedures need to be in place to support this.
- Credit awarded as a result of either recognition of prior learning or recognition of current competency is of equal standing to credit awarded through other forms of assessment and should be able to be carried with the learner once awarded.

Objectives

- Credit transfer decisions should be fair and recognise learning in an appropriate way.
- Credit transfer decisions should be defensible, consistent and open to scrutiny.
- Credit transfer decisions should be timely so that a learner’s ability to access programmes is not unnecessarily inhibited.
- Credit transfer processes should facilitate access and promote new learning opportunities without compromising the quality or standards of qualifications.
- Clear and coherent information should be readily available on the types of pathways that a learner may expect to progress following the awarding of certain types of qualifications (ie. through the Register, credit transfer and formal articulation arrangements).
- Learners, providers and assessors should have a clear understanding of what may be expected in relation to the application for credit transfer.
• Learners must have recourse to review and appeal of credit transfer processes and decisions.

**Outcomes**

• Credit will be granted for recorded success, whether or not it forms part or all of a complete qualification.
• Credit will be granted at the highest level consistent with the learner’s demonstrated level of competence.
• Credit transfer arrangements will recognise the distinctive characteristics of qualifications.
• Where credit is not granted, providers will provide clear reasons for the decision.
• Each institution will have procedures in place to enable learners to seek a review of initial decisions on credit transfer matters.
• Information about credit transfer arrangements will be readily available to all learners.
• Recorded success refers to the record maintained by an accredited organisation relating to the result of the assessment that has occurred.

**Propositions of the Review**

1. That the policy of open admission for all persons aged 20 years or older, as provided for in section 224(3)(a) of the Education Act 1989, be endorsed and upheld as a key foundation-stone of ‘pathways and staircasing’ in New Zealand.

4.12 This policy, which was described in Chapter 2, has been a defining characteristic of New Zealand’s approach to lifelong learning. It is an important counter-balance to our relatively unregulated approach to articulation, and should be retained. Related issues around lifelong learning are discussed in Chapter 5.

2. That, for every qualification, students and prospective students should have access to meaningful information about the subsequent programmes of study, if any, for which this qualification will assist them to meet the admission or selection criteria.

4.13 This proposition is fundamental to an approach to ‘pathways and staircasing’ that goes beyond having good processes for dealing with applications for credit recognition or recognition of prior learning. The way that the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications can advance this proposition is addressed in Chapter 6.

3. That the design of all new or revised qualifications ought to take into consideration how best to link with other quality-assured qualifications in the same subject area, throughout the sector, so as to facilitate student movement between qualifications.

4.14 This proposition forms a crucial complement to the previous one. This is, first, because it embeds articulation in the design stage, rather than as something to be worked out after the fact; and, secondly, because it creates an obligation to work on articulation downwards on the Register as well as upwards. This proposition, along with measures to reinforce the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy, is the focus of the Chapter 7.

4. That the Student Support system ought not to create incentives for students to enrol unnecessarily in courses for which they could receive credit on the basis of previous study or prior informal learning.
4.15 ‘Pathways and staircasing’ is not the primary focus of the student support system. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that the student support rules around ‘pathways’ issues do not produce counter-productive outcomes, as explained in Chapter 8.

5. That the Tertiary Education Commission should consistently include the need to foster and maintain good pathways and staircasing in tertiary education, alongside other considerations, when developing and implementing strategic resourcing, monitoring and capability development processes.

4.16 The contribution that the Tertiary Education Commission can make to ‘pathways and staircasing’ is less a matter of developing new stand-alone initiatives and more a matter of ensuring that ‘pathways and staircasing’ is consistently taken into account when carrying out its functions. The application of this to the Next Steps changes is a key purpose of Chapter 9.

6. That the government and the tertiary education sector need to come to a consensus about whether the approach taken to recognition of prior learning should be an ‘extensive’ one or an ‘intensive’ one, and that the regulatory environment will need to reflect the approach taken.

4.17 Chapter 2 describes how there was a major wave of policy activity on recognition of prior learning in the 1990s, which has since ebbed away. Chapter 10 argues that, before we can make further progress, there needs to be a collective decision about whether recognition of prior learning ought to be an expectation amongst all tertiary education organisations (an ‘extensive’ approach), or whether it is better to focus on building centres of expertise (an ‘intensive’ approach).

7. That, further to the principles and objectives set out in the 2002 Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy, students holding a National Qualification and wishing to undertake a local qualification in the same subject area have a legitimate expectation that the amount of credit they can expect towards the latter based on the former has been arranged in advance and does not require an individual assessment.

4.18 Good processes for addressing individual applications for credit transfer are important, but ease of movement will be enhanced if tertiary education organisations can build up pre-arranged credit transfer with one another. A priority in this area ought to be to pre-arrange the recognition of national qualifications – they should be regarded as central elements in the qualification system. This is one of the topics covered in Chapter 11.

8. That the principles, propositions and policies relating to ‘pathways and staircasing’ apply to the relationships between all quality-assured qualifications in New Zealand, including at every level of the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications, in every sub-sector and in every cultural context.

4.19 Finally, it is worth emphasising the scope of coverage of the Review’s approach to ‘pathways and staircasing’ – it encompasses movements between every part of the quality-assured tertiary education sector. This includes qualifications conceived within a particular cultural context, which is another topic covered in Chapter 11, particularly as it relates to Māori qualifications.
Part Four: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Chapter 5. Fostering a climate of lifelong learning

5.1 We have seen that learners are not simply passive in relation to ‘pathways and staircasing’. They make their own decisions about whether or not to pursue further study and at what level, sometimes for quite complex reasons. These may include family commitments, work opportunities, lack of confidence, a desire to travel overseas or simply that the person has had enough of being a student for the time being.

5.2 Nonetheless, there is an evolving trend of people entering and continuing through education. It is becoming the norm to continue to learn throughout one’s life. This is due to the changing attitudes of society as well as the demands of the labour market.

5.3 This has been a central theme in New Zealand tertiary education discourse since at least 1988 when tertiary minister Phil Goff stated in the preface to *Learning for Life: Education and Training beyond the Age of Fifteen* that education was now “a truly life-long process”, given the rapidity of change in the modern world. The importance of lifelong learning was re-affirmed throughout the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission’s set of *Shaping* reports, and more recently taken up in the *Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-07* (p. 36: “The demands of our contemporary world require learning to be lifelong”).

5.4 Nor are these trends or sentiments unique to New Zealand. The Dearing Committee, a committee of inquiry on the future of higher education in the United Kingdom, entitled its 1997 report *Higher Education in the Learning Society*, saying:

The expansion of higher education in the last ten years has contributed greatly to the creation of a learning society, that is, a society in which people in all walks of life recognise the need to continue in education and training throughout their working lives and who see learning as enhancing the quality of life throughout all its stages. But, looking twenty years ahead, the UK must progress further and faster in the creation of such a society to sustain a competitive economy.

5.5 And the previous year, 1996, OECD education ministers had adopted “lifelong learning for all” as a guiding framework for the OECD’s education policy.

5.6 The Review considers that a vision for New Zealand as a country where learning is lifelong is central to the rationale for ‘pathways and staircasing’. Our proposition in this regard is:

That the policy of open admission for all persons aged 20 years or older, as provided for in section 224(3)(a) of the *Education Act 1989*, be endorsed and upheld as a key foundation-stone of ‘pathways and staircasing’ in New Zealand.

5.7 This chapter also considers what can be done to promote a climate that embraces the concept of ‘lifelong learning’ and in which students think carefully about progression options when making study choices.

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Encouraging a ‘lifelong learning’ perspective amongst learners

5.8 It can be argued, given the importance of lifelong learning as an objective for tertiary education, that we should promote progression as a worthwhile activity. But, how might we go about this?

5.9 One possibility is to try to influence public opinions and attitudes in relation to learning. This is often described as ‘social marketing’. The instance of public-sector social marketing that has the most relevance for our purpose is the Ministry of Education’s Te Mana campaign, which was launched in June 2001 as part of the ‘Whakaro Mātauranga/Think Learning’ project. It is aimed at raising expectations of Māori achievement amongst Māori, the community, and education providers, and uses television, mainstream and iwi radio, and Māori media to communicate its message that “you can get where you want to be through learning”.

5.10 However, there is some question about whether the time is right for a concerted promotional campaign of that kind in the area of lifelong learning. If we are successful in encouraging a greater demand for progression on the part of learners, is the system ready to meet that demand? A major promotional campaign might be premature at this juncture.

5.11 There is also a question of priorities. A promotional campaign can be quite expensive and also require the investment of a lot of time and energy. This is particularly so with a multi-pronged approach like that of Te Mana. It can be argued that the agencies concerned with ‘pathways and staircasing’ might be better to focus their resources in the short-to-medium term on building the sector’s capability in this area. That is the approach taken with the recommendations in this report.

5.12 This does not mean that the timing will not ever be right for a major promotional exercise in lifelong learning. It is more a matter of sequencing. In the meantime, there are still some less ambitious measures that could be undertaken. An approach of incidental social marketing could be pursued. This would involve developing some key messages and themes that could be used by education agencies when communicating with learners and prospective learners for other purposes.

5.13 These messages and themes could be based around the overall frame, outlined above, of learning as a ‘lifelong endeavour’.

5.14 It should be recognised, however, that the three agencies undertaking this review – the Tertiary Education Commission, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Ministry of Education – do not have regular contact with most learners as part of their regular business. Their main communications tend to be with tertiary education organisations.

5.15 The agency that has the greatest ‘penetration’ into this target audience is Career Services. Studylink, which is the service of the Ministry of Social Development that administers student support, also has a great deal of contact with students but much of this occurs once a decision to enrol has already been taken.48

5.16 Career Services, on the other hand, has an explicit role in assisting prospective learners to thinking about career paths and what study might be required as a consequence. Much of its services are in the form of information provision, advisory services and decision-making tools (see inset box following).

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48 This should not be overstated, however. As noted in para 5.34, Studylink does engage with learners at the stage when they are still contemplating study. Its audience here is primarily senior school students for whom the ‘lifelong endeavour’ message is less immediately relevant, but still important.
Career Services – main products and services

- CareerPoint Contact Centre
- KiwiCareers and associated electronically based products
- Provision of career information, advice and planning
- Local up-to-date labour market information
- Skill and knowledge enhancement workshops
- Induction training for new careers advisors;
- Industry information dissemination – via electronic, web page and paper based media
- Schools consultation visits, and
- Community Outreach visits.

Moreover, Career Services needs to periodically advertise these products to the general population, using the mass media (television, newspapers, radio). This periodic advertising would seem to be a perfect opportunity to incorporate some messages around ‘learning as a lifelong endeavour’. Indeed, this message would be very consistent with Career Services’ existing messages.

A key example is the recent Take Off to Tertiary series of television commercials promoting tertiary study. The campaign’s key messages were the importance and value of informed tertiary decisions and the benefit of calling Career Services’ 0800 number. It should be noted, however, that Career Services received one-off funding for this particular initiative. It does not have funding within its normal baselines for advertising on this scale.

The lifelong learning message can also be emphasised in the variety of publications and brochures that Career Services produces. These materials already reference older learners, but it might be useful to discuss more explicitly learning as an ongoing process, with periodic study throughout life.

**Recommendation 1**

**Recommendation:**
That the marketing of careers information and guidance services to learners takes the opportunity to frame learning as a lifelong endeavour.

**Responsible agency:**
Career Services

**Process for consideration:**
As part of its ongoing work programme

It is also worth noting that, while the tertiary decision-making material that Career Services produces (which is discussed further below) is aimed at all ages, Career Services also produces a number of publications and guides aimed at senior school students and school leavers, but no publications and guides aimed specifically at older people considering returning to study. This may be worth looking into, as part of Career Services’ range of products.

**Recommendation 2**

**Recommendation:**
That some careers information and guidance material be produced that is specifically aimed at people aged 25 and older who are considering returning to study.

**Responsible agencies:**
Career Services

**Process for consideration:**
As part of the ongoing development of its range of publications and guides
Assisting learner decision-making

5.21 There is another important way in which agencies might influence learner attitudes and behaviour in order to increase the rates of progression. This is by prompting them, when making decisions about whether to undertake a particular course of study, to think about the progression opportunities offered by that course of study.

5.22 The rationale here is that learners should keep their options open for continuing their studies at a higher level in future. Therefore, they ought to consider whether or not the qualification they are currently contemplating is accepted as appropriate preparation by the provider(s) offering the subsequent more advanced qualification available on the same topic. In other words, if a student is thinking about taking a Certificate in Engineering course, how is that certificate regarded by those offering a Bachelor of Engineering? Or, if a student is thinking about a Bachelor of Design, does that degree meet the entrance standard for Masters of Design courses?

5.23 The idea is to encourage learners to think one step ahead of what they are trying to achieve today, in order to ensure that the qualification they are planning to take will also meet their future needs.

5.24 This can be seen as part of the general aim of encouraging and assisting learners to make careful decisions about their study, in keeping with Objective 21 of the 2002–07 Tertiary Education Strategy, that “Learners are equipped to make informed choices about career and learning options”. Of course, the corollary of this is that learners also have to be able to readily access authoritative information that can answer these questions for them. We will return to this issue in the following chapter.

5.25 At the moment, however, our concern is how we can encourage learners to ask that question in the first place. Once again, it is the agencies that have the greatest contact with students who are best placed to undertake this role, ie. Studylink and, particularly, Career Services.

5.26 Equipping learners to make informed choices is an important component of Career Services’ core mission. One of the strategies in its Strategic Plan is “To lift all New Zealanders’ understanding of the value of informed career decision-making in improving their lives, socially and economically”. To do this, Career Services employs a range of products and services. The four most important are shown in the table below. The table distinguishes between automated decision-making tools and services in which the information-seeker interacts with Career Services’ staff members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making tools</th>
<th>Interactive services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Services’ website (KiwiCareers):</strong> website with comprehensive career information aimed to assist with career choices. It contains over 650 general job outlines, each of which includes necessary skills, entry requirements, a salary range and profiles of New Zealanders working in the occupation. It also contains industry overviews, and labour market research and statistics. There are also more than 6,000 links to national and international websites for information on vacancies, training, funding and career resources.</td>
<td><strong>Career Services’ Centre:</strong> a national network of 16 sites that provide free career information and advice services. Each CareerCentre has a public reception area where individuals and groups can access print and computer-based information for themselves. Career Services’ staff are also available to help people develop their career plans and goals. The career planning services are fee based but can be free to people who meet criteria for eligibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pathfinder:</strong> an online career guidance programme is available via KiwiCareers. It allows users to complete activities and read articles that will help them discover career options that may suit them. They can explore career suggestions and plan the next steps that will assist them to realise their career goals.</td>
<td><strong>Career Services’ advice line (CareerPoint):</strong> a freephone careers information service to help people make informed career and training decisions. Advisors can give callers information on careers they are interested in and can tell them about what is needed to get started or advance in a career. This includes advice on courses, training options and job profiles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.27 Neither the website nor Pathfinder specifically addresses the factors that someone ought to take into account when deciding on a course of study. Rather, this is covered by the ‘Take Off to Tertiary’ section of the main Careers website (www.careers.govt.nz). This section contains ‘self-help’ information including questions to ask prospective providers. There is also guidance material such as the Take Off to Tertiary Passport and Countdown to Action! A guide to help you make your study and training – the latter document is also incorporated into the Career Kete that is used to support career education activities in secondary schools.

5.28 It is clear that Career Services is aware that ‘pathways and staircasing’ issues need to be considered as part of informed learner decision-making. Amongst the questions that learners are encouraged to ask providers are:

- Is this qualification a prerequisite for any further study or training courses?
- What happens to the credits I’ve achieved if I want to switch to another course or provider?
- Can I ‘cross-credit’ my achieved credits to another type of training provider such as transferring polytech [sic] credits into university credits?

5.29 These are amongst the questions included in the ‘self-help’ information mentioned above, and staff members delivering services through the advice line and in the centres are trained to cover the same material with students on a one-on-one basis.

5.30 However, it would be useful for Career Services to continue work on incorporating into their material the message that students need to look at their options for further study when choosing a course.

5.31 For instance, the Countdown to Action! booklet usefully prompts readers to consider “What qualifications can I go on to do once this one is completed?” when choosing an appropriate qualification, but not at the next stage of selecting with which provider to study.

5.32 As well as this, there may be a need for some contextual information for learners to help them understand things like the fact that some qualifications might offer limited opportunities for further study, and what they should expect in terms of credit recognition and transfer.

5.33 Career Information and Guidance within schools is also important in preparing school-leavers to make informed tertiary choices. Career Services organises a range of training and professional development activities aimed at school Careers Advisors and Transition Teachers in each of its regions. These events can involve presentations from tertiary education providers, ITOs and representatives from industries, presentations on trends in local labour market information, and opportunities to develop advice and guidance skills. Any developments in Career Services’ resources are also shared through such events and through a newsletter sent out once every term.

**Recommendation 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That the services, guidance material and decision-making tools offered to prompt learners to think about progression options when choosing a programme of study be maintained and enhanced.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agency:</td>
<td>Career Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of its ongoing work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted above, Studylink also has contact with a large number of intending students. Every student applying for a loan or allowance has contact with Studylink in one form or another. In addition, Studylink holds information seminars for senior school students about tertiary study. These focus on options for financing tertiary study, but also provide an opportunity to cover other issues. Indeed, Studylink and Career Services often hold joint seminars. Studylink has also developed a Studywise financial information service, which consists of a team dedicated to assisting students and intending students by phone or in person.

Would it be useful therefore for Studylink to develop its own products or advice about informed decision-making? Probably not. It will ensure consistency of message if the responsibility for developing communications on assisting students to make informed educational decisions is not dispersed. Instead, it should be assigned to a single agency, Career Services.

On the other hand, it is useful for Studylink, like all agencies, to take every opportunity to refer learners to Career Services’ material like the *Take Off to Tertiary* web-pages and *Countdown to Action!* The Review has been advised that this is already occurring through Career Services’ links with the Studywise financial information service. Studywise staff have received training on the information, advice and guidance services that Career Services provides and know how to refer learners to these.

**Recommendation 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That the use of the Studywise financial information service for new borrowers and its website to encourage learners to access Career Services’ services, guidance material and decision-making tools be maintained and enhanced.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>Studylink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of its ongoing work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6. Placing pathways on the Register

6.1 As discussed in Chapter 2, the crucial underpinning for a well-connected system of qualifications in New Zealand is the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications. As of August 2006, all qualifications are now benchmarked against the ten levels of the Register. But, although this broad infrastructure is now in place, not much attention has been focussed thus far by government on fostering a situation where active effort is put into ensuring that there are pathways between qualifications at different providers. Qualifications in a particular subject at one level of the Register should lead on well to qualifications in that subject at a higher level of the Register.

6.2 The Review considers that the full implementation of the Register presents a valuable opportunity to ensure that learners, and other interested parties, are fully informed about the opportunities for further education arising out of each qualification. Our proposition in this area is:

That, for every qualification, students and prospective students should have access to meaningful information about the subsequent programmes of study, if any, for which this qualification will assist them to meet the admission or selection criteria.

Some useful terminology

6.3 While issues relating to credit recognition and recognition of prior learning have been well identified and considered, arguably the most important aspect of ‘pathways and staircasing’ is to have a tertiary education system in which qualifications relate well to one another. However, there has been little discussion in New Zealand about the dynamics of articulation, admission and selection. Therefore, it may be helpful to define the terms of this discussion

6.4 For the purposes of this report, the term ‘qualification sequence’ is used to refer to all the qualifications about a subject at different levels of the Register, whether at the same provider or delivered by different providers in different parts of the system.

6.5 There are also some cases where a qualification sequence may lead sideways rather than up and down. One example is people moving from general degree studies to studying for a teaching qualification. This is likely to be the exception, rather than the rule. Nonetheless, the same principles apply in these cases as with the standard situation, and the approach outline would apply to these sideways pathways as well.

6.6 We can define three different varieties of articulation that may occur:

- Articulation with credit: The first qualification meets the education prerequisites for entry to a second qualification with credit, i.e. programmes designed with credit recognition in mind.

- Articulation with admission: The first qualification meets the education prerequisites for entry to a second qualification but without credit.

- Basic articulation: The first qualification prepares the learner educationally for at least some aspect of the second qualification though there is no formal recognition in terms of entrance criteria.

6.7 Obviously the first variety is the most valuable arrangement from the perspective of the learner, and of the provider offering the first qualification. It will also tend to be the hardest to arrange. To some extent, this is dealt with in Chapter 12 in the section on pre-arranged credit recognition.
As mentioned in Chapter 2, we also need to recognise that articulation with credit can occur only when the credit levels of the two qualifications overlap. By definition, one cannot gain credit towards a degree, with credits at levels 5–7 of the Register, on the basis of level 4 credits gained studying a certificate.

Articulation with admission generally requires the same kind of engagement between providers as that for articulation with credit. Even though the threshold that the first qualification has to meet is not as high as for articulation with credit, the provider of the second qualification will still need to develop a reasonable understanding of the knowledge and skills that the first qualification will produce.

Basic articulation is the least demanding arrangement but also the least valuable. It is preferable if there is some engagement between providers, but it can occur at the unilateral initiative of the provider of the first qualification, or even by accident. To some extent, because this pathway gives the provider of the first qualification no acknowledgement and no marketing advantage, there may be less incentive for them to put in place this third form of articulation than for the first two, even though it requires less effort.

There is an important caveat in relation to this typology, however: because of the ‘open entry’ provision for those aged 20 and over, the difference between the second and third form of articulation is only relevant for restricted programmes and for those aged under 20.

So we need to be realistic about how often the first or second form of articulation can occur or is needed. It is still reasonable to expect basic articulation to be in place, even for open entry programmes, but that it may not always be visible.

We should also recognise that some qualifications may legitimately stand alone. There are some fields of knowledge that might quite legitimately be covered by a single qualification, so there may be no need for a full qualification sequence in these areas.

**A stronger focus on outcomes**

The Register can have a vital role in fostering stronger articulation by ensuring that the further education outcomes of qualifications are clearly and publicly identified. This identification serves two important purposes:

- First, learners have a right to know whether their holding a particular qualification will help them to attain entry subsequently to any more advanced courses of study – this is a vital corollary to the encouragement of informed learner choices that was discussed in the previous chapter.
- Secondly, the Tertiary Education Commission also needs this information in order to assist its funding decisions, as it may have concerns about funding a course with insufficient further education outcomes – we will return to this point in Chapter 9.

It is worth emphasising that the key consideration is whether the further education outcomes are sufficient or not. This requires a judgment to be made. It is not simply a matter of saying that every qualification needs to lead on to another course. As noted above, some qualifications may legitimately stand alone. The issue is with qualifications that should lead somewhere but do not.

Another complication is that, for some qualifications, the next steps in its qualification sequence are open entry courses. Therefore, the pathways to further education that they offer will tend to fall into the third category above, basic articulation. In these circumstances, that arrangement would be perfectly legitimate.
6.17 On the other hand, what if the next step in the qualification sequence was a restricted entry course and all the qualification could offer was basic articulation? That would indicate that the owner of the next qualification had given no undertaking to consider this earlier qualification when deciding on students’ applications for entry, as would have been the case with a second category pathway (articulation with admission). In such a situation, the learner (and possibly the Tertiary education Commission) would have some reason for concern.

6.18 The aim of ensuring the further education outcomes of qualifications are well identified seems to be widely shared. The stakeholders consulted during the Review noted that a clear description of the outcome of a qualification is essential for the efficient functioning of ‘pathways and staircasing’. The question therefore is how best to achieve this clear outcome description.

6.19 Currently, there is provision for further education outcome to be reported on in the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications, within the general ‘Outcomes’ field. (An example of what a qualification looks like on the Register is shown in paragraph 6.21.) The regulations for qualifications require reference in this ‘Outcomes’ field to entry requirements and outcome statements. There is little disagreement about this, but there is a lack of clarity about what might reasonably be required.

6.20 The criteria established for outcome statements in the New Zealand Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications were made purposefully broad (see inset box), but there may now be a need to require greater specificity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome statements (advice provided on the KiwiQuals website)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For each qualification on the Register there must be a statement of learning outcomes. This includes statements about:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• what the whole qualification represents in terms of the application of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the components of the qualification which, in their combination, make up the wholeness of the qualification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Register requires the registration of whole qualifications only. There is no requirement for the registration of components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about and/or links to where publicly available information about the component parts of qualifications and other provider information may be held on the Register (see below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no standardised way of expressing these outcomes. Since 1991, different types of qualifications have been expressed in terms of outcome statements, including degrees and related qualifications. However, they must:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be publicly available in an appropriate way (e.g. by publication in a provider’s course ‘guidebook’, for example, or on the Register). In the case of National Qualifications Framework unit standards and achievement standards, public availability must occur through national registration;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be stated as specifically as possible (supported by publicly accessible details where qualification components are specified);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• improve understanding about the qualification by accurately describing achievement;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• allow meaningful comparisons to be made with other qualifications, revealing any significant differences between similar qualifications (particularly if there are significant credit transfer restrictions associated with the qualification);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be capable of being used to determine the level of the qualification or component; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• enable a fair system of credit transfer to operate in a transparent way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.21 Discussions between the Review team and quality assurance bodies indicate that the level of details provided in the course approval documentation on the expected outcome, the entry requirements and the articulation arrangements vary between providers. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority undertook an analysis of a sample of qualifications on the Register that supports this finding, i.e. that descriptions of outcome are not clearly documented for many qualifications.
Example of Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Certificate in Employment Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject/Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Skills Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality assurance body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.22 The lack of clear documentation of outcomes may be a reflection of the multiple purposes that the ‘Outcomes’ field currently serves within the Register. The ‘Outcomes’ field is where qualification-owners report on:

- the skills and competencies learners are expected to acquire
- any further education pathways offered on the basis of this qualification, and
- any employment pathways offered on the basis of this qualification.

6.23 It is up to the judgment of the qualification-owner how to balance the discussion of these three different types of outcomes within the single ‘field’. In such a circumstance, it is not surprising that one or more of these outcome types might be overlooked altogether. Indeed, on some occasions, when the qualification-owner does not have anything positive to report about a particular outcome type, it may be tempting to simply omit to mention it.

6.24 As well as this, the broadness of the Register guidelines gives qualification-owners the ability to use wording that gives a more positive picture than may be warranted. For instance, in using the terminology employed in this report, a qualification-owner might use wording that implies articulation with admission when actually all the learner will get is a basic articulation.

6.25 The Review considers that more specific requirements should be developed that give a clear picture of what exactly the student can expect in terms of entry to further qualifications.

6.26 As an example, the entry might be required to use one (or more) of the following three forms of words, although additional alternatives might also be developed.

| Fulfils the academic entry requirements for [name of qualification(s) and associated qualification-developers/provider(s)]. The provider[s] will, however, reserve the right to decide on applications for entry to their courses on an individual basis. |
| There is an agreement that this qualification will be taken into consideration by the provider when assessing whether a student meets the academic entry requirements for [name of qualification(s) and associated qualification-developers/provider(s)]. This is however a restricted entry course and the provider will reserve the right to take into account a range of factors in their decisions. |
| Does not meet specific entry requirements for any further qualification. However, skills gained may assist in meeting entry qualifications for [name of qualification(s) and associated qualification-developers/provider(s)]. |
6.27 If there were no specific agreements in place with any other qualification-owner then the statement would be obliged to use a required form of words such as “Does not meet specific entry requirements for any further qualification” though the provider would be allowed to soften that with a second sentence, as above.

6.28 We would need to move carefully in introducing new requirements here. The sector has put a lot of work into complying with the Register. It would not be advisable to bring in new rules in a way that meant any significant component of that work needed to be repeated.

6.29 There are two broad ways of proceeding: either by refining further education statements within the existing ‘Outcome’ field; or by adding a new field into the Register (perhaps entitled “Further Education Pathways”).

6.30 In the former case, the more specific wording could start as guidelines but become a firmer requirement over time, particularly for new qualifications. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority is currently preparing some guidelines for the sector on how to word Register entries. Those guidelines could be used as the initial vehicle for introducing this entry.

6.31 Introducing a new field seems a more radical option, but it could actually result in less compliance costs for the sector than the other option, particularly in the short term. The new field could be left empty as a default. New qualifications that commenced from an agreed date onwards would be required to comply. Others would be left to the discretion of the qualification-owner. However, over time, qualification-owners are likely to consider it advantageous not to leave such an important field blank. This will particularly be the case if we are able to improve student awareness of the Register information (see the following chapter).

6.32 This proposal was discussed with the ‘pathways and staircasing’ sector reference group in May 2006. The response was reassuring, overall, although understandably there were some questions from some members about what it would entail in practice. In particular, they wanted to know how comprehensive a range of further qualifications would need to be included.

6.33 The Review considers that the determination of the range of further qualifications to be included in the new entry should be left up to the qualification-owner to decide. Once again, the scrutiny of prospective students will motivate most qualification-owners to include a wide enough range of further qualifications to present a favourable impression. In some cases this may mean listing a number of individual qualifications; in others, it might be emphasising one or two high-profile or well-regarded ones. Quality assurance bodies would, of course, ensure that any information given is accurate.

6.34 It is likely that the main compliance impact will be on sub-degree qualifications. Universities have mutual agreements in place that would probably mean that they could simply draft a generic statement that would apply to most bachelors qualification, eg. along the lines of “This Bachelor of X qualification meets the academic entry requirements for a Bachelor of X (Hons) or Master of X at any New Zealand university”.

6.35 The exact approach to be taken in relation to strengthening the Register information about further education outcomes should be worked out by NZQA in consultation with the sector. The result should be underpinned by the gazetted criteria for course approvals.
Many of the arguments above relate to employment outcomes as well as further education outcomes. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority may wish to look at that also, though, if so, changes in relation to both further education and employability outcomes should be made at the same time, to avoid the need for a further revision.

**Recommendation 5**

| Recommendation: | That the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications be used to improve the amount of accessible and reliable information available to learners and other interested parties on a qualification's outcomes in terms of pathways available for further study, either by provision of more specific guidelines on how this should be covered within the 'Outcome Statement' field or by introducing a new 'Further Education Pathways' field. |
| Responsible agencies: | New Zealand Qualifications Authority |
| Process for consideration: | As part of the further implementation of the Register |

**Taking the Register to the learner**

6.37 As noted in the previous chapter, learners should be encouraged to consider the further education opportunities to which a qualification leads when making their study choices. Part of this involves a student asking questions of the provider offering the qualification. But it is preferable for this process to be complemented with an authoritative source of official information, ie. the Register.

6.38 The Register is already publicly available through www.kiwiquals.govt.nz. However, the KiwiQuals website is not actively promoted to learners. Instead, public-sector advertising and publicity has focused on encouraging learners to go to the Career Services website.

6.39 This is entirely appropriate. The Career Services website was developed to meet a wide range of learners’ informational needs, and is presented in an accessible, non-technical style. It is important that learners can be confident that there is one destination to which they can go that can connect them to all the information that they need.

6.40 But that destination should include Register information. The Register is the one government-sanctioned source of descriptive information about individual qualifications. Alongside information on further education outcomes, the Register also includes the outcome statement in general, the Register level and credit value, entry requirements, the responsible quality assurance body and some information on content.

6.41 If this information is not deemed to be useful or meaningful to learners in the format in which it has been collected, then there would have to be serious questions about why providers and qualification-owners are expected to go to the not-inconsiderable effort involved in generating the information in the first place.

6.42 If, on the other hand, the information is considered to be potentially valuable to learners – and that is quite definitely the view taken by this Review – then that information ought to be accessible to learners, through the Career Services website.

6.43 Moreover, the information needs to be accessible to learners – in as automatic a manner as is possible – as part of the process of seeking information about a particular qualification. This reflects two considerations:

- First, that it is at the level of the individual qualification that Register information is of interest to the learner,
• Secondly, the learner should not have to search for a particular qualification twice: first through the existing Career Services website material, and then a second time for the Register information.

6.44 Currently, when a Career Services website user clicks on an individual qualification, they are forwarded onto the information about that qualification on the provider’s website. (It is worth noting that this material is often very useful and informative – but it is not the official source of formal information about that qualification; the Register is.)

6.45 What is being proposed, therefore, is that the Career Services website in some way provide the user with both this provider website information and the Register information – preferably in a way that does not require the user to choose between one or the other.

6.46 There are a variety of ways in which the presentation of this information could be achieved, and determining the best means to do so lies within the technical domain of website design. However, as an example, one way in which this might be achieved would be via a ‘frames’ mechanism whereby the user remained in the Career Services website but, from there, accessed simultaneously both the provider web-page and the relevant web-page from KiwiQuals. That might look like the example in the insert box below (bearing in mind that the KiwiQuals information is currently designed to take up only half the screen).

### National Certificate in Employment Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>0231</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject/ Classification</td>
<td>Multi-field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Employment Skills Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry requirements</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome statement</td>
<td>The National Certificate in Employment Skills is awarded to people who have demonstrated competence in literacy, oracy, numeracy and other personal and technical skills. These skills have been identified by a wide range of employers as being important in the workplace. This qualification accepts credit from both unit standards and achievement standards. This qualification is designed to be flexible and accessible so that people are able to demonstrate some of the required competencies in alternative fields as well as exercising open elective choice for part of the credit requirement. In addition, this qualification is intended to act as a springboard from which people may progress towards other qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification developer</td>
<td>NZQA National Qualifications Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality assurance body</td>
<td>New Zealand Qualifications Authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.47 However, there are undoubtedly a variety of other ways to achieve the same aims.

6.48 It is worth noting in passing the possibility that other information could also be made available to the learner in this way, such as the most recent Summary Audit Report for the provider offering the qualification.
### Recommendation 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That the Career Services website be set up so as to allow users to automatically see Register information when they click on a qualification on the website (as well as the provider website information currently seen).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>New Zealand Qualifications Authority and Career Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for Consideration:</td>
<td>Stand-alone information technology task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7. The role of quality assurance

7.1 The quality assurance system has a central role to play in ensuring good ‘pathways and staircasing’ between qualifications. After all, many aspects of ‘pathways and staircasing’ between qualifications should be regarded as a matter of good academic practice (which is primarily the responsibility of the quality assurance system) rather than a characteristic of the portfolio of provision (which is primarily the responsibility of the funding system).

7.2 The New Zealand Qualifications Authority was, of course, the central agency that oversaw the development of the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy in 2001–02. It did so as part of its quality assurance responsibilities, and the implementation of good credit recognition and transfer processes should continue within that context. We will consider below how existing quality assurances practices could be refined to ensure that the intentions of that policy are being realised – and that the results are publicly evident.

7.3 Where relevant, we will also relate those refinements to recognition of prior learning. In general, though, the Review considers that there are some high-level decisions yet to be made about recognition of prior learning that may have ramifications for quality assurance. We return to this point in Chapter 10.

7.4 In addition, however, a key focus of this chapter is on how the quality assurance process can be extended to support ‘pathways and staircasing’ beyond these individualised application processes. In particular, the Review is conscious that, at present, consideration of the relationship between qualifications will often be undertaken by providers after the fact as credit recognition, but not so much when qualifications are being designed or revised.

7.5 The Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy did mention the development and design phase. One of the principles it advanced was that “Qualification, course and programme development and design should promote and facilitate credit recognition and transfer”. But this was not the primary focus of this policy.

7.6 It should be noted that engagement does occur in the sector, though overwhelmingly within specific collaborative arrangements like the Tertiary Accord of New Zealand and the Canterbury Tertiary Alliance.

7.7 Our proposition in this regard is,

\[ \text{That the design of all new or revised qualifications ought to take into consideration how best to link with other quality-assured qualifications in the same subject area, throughout the sector, so as to facilitate student movement between qualifications.} \]

7.8 Before the report discusses this proposition further, it is worth briefly discussing how quality assurance works in the New Zealand tertiary education system. Such a discussion is made more complex, however, because at the time of writing many of the arrangements seem likely to change.

7.9 In late July 2006, as part of the tertiary education reform Next Steps programme, the government released its decisions to date on quality assurance and monitoring, which included significant structural changes to the way quality assurance operates, as outlined below. Moreover, some key decisions are still ‘in principle’ pending further consultation and advice, and many of the implications are yet to have been worked through.49

7.10 For this reason, while in general the approach of the Review on this area is quite clear, much of the discussion of the mechanics of how the Review team’s proposals will work is provisional. Detailed decision will therefore need to be made in the context of future ‘Next Steps’ decisions.

**The quality assurance system**

7.11 There are five ways in which tertiary courses and qualifications offered by providers are quality assured in New Zealand: initial registration for a private provider, or establishment for a public institution; course approval; accreditation; moderation; and quality audit. The focus in this chapter is on course approval and audit.

7.12 These functions are carried out across the sector by four bodies known as quality assurance bodies:

- the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), a standing committee of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (NZVCC), which approves all university qualifications
- the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU), established by the Vice-Chancellors’ Committee as a wholly-owned body governed by an independent board, which carries out university academic quality audits
- Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQ), an independent committee of the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand (ITPNZ), which approves polytechnic qualifications (level 7 and below) under delegated authority from NZQA, and
- Approvals, Accreditation and Audit (AAA), a unit of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, which approves degrees above level 7 for polytechnics, all other degrees outside of universities, all national qualifications and all qualifications delivered by wānanga, private training establishments (including Other Training Education Providers), government training establishments and Unitec.

7.13 The New Zealand Qualifications Authority has also been considered as having an ‘overarching role’ in relation to quality assurance. Section 159AD of the Education Act 1989, which sets out roles within the tertiary education sector, specifies that the Authority “(or, in the case of universities, the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors Committee) is the body primarily responsible for quality assurance matters in the tertiary education sector”. Moreover, at present, even Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (and by extension CUAP and NZUAAU) is obliged to operate in accordance with criteria set by the Authority. Subject to Authority carrying out the required consultation with Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (under section 253(1)(d) and 253(2)), then the law requires that the Vice-Chancellors' Committee must also apply these criteria (section 260(3)).

7.14 Nonetheless, there is an important distinction between the university sector where the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee operates “in lieu of the Authority” (section 260 (1)) and the institute of technology and polytechnic sector where quality assurance powers are exercised under delegation from the Authority (under section 260(2)). Other subsectors have quality assurance undertaken on their behalf by the Authority's Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit.

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51 Up until this year quality assurance for qualifications (level 7 and below) in the college of education subsector was delegated to the Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee. The wānanga subsector has also previously expressed its interest in obtaining a delegation for quality assurance.
7.15 As indicated above, the government has now signalled its intention to change this current architecture. It has agreed in principle to the development of an approach whereby the accountability for the quality assurance function would be located with the Tertiary Education Commission.

7.16 Under this approach, the Commission would discharge its responsibility through ‘commissioning’ the Authority to undertake the quality assurance function for tertiary education organisations apart from universities. A separate relationship would be established with the Vice-Chancellors’ Committee to ensure that the Commission had the information and processes it needed for quality assurance in universities. This proposed approach is illustrated in Figure 7.1 below.

Figure 7.1: Proposed accountability for quality assurance function

7.17 The government has been open about the fact that there are a great numbers of details yet to be worked through before this option can be put in place, if indeed it is proceeded with. These details include how the setting of criteria for quality assurance will occur, and how (or whether) the process of applying these same criteria to the universities will be managed. Consideration will also be given to shifts needed from current arrangements regarding the Authority, including any exercise of the delegation of its authority.

7.18 Alongside this, the government has also indicated that by the beginning of 2008 the existing standards for quality assurance will have been reviewed and revised and action will have been taken to ensure that these are applied consistently across the sector.

7.19 Given all the uncertainties arising from this proposed policy development, it is worth being explicit about the following assumptions that have been made for the purposes of the discussion in this chapter:

- course approvals and audit will continue to be distinct identifiable functions within the quality assurance system, governed by separate sets of criteria
- responsibility for quality assurance in the non-university subsectors will continue to be shared by ITPQ and a unit of NZQA (although most of the recommendations and discussion deals with both of these quality assurance bodies collectively; in any case)
- both the Tertiary Education Commission and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority will have some role in determining what is covered in the quality assurance criteria, and
- these criteria will continue to be set via publication in the New Zealand Gazette, ie. they will continue to be gazetted criteria.

7.20 If any of these assumptions proves to be incorrect, this will not alter the intent of any of the recommendations in this chapter, but it may affect the applicability of the precise wording.

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53 Ibid., para. 86.
7.21 It is also useful to explain that, while the Approvals, Accreditation and Audit (AAA) unit is a part of NZQA, it is identified separately in this report from other functions of NZQA. This follows an accepted practice that distinguishes between NZQA’s role as a quality assurance body and NZQA’s overarching role in relation to quality assurance – NZQA in its overarching role even audits the performance of AAA just as it does for ITPQ.

7.22 In light of the current uncertainty around future roles in the quality assurance system, it seems even more important to be precise about which function we are referring to. For this reason, when discussion or a recommendation relates to the carrying out of quality assurance it will refer specifically to NZQA’s Approvals, Accreditation and Audit (AAA) unit. On the other hand, when referring to the setting of quality assurance criteria or other aspects of overarching quality assurance, we will (reflecting the assumption above that this responsibility will be shared in some way in the future) refer jointly to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission.

**Course approval**

7.23 Course approval means that the course has been assessed by a recognised quality assurance body as being a coherent programme based on clear and consistent aims, content, outcomes and assessment practices. Only courses that have been approved in this way are included on the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications. Moreover, courses need to be quality-assured in order to qualify for funding through the Tertiary Education Commission, or to access government-funded student loans and allowances.

7.24 However, this has not always meant that the course needed to be approved by a recognised quality assurance body; in some cases, an internal quality assurance process was sufficient. Until this year (2006) the TEC Funding Guide accepted Academic Board approval for certain local qualifications at public institutions. Now this can only occur “where the NZQA or the relevant quality assurance body has confirmed that this is appropriate” (4.1.2.3, Quality Assurance Approval Requirements).

7.25 Course approval is also required for providers who want international students to be granted student visas for study with them, and some courses are required to be approved by legislation, such as those leading to registration as a teacher. Courses may also be approved at the request of a provider or qualification owner where there is no external requirement for this.

7.26 At present, all of the quality assurance bodies in New Zealand use the same gazetted criteria for course approval (and also for accreditation of a provider to deliver an approved course). These criteria are currently set by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The current gazetted criteria for course approval (and accreditation) were consulted during 2002 and published in the *New Zealand Gazette* of 12 December 2002 (pages 4498–4499).54

7.27 The New Zealand Qualifications Authority has recently consulted on the gazetted criteria, and has indicated in the covering letter to the consultation document that, “The feedback process will also consider the findings of the Strategic Review of Pathways & Staircasing, currently underway, and the sector response to those findings”. Moreover, as noted above, the government has also signalled that by 2008 existing standards for quality assurance will have been reviewed and revised. In particular, reviewing qualification approval and accreditation criteria is noted by the government as an action that could be considered for 2007.55


Recommendation 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That issues relating to articulation and credit recognition and transfer be included in the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Building articulation into qualification design**

7.28 Much of the focus to date in relation to ‘pathways and staircasing’ has been on building linkages after the fact between existing qualifications. Yet, on the whole, the most effective way of ensuring that qualifications articulate well together is at the design (or re-design) stage.

7.29 If a qualification-owner\(^{56}\) is talking with the owners of other qualifications in the same qualification sequence during the design phase, or when making alterations, then this creates the opportunity to incorporate their feedback into the design process.

7.30 For instance, the owner of a proposed new diploma programme might ask the owners of degrees in the same qualification sequence what preparation they expect learners to have had. This is much preferable to the diploma-owner developing a course unilaterally and then being dismayed if the degree owners do not recognise it.

7.31 Similarly, the owners of a proposed new degree programme might talk to the owners of existing diplomas in the qualification sequence to find out what level of competency in the subject they should expect when learners begin the course (if they have had previous training). This will help ensure that there are not gaps between the level of knowledge expected of those completing the diploma qualification and the level of knowledge expected of those entering the degree programme.

7.32 Alternatively, having talked to the diploma-owners, the degree-owner might not choose to pitch the starting point for the degree at the finish-point for the diploma. Instead, they might build in some overlap between the coverage of the two qualifications. This would tend to make entrance to the degree more accessible for those without previous study at diploma level. The more advanced position of those who already had a diploma could also then be recognised by the degree-owner agreeing to recognise some of the credit gained in the diploma course as also counting towards the degree (pre-arranged credit recognition is discussed in Chapter 12).

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\(^{56}\) Throughout this section, the term ‘qualification-owner’ is used rather than provider. As indicated in Chapter 1, this term covers both providers who develop and deliver a qualification and others such as the industry training organisation or NZQA itself that are responsible for developing and maintaining a qualification, but are not directly involved in qualification delivery. Except where expressly stated otherwise, the points made in this section apply equally whether the qualification-owner is a provider or not.
At one level, suggesting that articulation issues like these be incorporated into the qualification design process might seem a fairly common-sense idea. At another level, it would represent quite an important departure from current practice for many qualification-owners. It involves asking qualification-owners to talk through the design of their qualification not just within their own organisation; nor with their ‘peers’ in organisations of the same type offering similar qualifications at the same level; but with those offering a qualification at a different level of the Register in another part of the sector.

This ‘distance’ may present its own challenges. There may be ‘cultural’ barriers: qualification-owners might find they have to deal with some organisational cultures and ways of operating that are quite different from their own. There may also be issues of awareness. In many cases, a qualification-owner may not even know who has qualifications on the same subject at the next level up or down from their own.

The Register will help in this regard, however, as it is straight-forward to search the KiwiQuals website by subject and qualification type or level. This is illustrated in Figure 7.2, using Drama and Theatre Studies as an example.

If we want to influence what is taken into account in programme design, the best way to do so is through the course approval process. The Review considers that a new expectation should be added to the gazetted criteria to require that articulation with existing programmes in the tertiary education system be built into programme design. This change in policy would mandate quality assurance bodies to take articulation into consideration when approving courses.\(^57\)

It would be an entirely appropriate matter for quality assurance bodies to ask qualification-owners about a programme’s articulation with existing programmes. The process already looks at:

- the adequacy and appropriateness of the title, aims, stated learning outcomes and coherence of the whole course, and
- acceptability of the course to relevant academic, industrial, professional and other communities.

\(^{57}\) Throughout this chapter, we stress the need for provisions to be covered within the gazetted criteria themselves, rather than in the wider guidelines that accompany the criteria. This is because the guidelines, while influential, do not actually have any statutory force. In an extreme case of non-compliance, a tertiary education organisation could simply choose to disregard an aspect of the guidelines and the quality assurance body would have no authority to apply sanctions on that basis. This is not the case with the criteria themselves.
This new expectation would complement these existing provisions by asking the qualification-owner to think about how this new qualification relates to other qualifications already being offered in this subject area.

There are resourcing costs involved for qualification-owners in meeting such an expectation. Some tertiary education organisations may also have reservations about sharing information about planned programmes with others who are in some cases perceived as potential competitors.

This point should not be overstated, however. Often there is very limited competition between qualification-owners at different points of a qualification sequence as they may tend to offer qualifications at differing levels of the Register from one another. The increased emphasis on ‘distinctive contributions’ as part of the Next Steps programme may also tend to further diminish such competition.

Nonetheless, for this expectation to be acted on in an effective way, it will be necessary to create a ‘safe’ environment in which the qualification-owners being consulted agree not to use the information they gain through this process to gain any market advantage. Quality assurance bodies can play an important facilitative role in this regard.

The introduction of this expectation was discussed with the ‘pathways and staircasing’ sector reference group in May 2006, and the response seemed to be generally positive. The main message from the group was that the breadth of consultation with other qualification-owners had to be kept to a manageable level, and qualification-owners (and quality assurance bodies) need to be clear about what they need to do.

One suggestion was that the requirement should focus only on consulting with other qualification-owners in the same region. The Review agrees that this will sometimes be sufficient, but not always, as, for instance, with a relatively rare qualification sequence where programmes are only taught in a handful of locations scattered across the country.

While there will be a need to develop more detailed guidelines, in general, the Review would suggest that the expectation should focus on: large programmes (as a proportion of all learners studying in the qualification sequence); national qualifications; and programmes in the same region.

Recommendation 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That a new expectation be added into the course approval process that articulation with existing programmes in the tertiary education system be built into programme design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the proposed inclusion of issues relating to articulation and credit recognition and transfer within the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance (recommendation 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discussion at the reference group has also reinforced that there will be a need for a process to prepare the sector before this expectation comes in to effect. Furthermore, because the consultations that take place will need to occur between different parts of the sector, the preparation process will need to be pan-sector as well.
It is proposed that the best way to handle the preparation process would be for the three quality assurance bodies to work together. They could undertake regional workshops for all providers in a particular region to discuss this new expectation and how to meet it. The same workshops might also be used to explain other new expectations that are introduced as part of the current review process, or these might be dealt with through some other process.

It is possible that the need for this preparation process will mean that, depending on when the revised criteria are gazetted, there may be a need to set a later commencement date for this expectation than for the other changes being made.

**Recommendation 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That, before this new expectation is implemented in course approval processes, joint regional workshops are undertaken for providers (across subsectors) to discuss this new expectation and how to meet it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>The Committee on University Academic Programmes, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality and NZQA's Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>Via the Inter-institutional Quality Assurance Bodies Consultative Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Best practice in credit recognition**

Credit recognition and transfer is the most well-developed area in this Review both in terms of identifying the issues and addressing them, largely due to the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy.

The impression gained over the course of this Review is that a great deal of progress has been made in this area. However, it is difficult to know exactly how much. A similar point was made by the Panel that carried out the recent review of CUAP:

The Panel noted that CUAP supports the policy statement of the NZQA (December 2002) for credit recognition and transfer, adopting a definition of terms, in addition to principles and guidelines. No comments were detected during the interviews or document review about the effectiveness of CUAP in this area although the definitions were regarded as clear and accessible. Consequently, the Panel was unable to gain an impression of how consistently or effectively institutions in New Zealand, either within the university sector or across sectors (i.e., universities, polytechnics, institutes of technology) implemented cross credits and transfers or credit.

Many of the concerns raised by learners and their representatives during this review appear to relate to individual cases where the formal systems did not work. Consultation with learners and their representatives indicated that often requests for credit transfer are dealt with in an unstructured manner by academic staff. Communication between academic staff and learners is at times informal, verbal or through email. This could lead to misunderstanding around the outcome of an application or request. Learners reported that they were often frustrated and did not know where to take their complaints or queries relating to ‘pathways and staircasing’.

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A key means of addressing uneven implementation is through support for good practice. As part of this Review, NZQA has already begun undertaking the task of identifying pockets of good practice with the intention of subsequently promulgating them within the sector. The focus group meetings undertaken last year and the on-line survey identified examples from tertiary education organisations. The New Zealand Qualification Authority also considered the growing international literature-base on credit transfer.

Central leadership was identified as a key element in both the focus groups and the international literature. It appears to be the case that a contact person at each provider ought to be formally included in the provider's business processes involving transfer.

The New Zealand Qualification Authority has produced a draft set of good practice guidelines and plans the following further actions:

- further work on these draft guidelines and subsequent publication on the Qualifications Authority’s website, and
- website publication of examples of identified good practice (following approval from those organisations cited).

It is likely that completion of this process will not be immediate, due to competing work priorities. This may, in fact, not be a bad thing. It may be quite useful for completion and public release of guidelines and good practice to be timed to coincide with, or occur shortly after, the revision of quality assurance requirements in relation to credit recognition and transfer. It is this process to which we now turn.

**Recommendation 10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That guidelines for tertiary education organisations on credit recognition and transfer and examples of best practice be developed, circulated and promoted.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority, in consultation with the Tertiary Education Commission, the Committee on University Academic Programmes and Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>Already part of NZQA’s work programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A clear mandate for quality assurance**

We also need to make sure that TEOs are clear about their obligations and how they are supposed to meet them. Discussions undertaken with the sector during this Review indicate there is a lack of common understanding among learners and providers on the systems and processes that ought to be in place.

Quality assurance bodies have not always felt confident about what was expected of them either. A survey of quality assurance bodies undertaken by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority during this Review indicated that quality assurance bodies had not fully recognised their role in encouraging the development and maintenance of ‘pathways and staircasing’.
Findings indicate that at the time of approving a qualification, the respective quality assurance bodies ensure the outcome statements and entry criteria are clearly stated and articulation arrangements exist. Ongoing compliance is monitored during regular audits. Furthermore, there are guidance statements available to quality assurance bodies for measuring quality and success.

However, quality assurance bodies acknowledge there is no ongoing monitoring of processes and policies relating to pathways, staircasing and credit transfer, that the quality of outcome statements vary between providers and audits have not given priority to checking the existence as well as the standard of the processes.

These findings indicate a need to ensure that quality assurance bodies and tertiary education organisations both have a very clear set of guidelines in relation to credit recognition and transfer, and other aspects of pathways. This is not a core focus of the quality assurance process, and so anything that can be done to make expectations clear will make the tasks that much more manageable.

The Review supports the commitment set out in the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy that every provider should have a policy. A workshop involving students’ associations highlighted some of the pitfalls that can occur where a policy is absent or inaccessible. Concerns were raised about lack of publicity by providers, inconsistent advice from administrators and the lack of transparent and easy-to-understand information on the appeal procedures and timeframe.

The approach taken by CUAP is to be commended in this regard. Its Functions and Procedures 2005–06 states clearly and precisely that:

The processes used in the granting of transfer of credit should be documented, explicit, and challengeable. (p. 40)

This expectation is not out of step with practice within the sector. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the results of an on-line survey of providers conducted by NZQA as part of this Review show that most respondents do already have written policy and formal procedures in place to manage credit transfer (80%) and recognition of prior learning (83%), and these are communicated to learners as part of the application process.

As discussed above, the starting point for all course approval practices is NZQA’s gazetted criteria. These criteria include the following provisions in relation to credit recognition and transfer:

A Quality Assurance Body is expected to “satisfy itself as to the standard and quality of every course for which approval and/or accreditation is sought in regard to . . . the adequacy and appropriateness of the regulations that specify . . . credit for previous study.”

There is nothing particularly wrong with these criteria but the formulation used by CUAP is better. The latter makes it precisely clear what is needed: processes that are “documented, explicit, and challengeable”. Moreover, the Review has been advised by NZQA’s Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit and Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality that in practice they too already expect providers to have a formal policy.

That being the case, and given that the criteria are under review, this seems a good opportunity to send the clearest possible signal about what is expected. The way to do that is to adopt the CUAP formulation, or something very close to it.

59 See footnote 54 for the reference.
A secondary issue about the criteria as currently structured is their placement. The reference to credit recognition is currently in the ‘regulations’ section of the criteria. Certainly, it is important that any formal regulations adopted by a provider in relation to credit recognition and transfer are worded in an adequate and appropriate manner. But what is more important is that there are good processes and procedures underpinning those regulations, and that those processes and procedures are properly implemented.

The Review considers, therefore, that the focus of the requirements in relation to credit recognition and transfer should shift away from regulations. Based on the existing structure, the appropriate section would probably be the Assessment section, as credit recognition and transfer is, after all, a form of assessment (albeit a distinct one). There may also be some value, however, in retaining a secondary reference to credit recognition and transfer in the Regulations section to ensure that clear regulations are also maintained.

Recommendation 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That the wording of the course approval requirements around credit recognition and transfer be revised, using the Committee on University Academic Programmes wording as a model, to make explicit a requirement that processes be documented, explicit and challengeable.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the proposed inclusion of issues relating to articulation and credit recognition and transfer within the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance (recommendation 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also need to look at the provider-wide processes. As noted above, each provider is subject to processes of regular audit and ongoing monitoring by the relevant quality assurance body. These are the appropriate means by which to ensure that the provider’s procedures for credit recognition and transfer are actually working properly in practice.

Each quality assurance body has its own procedures for audit. These are doubly influential, because they also tend to be used by providers when carrying out their own self-evaluations between audits. In the case of providers audited by NZQA’s Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit, providers also have access to a Self-evaluation Workbook to help them interpret the audit standards.

The Review commends Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality’s audit standard in relation to credit recognition and transfer, which sets out the expectation that:

The institute has effective credit transfer and recognition of prior learning policies and procedures, consistent with NZQA Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy.

This has the advantage of being more specific than the expectation contained in NZQA’s Quality Assurance Standard 1, which is the basis for Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit audits (“applying fair and consistent processes”).
7.72 However, the Review has been assured that the latter means the same in practice as the former, ie. that the provider must have effective policies and that they must be consistent with the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy. The latter connection is particularly important. The Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy should be the ultimate guideline on this issue, and is much more detailed than any audit standard could, or should, be. But, in and of itself, has no regulatory status, so it is only by its inclusion in documents like ITPQ's audit procedures that it gains force.

7.73 The Review would prefer that a wording that explicitly references the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy be in place throughout the sector. The key thing, however, is that all quality assurance bodies are confident that the organisations they audit recognise it as a requirement of audit that they implement policies consistent with the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy.

7.74 At the very least, though, it would be useful to build in more explicit guidance for providers at the self-evaluation stage. Currently the Self-evaluation Workbook made available for tertiary education organisations audited by NZQA’s Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit does not explicitly refer them to the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy.

Recommendation 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That it be a recognised requirement of audit that all tertiary education organisations implement policies that are consistent with the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission, plus individual quality assurance bodies where relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the proposed consideration of articulation and credit recognition and transfer within the review and revision of existing standards for quality assurance (see recommendation 7), if changes are required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Application to Industry Training Organisations

7.75 Most discussion of credit recognition and transfer has focused on tertiary education providers, rather than Industry Training Organisations (ITOs). The Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy is slightly ambiguous about the role of ITOs. It states that the principles it sets out “intended to apply across sectors and cultures” and in some instances refers to both providers and qualification developers (which covers ITOs). However, in other instances, including the crucial January 2004 milestone for having credit recognition policies in places, only providers are mentioned.

7.76 The Review considers that ITOs, like providers, should have processes for credit recognition that are documented, explicit, and challengeable, and that the existence of these processes is publicised to trainees. Feedback from the industry training subsector indicates that ITOs are in agreement with this principle.

7.77 To what extent, then, are current quality assurance requirements likely to ensure this? At the course approval stage, the requirements are quite robust. However, at the audit stage, credit recognition and transfer is not so visible. Audit of ITOs is a new development, even more recent than for other parts of the system. The Quality Assurance Standard that forms the basis for ITO audit was finalised in April 2005.
At present, the Quality Assurance Standard for ITOs makes no explicit mention of credit recognition (although recognition of prior learning is referenced). There is value in the Quality Assurance Standard giving the quality assurance body both a clear mandate and a clear responsibility to ensure that credit recognition processes are documented, explicit, and challengeable.

There is also value for ITOs in this. If every other part of the sector has an explicit requirement here, then it is useful that the requirement on ITOs be transparent and that ITOs can point to audit reports that explicitly state that their processes are acceptable.

**Recommendation 13**

**Recommendation:** That it be made explicit in the Quality Assurance Standard for Industry Training Organisations that the same requirements regarding credit recognition and transfer that apply to providers also apply to ITOs.

**Responsible agencies:** The New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission

**Process for consideration:** When next revising the Quality Assurance Standard for Industry Training Organisations

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**Giving the public confidence in the process**

As well as providing the opportunity to check whether any problems are occurring, the audit of providers is valuable for the process undertaken with the providers (which in itself can help to change behaviours) and for the published results.

It is a gratifying development in general that Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit Summary Audits are now accessible on NZQA’s website, and that those of Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality will begin being placed on its website very soon.

However, these Summary Audits could be more explicit in the areas of credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning. At the moment, these areas are usually only mentioned when something has gone wrong. This is in contrast with some areas that are always mentioned including when things are going well.

Consistent mentions like this help to ensure the visibility of an issue within the audit process, and provide more active reassurance to members of the public reading these reports that strong processes are in place.

**Recommendation 14**

**Recommendation:** That Summary Audits, when made publicly available, report on the audit’s findings in relation to credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning rather than on an exceptions basis, ie. when policies and practices are adequate as well as when they are deficient.

**Responsible agency:** Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality and NZQA’s Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit

**Process for consideration:** As part of the regular audit process
The New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit’s approach is somewhat different from the other audit bodies. It does not use centrally set standards and its activities are not connected to any ability to impose sanctions.

Also, its current rounds have more of a thematic approach. This thematic approach provides a perfect opportunity in relation to recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning. It would be very useful if the Academic Audit Unit were to select these as two of the themes for its next round of audit.

**Recommendation 15**

**Recommendation:**
That credit recognition and transfer practices (in relation to the 2002 Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy) and recognition of prior learning practices be covered as themes in the next cycle of university audits.

**Responsible agency:** The New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (AAU)

**Process for consideration:** When making decisions on the next cycle of university audits

In fact, there would be some real value in Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality and NZQA’s Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit moving in this direction as well, now that their reports are being made public. This will not be able to happen right away as neither organisation has yet completed a full cycle of audits that have been undertaken on the understanding that they will subsequently be made public.

Resource issues would also need to be considered – it may not be appropriate for this to be funded from user-charges, as is the case with most of the activities of the quality assurance bodies. We return to this issue in Chapter 13.

**Recommendation 16**

**Recommendation:**
That thematic reports on credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning be compiled, including coverage of interventions by the quality assurance body and the effect these have had.

**Responsible agency:** Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality and NZQA’s Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit

**Process for consideration:** Discussions will need to be held with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority about how such thematic reports should be financed, and there may need to be specific government funding provided to support this
Chapter 8. Providing appropriate student support

8.1 The student support system is an important part of the infrastructure that allows students to participate and move around in the tertiary education system. In this sense, it has a generally permissive role in relation to ‘pathways and staircasing’. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the fact that New Zealand has a unitary system of student support that applies to all provider-based tertiary education is – like the Register and the common funding system – important in permitting free movement throughout the sector.

8.2 By student support, we mean primarily the Student Allowances programme and the Student Loan Scheme, although there are also smaller scale initiatives like scholarship programmes.

8.3 However, the student support system does have a more direct interaction with ‘pathways and staircasing’ when it comes to individualised recognition processes (credit recognition and recognition of prior learning), and it is not always a positive one.

8.4 The purpose of the student support system is to support people undertaking programmes of study, so the Review has no objection in principle to a distinction being made between education on the one hand, and related services offered by providers such as recognition processes on the other. A concern only arises where student support rules might impel students to make decisions that are not in their own interests, and often do not represent an efficient use of public money either. Our proposition in this area is:

That the student support system ought not to create incentives for students to enrol unnecessarily in courses for which they could have received credit on the basis of previous study or prior informal learning.

Impact on student support eligibility

8.5 Two areas were raised with the Review as areas where recognition processes could have an adverse affect on a person’s ability to access student support:

- Because credit recognition or recognition of prior learning may reduce a student’s course-load, there may be potential for these processes to make a student ineligible for an allowance, as allowances are only available for full-time students.
- Similarly, a student may become ineligible to borrow through the Student Loan Scheme, as part-time part-year students are (in most instances) not entitled to borrow.

8.6 In relation to the first issue, the Review is pleased to be able to report that the student allowance rules already take reduced course-load into account. It is true that part-time students studying below certain course-load thresholds are not entitled to access the Student Loan Scheme or Student Allowances. Yet a learner may only need to complete part of a qualification, because credit transfer has been granted for the rest of the qualification. This may reduce the student’s course-load below the ‘full-time’ threshold.

8.7 However, students in this position can in some circumstances apply for ‘Limited full-time status’. The most common circumstance in which its status applies is for students completing the final year of a multi-year programme such as a degree.

60 Allowances and loans are both administered by the Studylink service within the Ministry of Social Development, although policy responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education. Administration of loan repayments, which is not addressed in this report, is undertaken by the Inland Revenue Department.
8.8 However, upon investigation, the Review has learned that there is also specific provision for students whose course-load has been reduced as a result of credit recognition or recognition of prior learning (see inset box).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition processes as a basis for Limited full-time status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students, who have undertaken study or have work experience relevant to their course or programme, may be exempt (with the permission of their institution) from completing some papers or components of their course or programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This 'cross-crediting' of papers in recognition of prior learning may affect the full-time study requirement for Student Allowance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In these cases the student may elect to apply for Limited full-time status that must be supported by confirmation from the institution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.9 The same exception (as is made for Student Allowance) is not available in relation to student loan eligibility, which was the second issue raised. However, the Review is not convinced that there should be an exception in this instance.

8.10 Unlike allowances, which pay for living costs, the issue at stake here is assistance with fee costs. Only a full-time student can borrow through the Student Loan Scheme for living costs and full-time status for these purposes is defined in terms of the Student Allowance regulations outlined above.

8.11 This seems in effect to be intended as a threshold of materiality. The assumption behind this rule appears to be that below a certain threshold (in terms of the scale of study being undertaken) it should be within the means of a student to finance their own study. One would not expect the government to lend someone money to pay for a half-day course, for instance.

8.12 Within that context, it is not clear why the reason for the student’s reduced tuition fee (in this case as a result of credit recognition and transfer or recognition of prior learning) should make a difference as to a student’s ability to self-finance the study. Therefore no change is recommended.

Recommendation 17

| Recommendation: | That part-time part-year students should be treated consistently, in terms of eligibility for student loans for fees, and no distinction should be made for students who are only part-time part-year because the student had some credit conferred. |
| Responsible agencies: | The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development |
| Process for consideration: | No decision needed – continuation of status quo |

**Student support for recognition costs**

8.13 Another issue that has been raised is that the tuition fees component of the Student Loan cannot be used to borrow for credit recognition or recognition of prior learning fees, which may lead to unintended consequences.
8.14 Before we consider this issue, however, it is worth looking briefly at the fees charged. Based on the survey of providers undertaken for the Review in 2005:

- The fees for processing applications for credit transfer vary from $25 to $80, but are typically around $45 per paper/course.
- The fees for recognition of prior learning at providers also vary widely, with applications handled on at least a partial cost recovery basis. A typical cost for a candidate is approximately $1,500, but they have been known to reach $2,000 for a full 120-credit qualification. On top of this there may be incidental costs incurred by candidates in travelling to the place of assessment.

8.15 The question is whether students should be able to use the Student Loan Scheme to finance these fees. On the one hand, it may be argued that these processes are not considered ‘education’ per se and they do not receive funding from the Tertiary Education Commission, so why should they be subsidised indirectly through student loans? On the other hand, the tuition fee component of the student loan can be used for many charges that are not directly educational, such as health levies. These, however, are compulsory and are therefore regarded as part of the ‘cost of entry’ to enrolment at a provider.

8.16 The main consideration, however, is that lack of an ability to borrow may create a perverse situation where a student opts to forego the credit transfer or recognition of prior learning process even though the potential savings in tuition fees is greater than the cost of the recognition process.

8.17 This can occur because the student can borrow for tuition fees whereas they currently have to finance the recognition process upfront. In this way, a lack of liquidity can mean a student pays more than he/she needs to. Moreover, since every dollar borrowed has a net cost for the government, the government is paying more than it needs to as well, particularly since a student’s financing of the recognition process is likely to mean they require an increased tuition subsidy.

8.18 It should be noted that non-compulsory costs can currently be funded through the Course-Related Costs component of the Student Loan Scheme, but for many (though not all) students the maximum of $1,000 is already fully-subscribed in paying for course texts and a bond for accommodation, etc.

8.19 The Review considers that in principle fees for credit recognition and recognition of prior learning should be allowed as a tuition cost for student loan purposes when enrolling for study. In other words, students should be able to borrow for recognition process fees under the tuition fee component, rather than the Course-Related Costs component.

8.20 However, recognition process fees should not be allowed as a stand-alone payment if the candidate is not studying. (This only applies to recognition of prior learning; it is effectively impossible for a student to receive 100 percent of a qualification through credit transfer.) There are some risks at the margin here but we would suggest this rule would be largely self-regulating: if too great a proportion was recognition of prior learning then the study would not be loan-eligible anyway, for the reasons stated above (paras 8.10–8.11).

8.21 It is also worth acknowledging that there may be some compliance costs on providers from this policy as a result of changes to the Verification of Study process.
**Recommendation 18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That the student loan contract be changed to include charges for credit recognition and recognition of prior learning/recognition of current competency as part of the allowable tuition costs that can be borrowed, so long as the student would have been eligible to borrow for tuition costs without these charges.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>Advice to Ministers, possibly as part of the Budget process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 9. The role of the Tertiary Education Commission

9.1 The Tertiary Education Commission has an important role to play in the area of ‘pathways and staircasing’, but in general the Review does not consider that this requires the need for specific ‘pathways and staircasing’ initiatives. Rather, it is a matter of ‘pathways and staircasing’ being factored in throughout its general activities.

9.2 As set out in Chapter 4, our proposition is:

That the Tertiary Education Commission should consistently include the need to foster and maintain good pathways and staircasing in tertiary education, alongside other considerations, when developing and implementing strategic resourcing, monitoring and capability development processes.

9.3 This means, on the one hand, that there is not presently a need for a specific funding mechanism to support ‘pathways and staircasing’. On the other hand, ‘pathways and staircasing’ considerations ought to be part and parcel of things like Tertiary Education Commission’s funding decisions, the way Investing in a Plan is implemented and the implementation of the TEO Component. This also has application to portfolio analysis work, the design of the learner survey and the treatment of bridging programmes. These matters are discussed in more detail in the course of this chapter.

9.4 There is one area that stands aside somewhat from this general proposition, however, and that is recognition of prior learning. As we will see in Chapter 10, some strategic choices need to be taken about the policy direction for recognition of prior learning, and, depending on the choice made, there may be some funding implications. In particular, the Review is proposing that if an ‘intensive’ direction is taken, it may be appropriate to provide funding for specialist assessment centres. For this reason, recognition of prior learning will be dealt with more specifically in the following chapter, although it will also be covered here in the context of more generalised measures to support ‘pathways and staircasing’.

Incentives within tuition funding

9.5 An issue that was raised from time to time in discussions with the sector was the possibility of using the system of tuition funding to ‘reward’ tertiary education organisations for supporting ‘pathways and staircasing’. It would be fair to say that there was not a consensus in favour of this from the sector but, nonetheless, the Review did receive some strong representation in favour of the idea.61

9.6 Such funding incentives were usually discussed in relation to the individualised processes associated with ‘pathways and staircasing’, ie. applications for credit recognition and transfer or recognition of prior learning. The aim was to use public funding to recognise and defray some of the costs to tertiary education organisations that are associated with these processes.

9.7 It is not clear to the Review that individualised processes should necessarily be the priority rather than articulation. If the latter, this would imply more of a focus on number of students moving from one place to another rather than on application numbers. But, nonetheless, let us look at the case for the former.

The costs of individualised processes are both direct and indirect. The direct costs incurred in processing credit transfer and recognition of prior learning applications generally appears to be greater than the fees charged. Processing an application for credit transfer can take as much as one working day, and this is provided that the learner has supplied all the relevant information. Otherwise, it could take even longer.

Alongside this, however, there are indirect costs associated with the loss of student enrolments that results from the awarding of credit. The amount of credit conferred through these processes is deducted from the course-load that may be claimed in tuition subsidies. The student tuition fee is also reduced accordingly.

The real impact on tertiary education organisations, however, is subject to some debate. It has been argued that recognition processes might actually be quite cost-effective for them. These processes may lead to enrolments that would not otherwise occur: some students would be disinclined to study if they had to ‘start from scratch’, but might be encouraged to do so if credit is offered.

The strength of this countervailing effect has been challenged, however. The counter-argument was made at the Review’s May 2006 sector reference group that, for instance, a small-scale single-year course could easily become unviable to run if a learner has received, say, 25 percent of the credit elsewhere. This is particularly the case for some capital-intensive trades courses, which are expensive to run and often have a low limit of student numbers.

There are a variety of other considerations, of course, such as the extent that transfer flows between tertiary education organisations are reciprocal. This might be particularly the case, for instance, with regard to ‘change of address’ credit transfer within a sub-sector, ie. instances where a student begins a qualifications at one provider but ends up completing an equivalent qualification at another provider.

Nevertheless, the Review accepts the point that recognition processes are probably not self-financing. On balance, however, we do not feel that building incentives into the funding formula, to award recognition, is a practical or necessary option at this juncture.

Looking at the issue of practicality first, it would be a challenging task to design a formula that could meet all of the required characteristics. To begin with, it would need to be designed in a way that was effective in the sense of actually changing tertiary education organisation behaviour, and without too much dead-weight cost (paying for outcomes that would have occurred anyway). In addition to that, we would need to consider the impact of this new incentive on incentives relating to other objectives both within ‘pathways and staircasing’ (eg. programme articulation) and outside it (eg. retention/completion). All of this would also need to be done in a way that did not overly complicate the funding system or create perverse incentives.

Alongside this, the Review also considers that the need for such a measure is reduced due to some changes already announced or proposed.

First, the proposal in Chapter 8 to allow students to borrow for recognition fees will make it easier for tertiary education organisations to recover the costs of recognition processes. They will either be able to increase their fees to more fully cover the direct cost of processing the applications or (particularly if fee levels do not increase) there will be an increase in the number of applications, which will create economies of scale.

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62 As discussed in Chapter 2, the loss of tuition subsidy is not the case for ITOs in relation to recognition of prior learning, which they are funded for, but it does affect ITOs with regard to credit recognition and transfer.
Secondly, the effect of the Next Steps funding changes will be to reduce the opportunity-cost to a tertiary education organisation of recognising students’ previous credit in place of their requiring students to enrol for the study again. This is because the capping of tuition funding will mean that equivalent full-time students (EFTS) at the margin may tend to be unfunded anyway.

In summary, the idea of, say, paying a small ‘bonus’ to a tertiary education organisation for each credit they recognised is an attractive proposition. However, the cost of doing this would add up. For instance, if credit equivalent to 2 percent of EFTS were recognised each year at a rate of just $10 per credit (ie. $1,200 for a full years’ worth of credit, which equals 1 EFTS) then based on 245,000 EFTS in 2005, this would cost nearly $6 million a year.

From a tertiary education organisation perspective, if the government were willing to inject an additional $6 million a year into the sector, would it be their top preference that this was done as an incentive on recognition processes, rather than going to top up basic funding rates or through some other mechanism?

Similarly, from a government or student perspective, it is not clear why recognition processes should specifically be incentivised when a variety of other desirable behaviours are not (for instance, the government has recently decided against any direct incentive in the funding formula to reward high rates of retention and completion).

Moreover, appropriate credit recognition is not simply something tertiary education organisations should do, but something they are obliged to do. This might make it particularly difficult to justify prioritising this over other objectives as something the government rewards tertiary education organisations for doing.

There may, however, be other considerations in relation to recognition of prior learning, that make the funding of assessment centres appropriate. We return to this in the following chapter.

### Recommendation 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That no changes to incentivise ‘pathways and staircasing’ be included in the funding formulae for tertiary tuition.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agency:</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of further development of the Next Steps programme</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### The funding of individual programmes

Rather than put in place special funding mechanisms in relation to ‘pathways and staircasing’, it would be better for the TEC to make ‘pathways and staircasing’ part and parcel of its general decision-making processes.

In this respect, the Review considers that further education outcomes should be one of the considerations that the TEC takes into account when deciding whether or not to fund a programme.

In discussions with the sector, this proposal has received cautious reactions in terms of how such a process might take place. However, it seems likely that this caution reflects two misconceptions.
The first misconception is that we are proposing a new activity on the part of the TEC (deciding whether or not to fund a course). Quite the contrary – the task of making judgments on whether or not a particular programme should be funded is the very reason why the TEC was established in the first place. Moreover, while some of the refinements in the Next Steps programme place a complementary weight on organisation-level planning (see Investing in a Plan below), the Review understands that decisions about individual programmes will definitely be part of the framework as well.

Indeed, we are advised that the TEC is currently setting up a risk monitoring framework based on establishing an evidence-based model that is able to predict ‘concerns’ over provision. This is in keeping with a ‘management by exceptions’ approach to assessing the strategic relevance of programmes.

The second misconception is that the inclusion of further education outcomes as a consideration in funding decisions would mean that programmes that did not have any arrangement for subsequent study would always be penalised.

This is not the intention. As stated in Chapter 6, not every qualification needs to lead on to another course. Some qualifications may legitimately stand alone. The issue is with qualifications that should lead somewhere but do not.

Even where the lack of established pathways for further study seems problematic, in most cases this would not on its own trigger further action. There would usually need to be other reasons for concern as well. An exception might be where the tertiary education organisation, as part of its basis for seeking funding, had claimed that the programme would lead students on to further study.

Where the TEC did take action, this would be to undertake formal ‘assessment of strategic relevance’ discussions about the programme. This process would provide further opportunity for the tertiary education organisation to put forward a reasonable explanation for the lack of education pathways (and any other causes of concern), before the TEC made a funding decision.

In this context, the Review considers it eminently reasonable that the TEC should take into account information about further education opportunities, as appropriate, when deciding whether to investigate a programme.

The means for the TEC to do this can be found in our recommendation in Chapter 6. If entries on all qualifications are required to state the opportunities for further education that a learner will obtain from that qualification, this will provide the TEC with an authoritative and timely information source. The TEC might wish to supplement this with its own information on ‘pathways and staircasing’ when reaching a decision, eg. official data on progression rates (in the case of a course that is already established); or supplementary evidence required from the provider.

### Recommendation 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That Register information on the lack of clear opportunities for onwards progression be used as an indicator of the need to undertake assessment of strategic relevance discussions about a course, particularly where further education has been stated as an intended outcome of the course.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agency:</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the development of its risk monitoring framework</td>
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</table>
9.34 The main opportunity for the TEC to encourage a greater focus on ‘pathways and staircasing’ may reside in the newly-announced ‘Investing in a Plan’ approach. A key component of the Next Steps programme, Investing in a Plan places greater accountability on tertiary education organisations for their performance across a range of areas.

9.35 Full details of the approach are still being worked out in consultation with the sector, but key aspects of it are that:

- the funding process will include not only an agreement to provision in stated areas but also a commitment by the tertiary education organisation to performance across a range of dimensions
- the tertiary education organisation will then need to demonstrate performance in relation to its commitments, at least in part through a set of evidence-based indicators and benchmarks, and
- lack of proper reporting and/or inadequate performance will result in sanctions, primarily in the form of greater levels of intervention from the TEC.

9.36 Investing in a Plan provides a great deal of scope to enhance the focus on ‘pathways and staircasing’ in a way that complements rather than simply reinforces the role of the quality assurance system. The Review therefore considers that ‘pathways and staircasing’ should be included amongst the range of dimensions where tertiary education organisations need to demonstrate performance.

9.37 Inclusion of ‘pathways and staircasing’ is important, not least because those dimensions required to be covered by the Plan will be seen as the ones that are important, with any other issues seen as second-order – or at least not a priority at the moment. For this reason, the exclusion of pathways issues from the areas covered by the Plan would not simply be a continuation of the status quo; it would have to be seen – in comparative terms at least – as a demotion for these issues.

9.38 So how would the inclusion of ‘pathways and staircasing’ as an Investing in a Plan performance dimension work? It is not possible to be absolutely precise at this stage, as there are many aspects of Investing in a Plan still to be decided, including what the other performance dimensions will look like. However, the following should be seen as some of the key components of how ‘pathways and staircasing’ would fit within this approach.

9.39 Performance monitoring in relation to ‘pathways and staircasing’ should focus on results, as measured by the educational diversity of the incoming student population. In other words, does the provider have students coming in with a range of previous educational experience, and, if not, what proactive measures is it taking to change this?

9.40 The focus on results in terms of incoming students has the advantage that it will place responsibility upon higher-level providers on the receiving end of a learning pathway. This complements the recommendations on further education outcomes in Chapters 6 and 7, which tend to place more responsibility onto the initial (usually lower-level) qualification at the start of the pathway.

9.41 The Review is advised, however, that outcomes for students is likely to be another of the dimensions measured as part of Investing in a Plan. For lower-level providers at the beginning of a pathway, therefore, an ability to show that a fair proportion of their students went on to further education may be important, especially if employment outcome rates are not high.
9.42 Investing in a Plan performance monitoring would also complement the quality assurance process, which focuses primarily on having good formal processes for dealing with individualised applications (credit recognition and transfer, recognition of prior learning) and then adhering to them in practice. The Investing in a Plan obligations would tend to focus on articulation and admission, rather than directly on these individual-level processes. However, it may be that a provider finds that the best way to remedy a perceived paucity of students coming in from other providers is to strengthen and/or better promote its credit transfer processes.

9.43 In terms of how these results are measured, Investing in a Plan will have some predetermined indicators but there will also be some onus on tertiary education organisations themselves to find ways to “demonstrate performance”.

9.44 The Review considers that tertiary education organisations should be given room to come up with their own ways of showing that they have good pathways into their provision – particularly as there are not really any established measures available for this. As the system evolves, it may be that certain measures evolve into the accepted best practice for measuring ‘pathways and staircasing’.

**Recommendation 21**

| Recommendation: | That ‘pathways and staircasing’ be included as a performance dimension against which tertiary education organisations make commitments and are monitored, within the Investing in a Plan approach, with a particular focus on the educational diversity of the incoming student population. |
| Responsible agency: | Tertiary Education Commission |
| Process for consideration: | As part of further development of the Next Steps programme |

**Supporting particular initiatives**

9.45 While we are not advocating funding for ‘pathways and staircasing’ in the sense of ongoing formula-based funding, it may from time to time be useful for the TEC to help finance particular initiatives that strengthen ‘pathways and staircasing’ within the sector. This would not imply treating ‘pathways and staircasing’ as a special case, however.

9.46 Rather, it would simply mean taking ‘pathways and staircasing’ into consideration when allocating whatever general funding might be available to advance the government’s objectives in tertiary education. At present the way this occurs is through the Strategic Development Component of the funding framework, which includes contestable funding streams such as the Innovation and Development Fund.63

9.47 So far as the Review is aware, no Strategic Development Component funding thus far has actually been used to support an initiative that advances ‘pathways and staircasing’ within the tertiary education system. However, a sense of the potential for such initiative can be gained from considering one Innovation and Development Fund initiative that looked at strengthening ‘pathways and staircasing’ between secondary and tertiary education.

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63 Other funds within the Strategic Development Component include: the e-Learning Collaborative Development Fund, the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP) Business Links Fund, the Growth and Innovation Pilot Initiatives, Design Education Initiatives, the Quality Reinvestment Programme and Partnerships for Excellence.
This is the *National Secondary Tertiary Curriculum Alignment Project*, which was granted funding in 2003 and then again in 2005. It grew out of the Secondary Curriculum Alignment project initiated by Manukau Institute of Technology, which involved close collaboration with neighbouring secondary schools to establish clear pathways based on curriculum for students transitioning from secondary to tertiary education. The TEC funding is being used to extend this pilot project nationally, with the results to be implemented in schools in 2007. More information about the project can be found at [www.manukau.ac.nz/initiatives/cap/](http://www.manukau.ac.nz/initiatives/cap/).

This initiative highlights an important feature of providing funding for particular initiatives, which is that it can be an effective way to ‘grease the wheels’ of collaboration between providers. This is particularly the case if the funding rules actively encourage collaborative proposals (as is the case, for instance, with the e-Learning Collaborative Development Fund).

The TEC’s approach to support for particular initiatives is, however, about to undergo a major overhaul as part of the Next Steps programme. A new *TEO Component* is to be introduced, which will be funded in part from a rationalisation of, and transfer of funding from, the existing contestable funds. As stated in the June Cabinet paper on changes to the funding system, the TEO Component will provide “the government’s contribution to costs that support providers to focus on their specific and distinctive roles in the network of provision”. The diagram below shows the intended elements of the TEO Component.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Component</th>
<th>Innovation Fund</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A formulaic approach will be used for calculating the core component wherever possible. This part of the component will in effect be a ‘base grant’.</td>
<td>Part of this fund is aimed at supporting major changes in provision. This funding will be allocated on the basis of negotiation, based on individual circumstances, but within a fixed cap and on the basis of competitive proposals. The amount of funding will diminish over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A part of the Core Component will be negotiated, within a fixed total. This will address costs that reflect the individual contributions of particular providers to the network of provision and are unique to those providers.</td>
<td>The remaining part of this fund will promote and support innovation. It will be allocated competitively (as with current innovation funds) and reward providers who propose projects that could result in significant gains in outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The TEO Component approach differs in a variety of ways from the Strategic Development Component:

- It makes greater use of negotiation between the TEC and the tertiary education organisation (although there is still a contestable element in the Innovation Fund).
- It involves a mix of ongoing and time-limited funding, depending on the purpose, whereas the current contestable funds can only finance time-limited projects.
- It is more integrated into a single funding stream, which will be linked in with Investing in a Plan, whereas the current funds tend to operate relatively independently from one another.

The potential for negotiated and/or ongoing funding will broaden the opportunities available to advance ‘pathways and staircasing’ (as they will for other issues).

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9.53 In particular, there seems to be ample scope for a cross-sector project that might significantly advance the amount of articulation between qualifications, in a similar way to the way the Secondary Curriculum Alignment is advancing articulation with schools. This would complement, and help tertiary education organisations to address, the recommendation about incorporating an expectation about articulation with existing programmes into the course approval process (Chapter 7).

9.54 Another possible use of TEO Component funding might be to help build up the networks of pre-arranged credit transfer in the sector. The concept of pre-arranged transfer is discussed further in Chapters 11 and 12 and the proposals there may in fact lend themselves to funding through the TEO Component.

9.55 Such initiatives would be best undertaken on a whole-of-sector, rather than subsector, basis, however. The improvement of articulation or pre-arranged credit transfer arrangements within a subsector, without also doing so between subsectors, could be quite counter-productive to good ‘pathways and staircasing.’

**Recommendation 22**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That provision be made for ‘pathways and staircasing’ activities to be supported through the Tertiary Education Organisation Component, particularly in areas such as facilitating greater amounts of articulation between qualification and pre-arranged credit transfer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agency:</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission, in consultation with the sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the Next Steps programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bridging courses**

9.56 The Review distinguishes bridging courses from other kinds of foundation/preparation courses in that bridging courses take place at the provider offering the programme that the learner is being prepared for.

9.57 Bridging programmes therefore tend not to encounter the same kinds of barriers in terms of lack of credit recognition or mismatch with the entry criteria of the next programme. Rather, they tend to represent an attempt by the providers of more advanced qualification to ‘reach down’ to give learners a ‘hand up’, so they can participate in further study on an equal footing with their peers.

9.58 The Review affirms the value of these bridging programmes as an element of ‘pathways and staircasing’. Moreover, it is worth noting that bridging education practitioners have been working together to lift the standing of this area of provision over recent years:

Since 2000 there has been a concerted effort to develop cohesion and identity across bridging programmes through the New Zealand Association of Bridging Educators. The impact of bridging education has been the focus of small scale outcome studies and while this work identifies the success bridging education has had in making tertiary study accessible, there is also much work to be done to reduce the cost to students. A survey of bridging programmes in six tertiary providers found a high representation of Maori and Pasifika students (18 percent and 27 percent respectively.)

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The move, as part of the Next Steps programme, to place clearer boundaries around what different organisations should be focusing on (‘distinctive contributions’) may result in the need for more bridging courses. The establishment of fences will also require the provision of ‘stiles’ to ensure that learners have accessible pathways across the tertiary education field. The TEC will need to take account of these issues in its provisions for funding bridging courses.

There may also be an emerging need for providers of postgraduate education to look at the idea of bridging courses between a bachelors degree and postgraduate study. This may be important in some circumstances in relation to certain aspects of content, or to developing a person’s skills in research methodology, or both.

Recommendation 23

**Recommendation:**

That the important contribution that bridging courses, particularly bridging courses into degrees, can play in supporting ‘pathways and staircasing’ be taken into account when designing and implementing the approach to reinforcing the ‘distinctive contributions’ of different parts of the sector.

**Responsible agency:**

Tertiary Education Commission

**Process for consideration:**

As part of further development of the Next Steps programme

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**Portfolio analysis**

Portfolio analysis is one of five discrete but inter-linked types of review that the TEC carries out to help direct public funding towards tertiary education that is relevant to New Zealand’s broad economic, social, cultural and environmental goals. These review types vary in scale, focus and duration.66

A portfolio analysis is essentially an information analysis exercise, focusing on discrete areas of tertiary provision. It provides an evidence base to support decision-making in the sector. Three portfolio analyses have been announced:

- a project to develop a better interface between the health sector and tertiary education, so that the workforce needs of the health sector can be met (in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and District Health Boards New Zealand)
- an analysis of tourism to support tourism industry strategic development (in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Leadership Group), and
- an analysis of teacher education to develop an understanding of tertiary provision in teacher education for the compulsory education sector (in collaboration with the Initial Teacher Education Strategy Group comprising officials from the TEC, Ministry of Education, NZQA and the Teacher’s Council).

These portfolio analyses provide a useful opportunity to identify any gaps in the learning pathway in the subject area being investigated.

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66 The other four types of review are Strategic Reviews (such as this one on ‘pathways and staircasing’), vocationally-oriented reviews, Assessment of Strategic Relevance of PTEs and other reviews focused on particular issues of concern (such as the recent review of A1 and J1 provision).
These sort of 'missing rungs' in a qualification sequence have the potential to prevent a lower-level qualification progressing onto a higher-level one. For instance, the main entry-point onto a qualification sequence might be a level 4 certificate (which may include credits at levels 3 and 4), but there may also be a level 3 certificate available from another provider. The next qualification in the sequence might be a restricted entry degree, and entrance requirement for the degree (which covers levels 5–7 of the Register) might involve credits at level 4. This would be fine for students with the level 4 certificate but would create problems for those with the level 3, as those students would be looking for a more advanced certificate that fitted in between the skills they already had and the starting point for the degree.

In reality, we do not know how often this really occurs. As previously discussed, a large number of higher-level qualifications are open entry, particularly for adult students. That means even if there is a gap in terms of what we have described in Chapter 6 as basic articulation, this will not prevent a student from gaining entry to the course.

Therefore the best approach with this issue of progression is not to actively prioritise it with specific initiatives, but to be on the lookout for the possibility of such gaps through portfolio analyses.

There may also be scope for picking up the gaps in a qualification sequence when the TEC undertakes vocationally-oriented reviews. These are carried out in response to concerns (as they arise) about a possible mismatch between tertiary provision and the relevant industry’s current and future skill need. A recent example is the dive review.

**Recommendation 24**

| Recommendation: | That ‘portfolio analyses’ (and, where appropriate, vocationally-oriented reviews) should include consideration of whether there are gaps that prevent a lower-level qualification from progressing onto a higher one, either because the design of the two qualifications is not compatible or because there is the need for an intermediate qualification between the two. |
| Responsible agency: | Tertiary Education Commission |
| Process for consideration: | In the course of individual reviews |

**A learner survey**

The proposal to undertake a regular learner survey arose as part of the design of a performance measure for tuition funding. The TEC is currently working with the Ministry of Education on further design of the performance measure. Final decisions about whether such a survey will proceed, and, if so, in what form, have not yet been taken.

If the survey does proceed, it would potentially provide a valuable opportunity to track progress in relation to ‘pathways and staircasing’, and, in particular, student satisfaction with credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning processes.
While monitoring progress in this area is important, the Review is sceptical about using purely quantitative measures such as the volume of applications and/or approvals. The New Zealand Qualification Authority’s online survey of providers indicated that there is not a consistent approach to the recording of applications for credit transfer. More than half of the respondents indicated that they had received no successful applications for credit transfer in the previous year. At the other extreme, some respondents reported several hundreds of successful applications. This is likely to reflect differing reporting practices as much as any actual variance between providers.

Alongside the consistency issue, is the fact that such figures do not capture deterrence. In many cases, a learner may not apply because they do not feel the system is supportive. Ideally, one could get around this by finding a reliable way to measure regularly the level of student satisfaction with the opportunities available for credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning.

The learner survey would be a valuable way of collecting a satisfaction-based measure of this kind. However, as has been mentioned before, one needs to be careful with a project like this not to lose sight of the fact that this is only one subject area within tertiary education. Collecting information on ‘pathways and staircasing’ is not the main purpose of the learner survey, and with survey instruments like this there is always the risk that they get overloaded with functions as a result of different groups all putting forward their priorities.

Having said that, it is reasonable to at least ask that this particular request be taken into consideration in the design of the learner survey.

**Recommendation 25**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That consideration be given as to whether it would be practical to include a question on learner experiences with credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning in the learner survey.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agency:</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of further development of the Next Steps programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 10. Recognition of prior learning

10.1 The Tertiary Education Strategy 2002–07 is clear about the value of recognition of prior learning.\(^{67}\) Learning recognition is part of Objective 7 of the Strategy, which aims that by 2007 “diagnostic and recognition of prior learning (RPL) devices”, amongst other mechanisms, would “make it easier for learners to build from their knowledge and skills base”. Recognition of prior learning is also seen as having a role in empowering Māori learners (Objective 12).

10.2 The various contributions that recognition of prior learning can make, as identified by stakeholders, are usefully summarised in a report for the European Commission by ECOTEC Research & Consulting Limited:

- **The needs of the knowledge economy.** Recognising non-formal and informal learning experiences offers an opportunity for increased labour market and geographic mobility.

- **Meeting business needs for a qualified workforce.** Validation of non-formal and informal learning allows employers to identify employees’ training needs as well as their skills and job requirements more accurately.

- **Improving access to the formal education system.** Validation of non-formal and informal learning is required to provide direct ways to gaining formal qualifications or as door openers to higher education courses.

- **Improving the efficiency of the education and training system.** Depending on the non-formal and informal learning acquired by individuals, their period of participation in the formal system until they obtain a given qualification can be accelerated and cost savings achieved. This can benefit education providers as well as those seeking qualifications.

- **Providing opportunities for disadvantaged or excluded people.** Validating non-formal and informal learning also has an important social dimension. Validation of acquired competences helps the socially excluded to re-integrate into the labour market and society as a whole.\(^{68}\)

10.3 But if there is general agreement that recognition of prior learning is ‘a good thing’, there is rather less clarity about what would constitute an effective system of recognition of prior learning in New Zealand. As set out in Chapter 4, our proposition is:

> That the government and the tertiary education sector need to come to a consensus about whether the approach taken to recognition of prior learning should be an ‘extensive’ one or an ‘intensive’ one, and that the regulatory environment will need to reflect the approach taken.

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\(^{67}\) Except where otherwise indicated, recognition of prior learning is used in this chapter to refer to any assessment based upon, or credit given on the basis of, learning or competencies that have been acquired outside of the formal education system. This includes activities described as ‘assessment of prior learning’ and ‘recognition of prior learning’. The issue of achieving commonly agreed nomenclature for this area of tertiary education is discussed in para 10.25 below.

The need for clarity

10.4 The policy expectations around recognition of prior learning have a generally supportive tenor to them, but it is not entirely clear from them exactly what sort of recognition of prior learning environment is being aimed for.

10.5 In order to explain this point further, it is useful to take the perspective of the learner: what can a learner reasonably expect from the tertiary education system in terms of recognition of prior learning?

10.6 If we are to take literally many of the official sources, the short answer is: quite a lot.

10.7 The quality assurance requirements for recognition of prior learning parallel those for credit recognition and transfer:

A Quality Assurance Body is expected to “satisfy itself as to the standard and quality of every course for which approval and/or accreditation is sought in regard to . . . the adequacy and appropriateness of the regulations that specify . . . recognition of prior learning”.

10.8 As explained in Chapter 7, in practice, all quality assurance bodies see these requirements (as they relate to credit recognition and transfer) to mean that a course has to have processes in place that are “documented, explicit, and challengeable”.

10.9 The clear inference that one would draw from this therefore is that every tertiary education organisation needs to have valid systems in place to provide recognition of prior learning for a student who applies for it (and pays the appropriate fee) in any programme that they offer.

10.10 This sort of expectation is reinforced somewhat by the TEC, which currently requires in its Profile content and criteria, that every tertiary education organisation must state in its Profile where stakeholders can access its policies and processes for (amongst other things) recognition of prior learning.

10.11 The result of all this is that a whole range of providers, from small private training establishments to large universities, have official recognition of prior learning policies in place. This raises some questions. Are all of these providers genuinely offering recognition of prior learning? And, if so, how robust is it? Or is there a divergence between official statements and actual practice?

10.12 One possibility is that these are merely ‘paper requirements’, which nobody really expects tertiary education organisations to adhere to. Yet apparently this is not the case. The Review is aware of an instance where a provider was required to take corrective action following a quality assurance body audit because one of the individual departments looked at in the audit did not have recognition of prior learning procedures in place.

10.13 On the other hand, discussions with the sector indicate quite clearly that recognition of prior learning is not available ‘on demand’ for every programme. A manager from one large tertiary education institution told the Review that this institution only offered recognition of prior learning for students in two relatively specialised programmes.

10.14 There therefore appears to be, at least in some instances, a disjunction between what the sector considers to be reasonable and what official policy requires quality assurance bodies to expect from the sector. Such a situation is in nobody’s interests, and requires clarification.

10.15 In saying this, the Review is not intending to be critical of providers, nor of quality assurance bodies, nor officials. The current mismatch between policy and practice seems to have been arrived at, over time, through no deliberate action by any party.
There is one feature of the way things have evolved that the Review would identify as being worth avoiding in the future, however. This is the tendency from time to time to make recognition of prior learning policy as an adjunct to decisions about credit recognition and transfer. Recognition of prior learning is often discussed alongside credit recognition and transfer in policy documents, and it seems in some cases to be simply ‘tacked on’ to credit recognition and transfer provisions. This is undoubtedly done with the best of intentions and represents a general wish to support ‘pathways and staircasing’, but doing so without reflecting on whether those provisions really are applicable to recognition of prior learning has the potential to lead to inappropriate expectations in this area.

In any case, as set out in the proposition at the beginning of this chapter, there is a need now to make a clear choice about how to treat recognition of prior learning so that we can ensure that consistent and effective systems are in place to support practice in this area. The Review considers that the choice is essentially between two broad approaches:

- an ‘extensive’ approach, where, as with credit recognition, all tertiary education organisations are expected be able to undertake recognition of prior learning for all programmes offered, or
- an ‘intensive’ approach, where the focus is on building centres of expertise in recognition of prior learning.

The members of the Review team do have a view about which of these two approaches would be preferable, and this is set out in the following section of this chapter. What is more important, however, is that some general consensus is arrived at on which of the two should form the basis of policy in the future, and that everyone commits to that, rather than each party continuing to operate on the basis of its own preferred approach.

**Recommendation 26**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That a programme of work be undertaken on the future direction of recognition of prior learning, and that additional funding be provided for this work.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agencies:</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission, for advice to the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the overall negotiation of the tertiary education work programme with the government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expectations about what a learner can expect in relation to recognition of prior learning will need to become much more specific. This means asking some fairly blunt questions. Should every private training establishment need to offer recognition of prior learning? Does a prospective humanities student need the option of recognition of prior learning at any university in New Zealand, or is it reasonable if only one or two do so, but have top-quality and supportive processes in place? (In saying that, however, we need to recognise that mature students, for whom recognition of prior learning is most relevant, tend to be less able to travel to study.)

As this work primarily relates to the qualifications system and expectations in terms of the quality assurance process, it is likely that NZQA is best placed to lead this work. Nonetheless, as it is likely to have flow-on implications for other areas of policy, the other agencies ought to be involved as well.
Once decisions are made it will be important that the gazetted criteria for quality assurance accurately reflect the approach taken, and that other policy requirements (such as Profile conditions and criteria) are also aligned with the approach where necessary.

**Recommendation 27**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That a process of sector engagement be undertaken to develop common expectations about when and to what extent recognition of prior learning ought to be offered (i.e. whether to adopt an ‘extensive’ or ‘intensive’ approach), and that these expectations subsequently be reflected in the gazetted criteria.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agency:</td>
<td>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority with support from the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the need for consensus goes wider than simply a choice between ‘extensive’ and ‘intensive’. As described in Chapter 2, there is a lot of previous work on recognition of prior learning that has largely passed out of the collective memory, and which we now need to recover or repeat.

Moreover, the process leading up to the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy in 2002 helped to embed a shared understanding and expectations for credit recognition. It is suggested that the development of national principles and guidelines could provide a parallel opportunity for recognition of prior learning.

This process may be able to build on some previous work in this area, such as the ‘Draft Assessment of Prior Learning Guidelines’ from 1997 mentioned in Chapter 2 and included in Appendix 3. We can also look to the Australian experience in this regard as a set of national principles and guidelines has recently been put in place there. Once again, NZQA is the agency best placed to undertake this task.

It is also important that this process result in some general agreement on terminology. Over the course of this Review, we have encountered a wide variety of different views about the appropriate use of language in this area, often passionately held. Some of this relates to preferred terms (e.g. ‘recognition of prior learning’ vs ‘assessment of current competency’) and some of it relates to exactly what is encompassed within a particular definition. There may therefore need to be some willingness to compromise, as, in the end, the advantages of having consistent usage throughout the sector outweigh the merits of any particular terminology.69

It may also be worth considering whether there is value in using different terms to denote different ways in which informal learning can be formalised. In particular it might be worth distinguishing between, on the one hand, the process of providing credit for broader, more holistic understandings gained through life experiences, particularly in relation to degree-level study; and, on the other hand, the arguably more straightforward task of assessing the skills a person already possesses in relation to specific tasks, particularly in the context of competency-based qualifications.

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69 It is worth emphasising that the Review does not advocate any particular terminology. The use of ‘recognition of prior learning’ in this report should not be seen as advocacy for this term, but rather a reflection that this is the term used in most official publications (the gazetted criteria, Tertiary Education Strategy, etc).
10.27 One option would be to use a term like ‘recognition (or assessment) of prior learning’ in the former case, and a term like ‘recognition (or assessment) of current competency’ in the latter.

Recommendation 28

| Recommendation: | That a set of national principles and guidelines for recognition of prior learning be developed, including agreed terminology and definitions. |
| Responsible agency: | New Zealand Qualifications Authority (in consultation with tertiary education organisations and quality assurance bodies) |
| Process for consideration: | As part of the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26) |

The case for an intensive approach – the view of the Review team

10.28 The views set out in this section represent the personal position of the members of the Review Team, which may be useful in helping to inform the debate that we have proposed on the future direction of recognition of prior learning. Ultimately, however, getting consensus around one approach or the other is more important than the particular approach chosen. So the arguments made in this section cannot be seen as a substitute for the consultative process recommended in the previous section.

10.29 We believe there are risks with an ‘extensive’ approach where all providers are expected to be able to offer recognition of prior learning for all courses. Recognition of prior learning in particular is quite a difficult process that requires expertise. This is particularly the case when one moves outside of the sphere of competency-based qualification.

10.30 There are real risks to the educational integrity of recognition of prior learning if it is undertaken by those without the appropriate expertise. It could lead to situations where students are over-credited for their previous experience and then find themselves unable to cope with the course. Potentially a learner could even be given a full qualification inappropriately, although this may be a little far-fetched in practice.

10.31 In Chapter 7, appropriate credit recognition was framed as a student right. Recognition of prior learning should not be seen in that way. It is desirable that many learners should have the option to have their experience recognised somewhere in the system, but they should not expect to be able to have it recognised anywhere they want.

10.32 Rather, the aim for the further development of recognition of prior learning should be more modest in coverage but more ambitious in content. We should aim to ensure that:

- all recognition of prior learning processes are high quality and educationally valid, and
- wherever practical, prospective learners with non-formal learning should be able to go somewhere within the system to have this recognised.

10.33 The way to achieve this is for government agencies and the sector to work together to identify and foster a limited number of sites within the sector where there is existing expertise in the assessment of non-formal learning. This will allow critical mass to be built up in a few places rather than practice in this area being spread thinly across hundreds of providers, some of which might only receive one application for recognition of prior learning every few years.
In this way, a situation could be created in which students and providers from across the sector would be able to use the services of these expert centres. Of course, individual providers could still choose to undertake recognition of prior learning within their own organisation if they preferred.

This approach has similarities, but also important differences, to the model currently operating within the institute of technology and polytechnic sector through the Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning (CAPL) model mentioned in Chapter 2. The four CAPL centres share a common methodology and sometimes share work if there is a particularly large or complex application.

On the whole, however, their work is internally focused, in that each centre deals with applications from students from its own institution. The centres are able to offer recognition towards one another's qualifications (and for those of UCOL, which is also part of the Tertiary Accord of New Zealand), as well as a range of national qualifications, which their institution does not offer but is accredited for, but it does not appear that this generates many applications.

By contrast, we are suggesting a situation in which an operation of this kind would have much more of a focus on applicants enrolled with (or about to enrol with) other providers, as well as catering to locally-enrolled students.

There may be some temptation to seek to have ‘the best of both worlds’ by adopting a mixed approach that accommodated both ‘intensive’ and ‘extensive’ recognition of prior learning. In our view, this would be the least satisfactory outcome.

Both the ‘intensive’ and ‘extensive’ approach have the virtue of providing both learners and tertiary education organisations with a clear set of expectations. Therefore, either could form the basis for a concerted effort to strengthen recognition of prior learning practice. A mixed approach, on the other hand, would tend to pull in two directions and is likely to be ineffective.

It is worth noting, also, that our advocacy on an ‘intensive’ approach does not extend to industry training, a point to which we return below.

**Funding for assessment centres?**

The current regulatory environment tends to reflect an implied ‘extensive’ approach. Therefore, although it may take a few years before a choice between an ‘extensive’ and ‘intensive’ approach is made, it is worth giving some thought at this stage to what would need to change if an ‘intensive’ approach were to be adopted.

One suggestion that was considered during the Review was that TEC funding could be provided for specialist assessment centres. These might operate on a regional basis and could either be run independently or attached to a tertiary education organisation.

Such a centre would assess applications for recognition of prior learning. It would then make its decision available to the learner, who could use it in applications to any provider. To be successful, decisions would have to be broadly acceptable both to education providers and to prospective learners. (It is possible that the centre might in some cases be able to deal in a similar way with assessing applications for credit recognition.)

As foreshadowed in the previous chapter, the Review considers that there is a case for funding for ‘assessment centres’ in the future, but only if a decision is taken to adopt an ‘intensive’ approach. The ‘assessment centre’ idea would help to reinforce concentrations of existing expertise in the recognition of prior learning field rather than spreading expertise thinly across all providers.
To some extent the lack of any funding available for recognition of prior learning has helped to maintain a ‘culture of amateurism’. Those parts of the sector where real expertise resides have been unable to really make their mark with, and sell their services to, other providers because there is no funding involved. Instead, most providers have developed their own in-house processes, with uneven results. The funding of focused ‘assessment centres’ could help to address that.

In this scenario, funding would go to a small handful of standout performers rather than across-the-board to all providers. This means it would be resourced through a performance-contract approach rather than needing to make amendments to the general formula for funding (as considered in Chapter 9). This also contains the fiscal risk associated with the proposal, as it would involve a fixed amount of funding to support basic capacity, rather than a variable amount based on volumes.

The development of the TEO Component, described in the previous chapter, may also mean that assessment centres could be resourced without having to create a whole new fund to do so. What has been announced about the TEO Component so far would seem consistent with the idea of saying to the host provider of an assessment centre, “that is a useful service there; we are prepared to pay you a certain amount each year to support it, in return for certain undertakings”.

It would be premature to attempt to design the funding of assessment centres in detail at this stage. No decision has been made about whether to undertake an ‘extensive’ or ‘intensive’ approach, and the approach will need to dovetail in with aspects of the Next Steps programme that are still being developed. However, the inset box overleaf outlines one model of how it might work, which may assist to communicate the concept further.

### Recommendation 29

| Recommendation: | That, if a decision is taken to adopt an ‘intensive’ approach to recognition of prior learning, funding be provided (possibly through the TEO Component) to help resource a small number of expert ‘assessment centres’ within providers. |
| Responsible agency: | Tertiary Education Commission |
| Process for consideration: | Policy decision subsequent to the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26) |

The funding of ‘assessment centres’ would not be compatible with an ‘extensive’ approach, as this would require all tertiary education organisations to become ‘centres’. The only way that funding could be used to support an ‘extensive’ approach would be through the funding formula, but we have already (in Chapter 9) discussed the disadvantages of this.

The Review therefore considers that the main change needed to support an ‘extensive’ approach is the extension of Student Loan borrowing eligibility to recognition of prior learning, as recommended in Chapter 8.
The job of the ‘assessment centres’ collectively would be to provide a recognition of prior learning service available to all providers in the tertiary education sector.

The TEC would not determine in advance how many ‘assessment centres’ were needed. Rather, it would indicate a certain amount was available for sufficient ‘assessment centres’ to cover the entirety of the sector, and invite applications. It might be that one centre could make a case for getting the full contract, or there might be a handful of centres, on either a regional or subject-specialty basis (one could envisage, for instance, a provider specialising in assessing people’s life-experience in relation to social work and related programmes). Since the money would be fixed there would be a limit to how many centres would be viable.

Assessment centres would be expected to operate in a co-operative way to ensure full coverage of the sector (although they might also compete for business amongst themselves at the same time).

Funding amounts would be based on a business case rather than being tied to volumes achieved. This funding would tend to cover the centre’s fixed costs.

The assessment centres would also recover their costs through a fee that the provider would pass on to the student (who could borrow for this – see Chapter 8). This would tend to cover the centre’s variable costs.

It would seem fair for the TEC to expect each centre to increase its cost-recovery as it got better established and increased its intake, so the annual TEC funding might decrease after an initial start-up period. But there would be an ongoing need for some base funding from the TEC.

Providers would have discretion about whether to use an ‘assessment centre’ or continue to provide recognition of prior learning in-house, and also on which ‘assessment centre’ to use. In this sense, centres would be operating in what is largely a market model. This might mean that some less successful centres may not prove viable, once the initial start-up period finishes and TEC funding decreases.

Assessment centres would be able to offer providers other services as well, on a cost-recovery basis. This might include credit recognition services, and possibly even some resources for assessment within programmes. The TEC may or may not choose to provide additional base funding in recognition of this wider range of services.

Assessment centres would be required to be transparent and consistent about their fees. They would not be allowed to charge students at their host institution a lower rate than other providers, nor could they have, for instance, a discount for institute of technology and polytechnic students. Similarly, they could not refuse to offer services to certain subsectors or individual (quality-assured) providers. However, they could decline where a service was outside their remit (eg. if they only covered the Central North Island, or only covered trades qualifications, or only covered degree-level provision).

The overall funding for assessment centres should be for pan-sector provision, not disaggregated by subsector and centres should be allowed and encouraged to offer services across subsectors. Indeed, the TEC should not allow any centre to operate exclusively within a particular subsector, as that would tend to advantage the more established sectors (universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics) and disadvantage the new ones (wānanga and private training establishments).
The role of Industry Training Organisations

10.51 We have already seen, in Chapter 2, that Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) have a quite distinct profile in relation to recognition of prior learning. Most, if not all, ITOs are active in recognition of prior learning, often in a way that combines recognition-based credit and training-based credit organically. While the volume of recognition of prior learning activity in this subsector is indeterminate, it seems likely to be high – quite possibly more than in all other parts of the sector combined. This is not surprising, since the industry training subsector is also the only one that receives funding for carrying out recognition of prior learning.

10.52 That being the case, it seems sensible to make ITOs an exception from the general recommendation that a choice needs to be made between ‘intensive’ and ‘extensive’ provision of recognition of prior learning. ITOs are clearly operating within an ‘extensive’ model at present, and it seems sensible that this continue, whichever direction policy goes in for the rest of the sector.

10.53 The exceptional nature of industry training in this regard is not only supported by current practice, it is also consistent with three of the fundamental characteristics of the sector.

• First, ITOs are not providers: they do not themselves undertake teaching or assessments. Rather, their job is to purchase a range of teaching and assessment services that meet the needs of their industry.

• Secondly, in theory at least, ITOs are mutually exclusive of one another (in practice there may some overlap at the margins), with each ITO uniquely responsible for meeting all of the skill needs of the industry for which it is responsible.

• Thirdly, the focus of industry training is on the skills of those already in the workforce, which includes ensuring that informally acquired competencies are able to be effectively used in the workplace.

10.54 The interaction of these three points means that an ‘extensive’ approach to recognition of prior learning is virtually inevitable for ITOs. When an industry wants its existing skill-base recognised (focus on the existing workforce), then its ITO has to be the one to make that happen (mutually-exclusive), but it can arrange that as part of a bundle of services from a range of agents that may range from large providers to individual assessors (purchaser).70

10.55 This also indicates why recognition of prior learning can be seen as integral to the job of an ITO, and therefore something that ought to be funded on an ‘extensive’ basis, whereas this is not the case for recognition of prior learning at providers.

10.56 It might be suggested that workplace-based recognition of prior learning should be funded at a lower rate than training, as in some of the Australian states. A number of considerations need to be borne in mind in relation to this, however.

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70 In fact, the notion of having ITOs operate extensively would be theoretically compatible with having the actual provision of recognition of prior learning operate intensively – one could for instance envisage a large number of ITOs all purchasing from the same small group of specialist prior learning assessors. However, this has not tended to be the case in practice.
First, it should not be assumed that recognition of prior learning necessarily costs less than formal training. A Training Opportunities pilot initiative a few years ago looked at the cost of recognition of prior learning compared with training delivery. It was found that due to the significant processes that need to be undertaken with recognition of prior learning it was in fact no cheaper than training delivery. Recognition of prior learning is hardly ever a matter of simply measuring what somebody knows. Typically, assessment is itself part of a learning process – it gives some acknowledgement and respect to the learner but is also couched in terms of the opportunity for them to safely show what they can do and in terms of ‘learning to learn’.

Secondly, even where recognition of prior learning may cost less to deliver, the fact that it is funded at the same rate as other aspects of industry training can be seen as part of the necessary ‘overs-and-unders’ within the system. There are not just two components to the system (recognition of prior learning and formal training), but a range of different training and training-related activities with differing degrees of resource-intensiveness, including standard and qualification development and maintenance, national moderation, etc. One could not really reduce funding for one of the lower-cost elements of the equation in isolation. One would need to consider whether other more expensive rates also need to move to separate funding rates, or whether the standard rate needs to be increased.

Thirdly, and related to this, industry training is funded at a much lower per-unit rate than other parts of the tertiary education system, particularly the Student Component. Part of this is to reflect the expectation of an industry contribution. But it also reflects, to some extent, the inclusion of (possibly) lower-cost elements such as recognition of prior learning, which pulls down the average cost of industry training compared with the Student Component.

Fourthly, unlike most other parts of the system (at present), ITOs regularly carry unfunded training places. Moreover, it is generally expected that they will do so. In some cases, these unfunded places may amount to a significant proportion of the overall total. The ability to receive funding for recognition of prior learning can provide a valuable financial buffer that allows ITOs to carry these unfunded places.

In short, therefore, any move to remove or reduce public funding for recognition of prior learning in industry training could only really be undertaken in the context of revisiting how and at what level industry training is funded overall.

Recommendation 30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That recognition of prior learning within industry training continue to operate an ‘extensive’ approach with funding per credit at the same rate as for training.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agency:</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>No decision needed – continuation of status quo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strengthening understanding and practice**

Regardless of the general approach taken to recognition of prior learning, there are some basic things that ought to be done to strengthen this part of system. There should be support for a more consistent professional approach to recognition of prior learning, wherever it occurs, building on the principles and guidelines recommended above.
In order to do this, however, there is a need to improve the state of knowledge in recognition of prior learning in New Zealand. The visibility of recognition of prior learning within the tertiary education sector is not high; no nationally comparable statistics are available; and very little research has been undertaken in this area in the last 10 years.

More information is needed about the state of recognition of prior learning, both quantitative and qualitative. In this regard, it is worth noting the contrast with Australia, where statistics, though imperfect, have been available for some years and a number of excellent studies have been undertaken recently, at least in the vocational education and training area, including:

- Recognition of prior learning in the vocational education and training sector (NCVER, 2003)
- *Valuing recognition of prior learning: Selected case studies of Australian private providers of training* (NCVER, 2004), and

There is a need to commission some similar sorts of work in New Zealand. The scope of this work spans the functions of the Ministry of Education, the TEC and NZQA. For this reason, it would be appropriate for the three agencies to work together to draw up a combined research and information-gathering programme in relation to recognition of prior learning and recognition of current competency, which might be implemented over multiple years.

As part of this, there is a need to get better numerical data as well, both in relation to recognition of prior learning activities in Student Component-funded providers and in relation to recognition of prior learning activities in industry training.

There may be some reluctance in relation to the former area, since, at present, the government does not provide any funding or incentives for providers to carry out recognition of prior learning.

It might be considered that the converse argument applies with industry training: that it is counter-productive to highlight recognition of prior learning within industry training and the fact that it is funded at the same rate as training activities, as this will make it a target. On the whole, the Review does not accept this argument, particularly not when it comes to the collection of quantitative information about recognition of prior learning in industry training.

Industry training is an important locus for recognition of prior learning – possibly the most important – and it will only be possible to maintain and enhance recognition of prior learning through the tertiary education sector if we can learn more about its incidence in industry training. (It is also worth noting that, given the significant amount of public (and industry) funding involved, there is a legitimate public interest in understanding the ways in which Industry Training Fund money is used.)
Moreover, the Review considers that the risk of an adverse reaction will be mitigated if, as intended, greater information about recognition of prior learning in industry training is gathered alongside information on provider recognition of prior learning and in the context of the greater awareness and understanding about recognition of prior learning throughout the sector that should result as part of the process of developing the set of national principles and guidelines proposed above.

Clear, consistent and widely-agreed definitions of recognition of prior learning – also an intended result of the process proposed above – will also be a prerequisite for being able to collect reliable quantitative information from any part of the sector.

Even with well-developed definitions, the methodological difficulties should not be underestimated. In practice there may be a fine line between recognising newly-acquired competencies and new discovered competencies, and it may be very difficult to distinguish what is recognition of prior learning and what is not. This may be particularly the case within the industry training system. After all, for the majority of industry training there is no classroom and no teachers nearby, so where the knowledge came from is hard to pin down, ie. the current job, the written materials, a previous job within the same organisation, etc.

There is another potential difficulty that is unique to industry training. Since ITOs, unlike providers, have funding at stake here, the collection of quantitative information about recognition of prior learning could be perceived as a threat by ITOs, although it is not intended as such. If this occurs, then (given the sort of definitional issues just mentioned) it would be difficult to ensure that under-reporting could not occur, and this would defeat the purpose of the exercise, ie. to gain a reliable understanding of recognition of prior learning activity in this subsector.

For all the reasons just given, it would be best for government agencies to look at a range of options for gathering quantitative information about recognition of prior learning. Given the sensitivities involved and the scale of recognition of prior learning within industry training, options involving industry training would need to be worked out in close consultation with the Industry Training Federation. In relation to provider recognition of prior learning, it may be acceptable to work with individuals with technical expertise, rather than sector representatives.

It is worth emphasising that, while it might initially seem obvious for credits gained as a result of recognition of prior learning in industry training to be identified within Standard Training Measure (STM) reporting, this is not a recommended approach. It might be seen as providing an information base for future funding reductions, and might therefore result in under-reporting. There are other, less threatening and more reliable ways to obtain the information, such as some sort of separate survey of ITOs.

Measurement of the incidence of recognition of prior learning across the tertiary education sector ought to be repeated periodically, although it would not be necessary for it to be done annually – every five years might suffice. This is necessary to identify changes in the incidence of recognition of prior learning over time.

For instance, it is likely that the use of recognition of prior learning by an ITO will tend to reduce as it becomes more established, both in general and in particular parts of its industry. One might expect therefore a downward-sloping curve, but punctuated with increases when the ITO moves into new areas of business. A one-off survey would fail to pick up these sorts of complexities. Similar patterns are likely with provider recognition of prior learning, for instance, when new programmes aimed at more experienced learners are first introduced.
There may be potential for this work to be carried out in a way that allowed comparison with a previous survey of recognition of prior learning in the tertiary sector (including ITOs) that was conducted for NZQA in 1996 as part of the Assessment of Prior Learning Research Project (as mentioned in Chapter 2).

Recommendation 31

| Recommendation: | That a research and information-gathering programme be developed and implemented in relation to recognition of prior learning, covering:
|                | • commissioned research into issues and practices relating to recognition of prior learning in New Zealand
|                | • the collection of periodic numerical information on recognition of prior learning at tertiary education providers funded through the Student Achievement Component, and
|                | • the development, in consultation with the Industry Training Federation, of a means of collecting periodic numerical information on recognition of prior learning within industry training. |
| Responsible agency: | The Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority |
| Process for consideration: | As part of the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26) |

Another key strand to supporting good-quality recognition of prior learning is that practitioners should congregate and share best practice. Practitioners themselves need to take ownership of this, but government agencies can assist, particularly, in the early stages. This could possibly be done through a conference or a forum. The soon-to-be-established National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence may be best placed for this role and the Review requests that the Centre consider co-sponsoring such an event, along with relevant sector organisations.

Recommendation 32

| Recommendation: | That support be made available for a conference or forum bringing together recognition of prior learning practitioners from across the sector to share best practice and discuss issues and challenges. |
| Responsible agency: | National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence |
| Process for consideration: | As part of the prioritisation of its work programme |

There is one specific aspect of recognition of prior learning practice that is worth mentioning. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in Australia has recommended the use of short programmes that teach recognition of prior learning applicants what they need to know in order to undertake the process (see inset box following). Recognition of prior learning practitioners in New Zealand, and the providers they work for, may wish to look at this option.
A modular approach to supporting recognition of prior learning (RPL)

One registered training organisation offers students the opportunity to enrol in a module, *Preparation for skills recognition*, to provide them with extensive support in preparing their RPL application. Students learn skills of self-assessment as well as the skills and knowledge they need to understand VET (Vocational Education and Training), particularly in terms of the qualification for which they are seeking recognition. On completion of the module, students submit their completed RPL application and are granted recognition on the basis of it. The module itself is not assessable. This approach gives teachers the time to deliver the skills and knowledge required for students to successfully understand the RPL concept and the evidence requirements.

An RPL module in which students can enrol would ensure they receive the close support required in preparing for skills recognition. The module is additional to a student’s program of study. A teacher is allocated to the module as a facilitator and support person, and the hours are counted as part of the teacher’s annual load. This approach highlights that RPL is a learning process in its own right. It also acknowledges teachers’ time involved in supporting and implementing RPL. Thus the module approach could provide a cost-effective, practical and beneficial process to recognition for candidates, funding for the teaching department and acknowledgement of the teacher’s effort against their annual teaching load.


10.81 However, it would also be worth government agencies investigating this as-yet relatively untried area of recognition of prior learning and considering what potential it has to, for instance, broaden recognition of prior learning participation. If this approach were felt to have potential then it would also be worth considering to what extent the funding system might present barriers to providers offering programmes of this kind.

### Recommendation 33

| Recommendation: | That consideration is given as to whether there is value in programmes that teach recognition of prior learning applicants what they need to know in order to undertake the process, and, if so, to what extent the funding system might present barriers to providers offering programmes of this kind. |
| Responsible agency: | The Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority |
| Process for consideration: | As part of the proposed ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme of work (recommendation 26) |

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It is worth noting that in the early days of the National Qualifications Framework there was a national standard registered that covered recognition of prior learning preparation for learners (alongside standards for recognition of prior learning practitioners), although it was subsequently withdrawn.
Chapter 11. Some specialised areas

11.1 This chapter covers some specialised areas that did not fit tidily in any of the previous chapters, namely:

- national qualifications
- the role of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement
- Māori qualifications, and
- the diversity of learner populations.

11.2 This discussion covers two propositions:

*That the design of all new or revised qualification ought to take into consideration how best to link with other qualifications in the same field, throughout the sector, so as to facilitate student movement between qualifications.*

and

*That the principles, propositions and policies relating to ‘pathways and staircasing’ apply to the relationships between all quality-assured qualifications in New Zealand, including at every level of the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications, in every subsector and in every cultural context.*

National qualifications

11.3 The articulation between one national qualification and another generally occurs automatically. But in a system characterised by a mix of local qualifications and national qualifications, it is important that learners with national qualifications are also able to have the skills they have learned recognised with appropriate credit if they undertake further study through local qualifications. This is particularly the case since almost all degrees are local qualifications.

11.4 As noted previously, appropriate credit recognition should be considered a right for all learners. However, if a student undertakes a national qualification, then it also seems reasonable that they should be able to know in advance how much (if any) credit they can expect towards further study in the same qualification sequence on the basis of that national qualification (ie. credit transfer should be ‘pre-arranged’ as discussed in Chapter 12). National qualifications should by definition be quite central elements in a qualification sequence, rather than peripheral elements. Therefore, this seems to be a fair expectation for students to have.

11.5 In many cases, of course, national qualifications are already well-recognised through standardised credit transfer arrangements. For example, it is common for universities to have standard arrangements in place for how much credit towards an Engineering degree the New Zealand Certificate of Engineering is worth. However, this is not the case with all national qualifications.

11.6 The primary responsibility for negotiating standardised credit transfer arrangements for a national qualification rests with the Standard Setting Body that develops and maintains that qualification. These are:

- Industry Training Organisations National qualifications for specific industries and professions. ITOs are responsible for about two-thirds of the standards on the National Qualifications Framework.
National qualifications for Field Māori. Recognised Māori experts, in partnership with the Māori Qualifications Services, form expert groups known as ‘Whakaruruha’ to set national qualifications.

National qualifications that are not the responsibility of an ITO or MQS, including generic qualifications.

(In addition, the Ministry of Education is considered the Standard Setting Body for the NCEA.)

11.7 Given NZQA’s overarching leadership role in the area of quality-assured qualifications, it is appropriate that, as well as supporting the national qualifications for which it has direct responsibility, it also supports ITOs in their negotiations for pre-arranged credit transfer.

11.8 On the whole, the approach of negotiating qualification by qualification and provider by provider has not been the approach that NZQA has taken to securing recognition for national qualifications. Instead, its priority has been to ensure that there is a common understanding about the value of a cohesive qualifications system in general, and to promote the credibility of national qualifications as a category amongst the general public and throughout the tertiary education sector.

11.9 This is important work and certainly needs to continue. However, looking at things pragmatically, there may be a limit as to how much this can accomplish in terms of the recognition of specific qualifications. Moreover, it may be that by also convincing tertiary education providers of the credibility and relevance of specific national qualifications, there may be a positive flow-on effect for the credibility of national qualifications in general.

11.10 It needs to be acknowledged, however, that negotiating qualification by qualification and provider by provider can be resource-intensive. Both NZQA and the ITOs have a range of other priorities they need to address. Moreover, the providers who will be the targets of these negotiations would have difficulty managing requests about a large number of national qualifications simultaneously.

11.11 There is, therefore, a need to proceed strategically. The Qualifications Authority should work with the ITOs to assess which national qualifications are lacking in credit transfer arrangements, and then determine the qualifications where it is most important to negotiate such arrangements. This may include consideration of the number of students affected, how critical further study is to the efficacy of the qualification, and contribution to other government objectives. NZQA could then work together with relevant ITOs to negotiate with providers to achieve credit transfer arrangements. It may also be advantageous to negotiate with providers in groups where they are agreeable to this, rather than individually.

11.12 The specific role of Māori Qualifications Services in relation to Field Māori national qualifications is discussed further below.

**Recommendation 34**

| Recommendation: | That the national qualifications that are the top priority for achieving standardised credit transfer arrangements with local qualifications offered by tertiary education providers be identified, and that active negotiations be undertaken with relevant providers to achieve this. |
The role of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement

11.13 One of the most powerful impacts on pathways, particularly to degree-level, is likely to be the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), as it gets embedded and its influence begins to be felt. Having NCEA, as the sole official school qualification (though individual schools have chosen alternatives), means that National Qualifications Framework standards have become the basis for university entrance (see inset box following).

11.14 The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors’ Committee and CUAP have accepted this new system and indeed put in a great deal of work to make this a workable reality, particularly through CUAP’s sub-committee on University Entrance.

11.15 University Entrance is based on a learner having a specified minimum number of credits in each of three different subject areas. This is called the University Entrance standard. See www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ue/index.html.

11.16 This means a learner could have the NCEA level 3 qualification without having University Entrance. In other words, you can meet the NCEA level 3 requirements but not the University Entrance requirements. For instance, a person might not have the required minimum credit totals in the three subject areas. This also means you could get University Entrance but not the level 3 NCEA.

11.17 The reason why this is important is that NCEA is a competency-based qualification, designed to be broadly compatible with the first three levels of the National Qualification Framework.

11.18 This point should not be overstated however. There are some important differences between the NCEA and other National Qualifications Framework qualifications, most notably the opportunity to use achievement standards as well as unit standards (even though these can theoretically be used in some other National Qualifications Framework qualifications as well). Achievement standards differ from unit standards in that they have four different grades of achievement (not achieved, achieved, merit, and excellence) whereas unit standards have two (not achieved and achieved), and in some cases are externally assessed.

11.19 Nonetheless, the placement of National Qualifications Framework standards at the heart of the University Entrance process does provide, at least in theory, opportunities for providers currently offering qualifications at level 3 of the Register.

11.20 The most important opportunity is that tertiary education providers can actually seek accreditation to offer the National Qualifications Framework standards identified in the University Entrance standard themselves, either in whole or in part. This apparently little-known eligibility, if taken up to any significant degree, could have radical and on the whole positive implications for ‘pathways and staircasing’ both within tertiary education and between secondary and tertiary education.
Alternatively, if providers can establish the equivalency between their own qualification and some or all of the University Entrance requirements, then this provides a strong basis for that qualification to be recognised towards entry to university, or for that matter any other part of the system. This is not as straightforward as it might sound. Equivalence of tertiary courses with the University Entrance standard needs to be assessed rather than simply being accepted as self-evident. Nonetheless, for many providers it would possibly be more effective and efficient than direct negotiation with each university.

A related process currently in place for the recognition of ‘university foundation programmes’ offered outside universities is discussed in the following chapter.

**Māori qualifications**

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority recently proposed the concept of Te Tātātanga (progression) as one of the principles for its Māori Strategic Framework—that “Qualifications lead on to higher level programmes, vocations and meaningful employment”. It is important that ‘pathways and staircasing’ is working effectively with regard to qualifications conceived within tikanga Māori and/or taught in te reo Māori, and that relate to the Māori world, te Ao Māori. These qualifications are referred to in this section as ‘Māori qualifications’.

The most visible grouping-together of Māori qualifications is ‘Field Māori’ within the National Qualifications Framework part of the Register. ‘Field Māori’ is one of 17 classification fields on the Framework. It was introduced to cater specifically for Māori pedagogy, knowledge and skills, and covers a diverse range of areas. Most of the national standards and qualifications registered in Field Māori were developed by the Māori Qualifications Services business unit within the Authority in partnership with Māori experts, but three ITOs have also developed standards in Field Māori on the Framework.

As at August 2006 there were 30 qualifications in Field Māori, as shown below. There were also Field Māori components in many other qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Certificates in:</th>
<th>National Diplomas in:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance of Māori Authorities (Level 3)</td>
<td>Hauora (Māori Health) (Level 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauora (Māori Health) (Level 4)</td>
<td>Māori Business and Management with an optional strand in Iwi Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori (Te Ngutu Awa) (Level 4)</td>
<td>Nga Mahi a te Whare Pora (Pae Tuatoru) (Level 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori (Te Waharoa) (Level 2)</td>
<td>Reo Māori (Level 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori Business and Management</td>
<td>Reo Māori (Level 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori Performing Arts (Performance) (Level 4)</td>
<td>Reo Māori Media with strands in Journalism, Radio, and Television (Level 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marae Catering (Level 2)</td>
<td>Te Mātārangi Māori me te Whakangungu (Level 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nga Mahi a te Whare Pora (Pae Tuaturu) (Level 2)</td>
<td>Tourism Māori (Level 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nga Mahi a te Whare Pora (Pae Tuarroa) (Level 4)</td>
<td>Whakairo (Level 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reo Māori (Level 4)</td>
<td>Whakairo (Level 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reo Māori Media (Introductory Media Skills)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seafood Māori (Customary Fishing) (Level 3)</td>
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<td>Seafood Māori (Customary Fishing Management) (Level 4)</td>
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<td>Te Ao Tuaro (Level 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Te Mātārangi Māori me te Whakangungu (Māori Human Development Theory) (Level 4)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Te Mātārangi Māori me te Whakangungu (Te Tiriti o Waitangi)</td>
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</tbody>
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73 A field is the broadest of the three classification categories used in the Framework. It covers a general area such as ‘Health’ or ‘Engineering and Technology’. Within a field are sub-fields (the names of which are often used for qualifications) and then domains (which normally includes 10–30 unit standards).
11.26 Māori qualifications outside of the Framework are not collectively identifiable in quite the same way. It is not possible, for instance, to search ‘KiwiQuals’, the Register database, for Māori qualifications. And indeed not all qualifications within the Framework that might be thought of as Māori qualifications are registered in Field Māori; for instance, the National Certificate in Iwi/Māori Social Services (level 4) is registered within the Community and Social Services field. Nonetheless, we can still conceptualise a range of qualifications across the Register for which the term ‘Māori qualifications’ is applicable.

11.27 The need for strong ‘pathways and staircasing’ applies amongst qualifications within te Ao Māori (the Māori world). It also applies at what NZQA has called the “the interface between Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Whānui”, the wider society. In other words, we are concerned both with relationships between one Māori qualification and another, and with the relationships between general New Zealand qualifications and Māori qualifications.

11.28 In both cases, these relationships span each aspect of ‘pathways and staircasing’: articulation, admission and selection staircasing, credit recognition and transfer, and recognition of prior learning. Moreover, consistent with the proposition set out above, the cultural context that a qualification originates in does not limit the applicability of the previous chapters. All the principles and practices traversed in this report are relevant to Māori qualifications, and the actions recommended in this paper apply to Māori qualifications just as they do for all others.

11.29 In practical terms, that means that:

- The expectation that articulation with other qualifications in the same qualification sequence will be undertaken as part of the qualification design process, extends to Māori qualifications (as per recommendation 8).
- Students with Māori qualifications have the same rights to fair and appropriate recognition of this previous learning as any other students (as per the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy),
- Māori qualifications should be included in the proposed effort to cross-reference existing mutual credit recognition arrangements so that they can be extended more broadly where practical (as per recommendation 39 below).
- It will be important that practitioners of recognition of prior learning within a tikanga context are included and supported through the development of national guidelines for recognition of prior learning and the conference or forum for practitioners (as per recommendations 28 and 32).
- Owners of Māori qualifications should have the same obligations to include further education outcomes in their Register information as do other qualification-owners (as per recommendation 5).

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74 New Zealand Qualifications Authority, ibid., p. 11.
11.30 It is worth elaborating on that last point, as it has particular applications for Māori qualifications. As with all qualifications, learners and prospective learners need to know what opportunities they will have for further study both within a network of Māori qualifications (Te Ao Māori) and in the network of other New Zealand qualifications (Te Ao Whānui).

11.31 That means that the owner of a Māori qualification needs to be clear in their course regulations, and in the general publicity relating to this qualification, about its relationship both with other Māori qualifications and with Te Ao Whānui qualifications.

11.32 The point of this relates back to the proposition in Chapter 6 – students have a right to know what opportunities for further study they can expect as a result of a qualification. Certainly, as with other qualifications, some Māori qualifications may be intended as stand-alone qualifications. If so, they should be clearly represented as such to the learner.

11.33 There is, however, another possible category that may apply to Māori qualifications but is less likely to apply to other qualifications. It may be that a qualification-developer wishes to design a qualification conceived exclusively within Te Ao Māori and therefore wishes the qualification to relate solely to other Māori qualifications. The arguments for such an approach may derive from a wish to assert the autonomy of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge).

11.34 The Review has some concerns about whether it is in the best interests of the learner for a qualification to be deliberately designed to have no relationship to Te Ao Whānui qualifications. Moreover, from discussions undertaken, we are aware that such concerns are shared by some Māori within the sector.

11.35 In the end, however, the Review considers that it is up to the qualification-developer to decide whether to offer such a programme. And it is up to the learner to decide whether they want to enrol in it.

11.36 Of course, the learner needs to be able to make a fully-informed decision. Therefore, where the qualification-developer intends for a programme of study to relate solely to other Māori qualifications, then that needs to be made clear to learners before they embark on the programme. This should be done through the Register information on further education opportunities that was proposed in Chapter 6.

11.37 While in practice this situation may be most likely to relate to qualifications conceived within a Māori cultural context, in principle the same points apply to any cultural context.

### Recommendation 35

**Recommendation:**

That, where a qualification-owner intends for a qualification to relate exclusively to other qualifications within the same cultural context (such as where a Māori qualification is designed to articulate solely with other Māori qualifications), there should be an expectation that this be made explicit in the Register information on further education opportunities (proposed in recommendation 8).

**Recommendation to:**

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority

**Process for consideration:**

As part of the implementation of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority’s Māori Strategic Framework and the further implementation of the Register
It is important to emphasise that a deliberate rejection of articulation with Te Ao Whānui qualifications is not the only, or even the primary, obstacle to progression for students of Māori qualifications. They might find it difficult to use their qualification to gain entrance or credit in another part of the sector for a variety of reasons. Sometimes this may be unavoidable, because of a limited amount of overlap with the knowledge gained through this previous study.

In other cases, unfortunately, it may be because of unwillingness on the part of other providers to consider how much articulation there is between the Māori qualification and their own. In many instances, of course, this can be a complex and time-consuming process as it may be necessary to gain an understanding of the cultural context as well as the content of the qualification.

Nonetheless, it is important that tertiary education organisations, especially the owners of major qualifications, take responsibility for ensuring that linkages with Māori qualifications occur. In particular, we must avoid a situation where Māori qualifications become ‘accidental orphans’, not recognised by any other qualifications in their qualifications sequence.

When it comes to new qualifications, the course approval expectation around articulation proposed in Chapter 6 should help in this regard. In addition, the proposed focus on the educational diversity of the incoming student population as part of Investing in a Plan (chapter 9) should make tertiary education organisations offering higher-level qualifications more focused on the need to build pathways in from Māori qualifications.

However, quality assurance bodies will also continue to have a major responsibility in this area to give a voice to owners of Māori qualifications where necessary.

**Recommendation 36**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That quality assurance bodies be responsive to any concerns raised by owners of Māori qualifications about providers not consistently applying their credit recognition processes in relation to Māori qualifications, or being willing to consider articulation with Māori qualifications when designing or revising their programmes.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation to:</strong></td>
<td>CUAP, AAU, ITPQ and NZQA (AAA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process for consideration:</strong></td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority’s Māori Strategic Framework, and as individual issues are raised with quality assurance bodies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As noted above, a number of Māori qualifications are national qualifications under the jurisdiction of NZQA’s Māori Qualifications Services. Consistent with the recommendation above about national qualifications in general, the Review considers that Māori Qualifications Services should take an active role in promoting the integrity of these qualifications and, in particular, negotiating for them to be recognised by general qualifications in the same qualifications sequence.
However, this responsibility should not be left to Māori Qualifications Services alone. In order to address any reluctance to recognise Māori qualifications on the part of general providers, it will be important to emphasise that NZQA as an organisation believes in and promotes the integrity of these qualifications. The Chief Executive and board of the Authority would need to play a leadership role in this, as will any consultative or advisory bodies established as part of NZQA’s Māori Strategic Framework (which had not been published at the time of writing).

Recommendation 37

| Recommendation: | That the Māori national qualifications that are the top priority for achieving standardised credit transfer arrangements with local qualifications offered by tertiary education providers be identified, and active negotiations with relevant providers be undertaken to achieve this. |
| Recommendation to: | The New Zealand Qualifications Authority |
| Process for consideration: | In concert with the process in relation to other national qualifications proposed above, and as part of the implementation of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority’s Māori Strategic Framework |

The diversity of learner populations

As New Zealanders become increasingly diverse, there will almost certainly be a greater need for programmes taught in languages other than English and Māori and conceived wholly or partly within the context of other cultures.

Already there are notable examples in the languages and cultures of the Pacific Islands such as in early childhood education. The Pacific Islands Early Childhood Education (PIECE) sub-field on the National Qualifications Framework has two national certificates and a range of unit standards, most of which would need to be done in a Pacific Islands context. The national certificates are:

- National Certificate in Pacific Islands Early Childhood Education (Parent Helper) with strands in Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, and Tonga, and

Such programmes should not stand in isolation from other tertiary education programmes in New Zealand. Thus, care should be taken to place them appropriately on the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications; and course approval processes should ensure that agreed educational outcomes are given and that articulation arrangements are clear.

The ‘universal application’ proposition at the start of this chapter extends to programmes taught in languages other than English and Māori and conceived wholly or partly within the context of other cultures. Learners in such programmes should not be disadvantaged. In practical terms, that means that:

- The expectation that articulation with other qualifications in the same qualification sequence will be undertaken as part of the qualification design process, extends to these qualifications (as per recommendation 8).
• Students with these qualifications have the same rights to fair and appropriate recognition of this previous learning as any other students (as per the Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy).

• These qualifications should be included in the proposed effort to cross-reference existing mutual credit recognition arrangements so that they can be extended more broadly where practical (as per recommendation 38 below).

• Owners of these qualifications should have the same obligations to include further education outcomes in their Register information as do other qualification-owners (as per recommendations 5 and 35).
Chapter 12. Recommendations to the sector

12.1 This Review was initiated and resourced by the Tertiary Education Commission and so it is appropriate that its primary focus should be on how public policy administered by the Commission and other agencies can best support ‘pathways and staircasing’.

12.2 The Review feels strongly, however, that in the end it is the goodwill and hard work of tertiary education organisations themselves that will determine how effectively learners can move from qualification to qualification within the system.

12.3 Therefore, in this chapter, we address ourselves to the tertiary education sector and make recommendations about some measures it could undertake to strengthen ‘pathways and staircasing’.

Pre-arranged credit transfer

12.4 The Review has already proposed that quality assurance arrangements for credit recognition be refined and that guidelines and examples of best practice be produced. In addition to that, it is worth considering whether there are moves the sector itself could take to make the credit recognition process easier and more automatic.

12.5 In this regard, it is worth distinguishing between two forms of credit recognition and transfer, which we might term reactive and pre-arranged, respectively.

12.6 Reactive credit recognition applies to individual applications. It is therefore often very detailed, particularly to individual students and involves individual assessment. That means it is costly to implement. The processes, polices and protocols can be improved, but the application of them essentially relies upon the individual academic. The difficulties and cost involved in reactive credit recognition and transfer should not be under-estimated.

12.7 Pre-arranged credit recognition and transfer on the other hand is much easier to implement but it can be difficult to put the arrangements in place to begin with. Establishing credit transfer arrangements between providers can be a lengthy and resource-consuming process, so it is not feasible to have arrangements with all other providers. Nonetheless, to a large extent, the greatest gains in terms of both easy transitions for students and lower costs for providers will be achieved by extending the coverage of pre-arranged credit transfer.

12.8 There are two types of arrangements: those that are negotiated and those that are based on ‘case law’, ie. by the documentation of previous decisions that can be used as precedents. The former tends to occur in existing relationships or when there is a natural fit between the providers and/or qualifications involved. The latter occurs when administrators systematise the precedents set by academics in individual decisions over time.

12.9 The question is how could we evolve these arrangements to cover an increasing proportion of the well-travelled tertiary pathways? First, it should be acknowledged that progress in this area is critically dependent on the efforts and goodwill of administrative staff at each provider. It is only by a provider identifying and supporting ‘champions’ at this level that this sort of approach can succeed.
12.10 It is worth noting that most of the arrangements currently in place only include the public sector – private training establishments tend to be excluded. It would be desirable, in the interests of the students studying at those private training establishments, if this situation were to begin to change. On the other hand, one should be cautious about assuming any particular agenda behind these exclusions. The existing arrangements tend to be based around the participation of universities, as they are the dominant providers at the upper end of most qualification sequences. And most universities simply have limited credit cross-over with most private training establishments. (As mentioned previously, no credit can be accepted towards a degree qualification unless it is at level 5 of the Register or higher.)

Recommendation 38

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That tertiary education organisations continue to work together to develop mutual arrangements for pre-arranged credit transfer wherever practical, including making use of regional and other pre-existing networks, which should be expanded to include compatible private training establishments as opportunities permit.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>All tertiary education organisations</td>
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12.11 It may be possible to combine the two as ‘indirect credit arrangements’: case law based on negotiated arrangements. For instance, if Provider A has an arrangement with Provider B; and Provider B has an arrangement with Provider C; then, on the basis of this, the correspondence between credit at Provider A and credit at Provider C may be able to be estimated in some circumstances.

Recommendation 39

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That existing mutual arrangements cross-reference so that they can be extended to indirect credit arrangements where practical.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>The sector, with CUAP, ITPQ and NZQA (AAA) playing a co-ordinating role as required</td>
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12.12 There may also be ways to streamline the process. For instance, the Canterbury Tertiary Alliance has a simple template that any member of the Alliance can use when applying to have a course recognised for credit purposes. This seems a simple and sensible idea that has wider applications.

Recommendation 40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That consideration be given to adopting a standard template for use by providers seeking to pre-arrange credit recognition for a course by another provider, drawing on material already in use as part of current multi-provider arrangements.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>Universities and institutes of technology and polytechnics, in consultation with other subsectors</td>
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Recognition of ‘university foundation programmes’

12.13 In the previous chapter, the role of the University Entrance process was discussed. In addition to the general provisions covered there, CUAP’s Sub-committee on University Entrance also has a process in place for recognition of ‘university foundation programmes’ offered outside universities for the purposes of admission *ad eundem statum* at entrance level.

12.14 However, there is one major caveat: this process is currently restricted to courses for international students. There is a ‘moratorium’ in place on applications from providers who teach domestic students.

12.15 Partially this is likely to reflect caution, as the University Entrance standard based on National Qualifications Framework standards is still new. However, there are other rationales that might support such a ‘moratorium’. There is some possibility of perverse consequences for the school system – senior school students could be tempted to seek University Entrance through a tertiary provider, which would give them access to the Student Loan Scheme. It could also be argued that this use of alternative qualifications for University Entrance could itself weaken the status of the NCEA and/or the University Entrance standard.

12.16 These are genuine issues, but it is not clear that denying domestic students the same chance for recognition of the qualification they have earned (in this case for admission rather than credit transfer purposes) as is granted to international students is an appropriate way of dealing with it.

12.17 Use of the TEC’s assessment of strategic relevance tool would be a preferable mechanism, or, more bluntly, a restriction could be brought into the funding rules. In other words, if there is a public policy reason to discourage such programmes, then there is always the option not to fund them. But if such programmes do proceed, the students involved have the right to have their previous study appropriately considered.

12.18 The Review was advised that CUAP intends to review the moratorium this year. Government agencies should engage with CUAP to develop a better mechanism for addressing this issue than non-recognition of qualifications.

12.19 It should be acknowledged, however, that the direct impact of this would be confined to a relatively small group of qualifications and students. Only broad-based qualifications are really able to apply, and it would mainly matter to those aged under 20 (although there could be flow-ons for mature students applying for restricted courses).

**Recommendation 41**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That the moratorium on applications for recognition of ‘university foundation programmes’ offered outside universities where these are offered to domestic students be removed.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>The Vice-Chancellors’ Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of its scheduled review of the moratorium</td>
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</table>
The use of national qualifications

12.20 In Chapter 2 we described how the current qualifications system was set up with a view to national qualifications having a central role, but that providers often opted for local qualifications instead. It was noted that a sometimes-inflexible attitude on the part of a then newly-established New Zealand Qualifications Authority may have contributed to this. Providers felt that they did not have the freedom to deliver the national qualification in their own way.

12.21 The Authority’s approach to national qualifications has long since changed and is now much more flexible. However, in many cases, the providers have not revised their position to recognise this and are still delivering as a local qualification a programme that could easily be accommodated within the framework of the national qualification.

12.22 Branding may be a consideration. Providers may feel that by adopting the national qualification, their programme would lose its identity. But that need not be the case. A distinction can be made between the qualification awarded and the way the programme is delivered. Indeed, one of the most well-known tertiary education programmes today (for both positive and negative reasons) is Te Wānanga o Aotearoa’s Mahi Ora, yet what is much less widely appreciated is that this is a programme leading to the National Certificate in Employment Skills, which is offered by 28 other tertiary education organisations.

12.23 The unnecessary proliferation of qualifications covering similar content makes the task of negotiating appropriate articulation, arrangements for admission and credit recognition that much more difficult.

12.24 For this reason, the Review encourages providers currently offering a local qualification in an area also covered by a national qualification to investigate the pros and cons of gaining accreditation for their programme to lead to the national qualification.

12.25 This will generally only apply to non-degree provision, as very few subject areas are covered by national degree qualifications.

Recommendation 42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That providers consider the option of offering national qualifications rather than local qualifications wherever possible.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>Providers currently offering a local qualification in areas also covered by a national qualification</td>
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</table>
Chapter 13. Some related issues

13.1 ‘Pathways and staircasing’ is a distinct issue but it does not operate in isolation from the rest of the tertiary education system. Moreover, as will be apparent from the range of policy issues covered in the previous chapters, it touches on virtually every aspect of the system.

13.2 Inevitably, then, the Review has had cause to consider some issues that do not solely or even primarily relate to the issue of ‘pathways and staircasing’. This chapter therefore includes recommendations on some related issues that agencies may wish to consider.

Provision of quality assurance information to the TEC

13.3 A wider issue that came up when considering the interface between quality assurance and TEC funding decisions was, how can the information about credit recognition and transfer collected as part of the quality assurance process help inform the TEC’s decisions? This goes to the heart of the interface between quality assurance and a strategic funding system, and is very pertinent to issues raised by the Next Steps programme.

13.4 Consultation during this Review has highlighted a consensus for quality assurance bodies to be reluctant to refer information gathered as part of the quality assurance process to the TEC. This related not only to the provision of confidential information but also to proactively highlighting specific findings from reports that were public documents. Quality assurance bodies were unconcerned if the TEC were to use their public reports as a resource, but tended to feel that it was up to the TEC staff to analyse these for themselves.

13.5 There is a clear rationale for this point of view. The quality assurance process is based on a certain degree of mutual trust between provider and assurance body, even though the latter is charged with exercising statutory powers in relation to the former. The possibility of information provided in this context resurfacing in another context, and possibly being misinterpreted, might be felt to have a ‘chilling’ affect on quality assurance interactions. Similar limitations have on occasion arisen in the stewardship monitoring area, where the Tertiary Advisory Monitoring Unit (TAMU) has felt constrained from passing on privileged information to other government agencies.

13.6 There is, however, a genuine trade-off here. To the extent that quality assurance information can be shared with the funding body, with assistance from the quality assurance body in interpreting it, this is likely to lead to better-quality funding decisions. The feedback can also work the other way, leading to better quality-assurance decisions as well.

13.7 This point was recognised by the independent Panel who undertook the recent audit of CUAP. They commented:

. . . there are instances where CUAP may have reservations about the position of the programme within a coherent and balanced system. In such cases CUAP should bring their concerns to the attention of the institution and the TEC as part of the approval process.75

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75 Audit Report. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors’ Committee: Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), p. 6.
13.8 The alternative may be to create significant duplication of information collection between these two parts of the system. This could increase compliance costs for the sector, and might lead to a call for regulatory functions to be rationalised.

13.9 It may however be that this trade-off is not as intractable as it initially seems. It may simply be a matter of agreeing on the appropriate threshold for a quality assurance body to notify the TEC, and on the best formats for sharing information.

13.10 On the matter of the threshold, there is no disagreement that a quality assurance body should advise the TEC when it has used its statutory powers, either to withdraw accreditation, approval or registration, or to place conditions on continued accreditation, approval or registration. At the other end of the spectrum, nobody would argue that the TEC needed to be alerted on every aspect of the quality assurance process.

13.11 The question, then, is where on the continuum between these extremes should the threshold lie? A possible answer is at the point when a quality assurance body issues a provider with ‘action points’ of issues to remedy, which will then be scrutinised in a subsequent follow-up audit.

13.12 On the format side of things, there may be useful exchanges that can occur on a thematic basis rather than reporting on a particular provider. For instance, processes such as the Interagency Dynamic Risk Management Framework might provide useful points of engagement for quality assurance bodies. (The Interagency Dynamic Risk Management Framework group is a multi-agency panel made up of officials from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, the TEC and NZQA, which considers emerging risks within the tertiary sector from a variety of perspectives.)

**Recommendation 43**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That an agreement be reached on the appropriate thresholds and formats for quality assurance bodies to provide information on issues arising during the quality assurance process to the Tertiary Education Commission.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>NZQA and the TEC working together with CUAP, NZAAU and ITPQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
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**A Record of Learning for the full Register**

13.13 When looking at the promotion of the idea of learning as a lifelong endeavour, the Review looked at systems and structures that might enhance the visibility of this idea. This included the Record of Learning. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority currently administers a Record of Learning system which keeps track of all the credits and qualifications a learner has achieved in a single place. However, the Review came to the conclusion that it was not currently possible to actively promote the Record of Learning because it only covers qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework. Qualifications that are on the Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications but not on the Framework are not included.
Might it be possible however to create a Record of Learning for the Register? After all, as information technology becomes increasingly ubiquitous within society, learners are becoming increasingly demanding about access to information about themselves. It is only a matter of time until it becomes a standard expectation for a person to have immediate online access to their academic transcript.

If so, then it seems sensible, at that point, to make available a full ‘academic transcript’ of all of a person’s qualifications. This is more useful to learners and to employers than a fragmented set of records that they have to piece together themselves.76

The Review has investigated this idea with officials from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Ministry of Education. In summary, it seems the answer is that this is potentially an option but that there are a range of technical and conceptual challenges. There would also be inevitable compliance costs for providers in such an undertaking and consideration would need to be given to minimising these.

None of this is going to happen quickly. It would be a number of years before a Record of Learning for the Register was operational. This is all the more reason why it is timely to begin discussing such an idea now. If the process is to be a long one, it is best to commence sooner rather than later. Particularly when, as noted above, pressure is otherwise likely to mount for tertiary education organisations to develop their own, fragmented responses.

It is important that the tertiary education sector itself takes a leadership role in the process. It should not be done as an imposition from the centre but a proactive move by the sector to anticipate and meet the emerging expectations of learners.

Recommendation 44

| Recommendation: | That the idea of developing a Record of Learning for the full Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications and promoting this to learners in a way that reinforces the idea of learning as a lifelong endeavour be investigated. |
| Recommendation to: | Tertiary education organisations, in concert with government agencies |
| Process for Consideration: | As part of an ongoing engagement between the sector and agencies |

**Student complaints**

There was some discussion during this Review as to whether or not there should be advocacy bodies for prospective learners to advance individual cases for transfer of credit and recognition of prior learning. It is not clear, however, why credit recognition and transfer could be regarded as different from other academic issues in terms of the student complaints process needed.

The current system for student complaint works as follows:

76 It is worth noting that until the early 1990s all universities included qualifications gained at any New Zealand university as part of a students’ academic record. This was known as ‘Accumulating the Record’ and was a legacy of the time when they were all part of the University of New Zealand.
All tertiary education providers are expected to have robust procedures to address student complaints on academic matters, which include credit recognition and transfer, including provisions for appeal.

If a student has exhausted all available processes within a provider and is still not satisfied, he/she may appeal to an external students complaints agency.

For students at public tertiary education institutions, the external students complaints agency is the Office of the Ombudsmen.

The Ombudsmen are responsible for addressing public complaints with respect to any public entity, but their role with respect to tertiary education institutions was reinforced, and additional funding was provided for this purpose, in the 2001 Budget.

For students at private training establishments, the external students complaints agency is the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.  

This is because it would not be appropriate, and would create a problematic precedent, for the Ombudsmen to investigate public complaints against private businesses, even if those businesses are in receipt of government subsidies;

Neither the Office of the Ombudsmen nor the New Zealand Qualifications Authority have any power to apply sanctions against a provider if that provider chooses not to comply with any recommendations they put forward after considering the complaint.

It was considered that the power of moral suasion (supplemented by the risk of adverse publicity) would be sufficient to ensure compliance on the part of providers.

Given the concerns specific to ‘pathways and staircasing’ that have been raised during this process, it would be worth consulting about student complaints more generally with the two national-level representative bodies for students, the New Zealand Union of Students’ Associations (NZUSA) and the TEC’s Learner Advisory Committee. If there is a problem with the processes set out above, then it should be dealt with for the student complaints system as a whole.

Recommendation 45

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That student representatives be consulted about whether further work is needed on student complaints mechanisms.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission, with involvement from NZVCC if further work proceeds on this issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process for Consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
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In addition, members of the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers have established a specific students complaints mechanism called the Quality Commissioner, with which they have agreed to voluntarily comply.

There was an instance in 2004 when a provider did temporarily defy the Office of the Ombudsmen but later agreed to comply with its recommendations.
Connection with other publicly funded programmes

13.22 A further issue is the quality assurance of publicly funded programmes that are not funded through the TEC. In some instances, it appears that government agencies have purchased short training programmes, on behalf of clients or their own staff, which have not been quality assured by a formal quality assurance body. This means that in some cases a programme provided through a public agency will not be recognised in future for admission to (or credit towards) programmes in the tertiary sector.

13.23 In any case, as the custodian of the quality assurance system, it behooves the government sector to consistently uphold that system in practice.

13.24 The Review has not investigated the current situation and therefore is not aware of any currently purchased programmes that fit in this category. Nonetheless, it is worth setting a clear principle that such practices should not occur.

Recommendation 46

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That all education and training programmes purchased by government agencies be externally quality assured.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>Government agencies, for advice to the government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
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Thematic reports based on audit of Tertiary Education Institutions

13.25 In Chapter 7 we proposed that Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality and NZQA’s Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit use their audit findings on credit recognition and transfer and recognition of prior learning to produce thematic reports on these topics.

13.26 While the focus in that chapter was on ‘pathways and staircasing’ issues, the same logic applies to any number of issues covered during tertiary education organisation audits.

13.27 The work of quality assurance audit is likely to contain many insights that could usefully be shared. Such thematic reports would also be a way of disseminating innovative initiatives and identifying emerging issues. In this way they would contribute to one of the objectives of audit, which is that it feeds back into informing practice. It would also have the advantage of raising the profile of the quality assurance audits themselves, both within the sector and with wider stakeholders.

13.28 There are already examples of such an approach. The Education Review Office (ERO), which is responsible for quality assurance in the school and early childhood service areas, produces Education Evaluation Reports each year on national educational issues. These reports are based on the information compiled by ERO through its reviews of individual schools and early childhood services. The stated aim is to “give parents, boards of trustees, teachers, government officials and others reliable information to use to improve New Zealand education”.79

79 See www.ero.govt.nz/ero/publishing.nsf/Content/Reports - National Reports.
The New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit also already identifies audit ‘themes’ for its work, although these are addressed within the reports on individual universities. In addition to this, though, it also publishes the AAU Series on Quality (ASQ). This is an occasional series including summary reports following each audit cycle, and occasional papers on topics relevant to academic audit and good practice in university education. The most recent reports in the ASQ series have been *New Zealand universities and Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (March 2004) and *Student Engagement: Measuring and enhancing engagement with learning* (June 2006).80

As mentioned in Chapter 7, however, there is one important issue that would need to be resolved before thematic reports could be introduced: how this work would be resourced. At present the principle for all tertiary education organisation audits is that they should be paid for by the organisation being audited. Should the new thematic reports also be financed, as an ‘overhead’, out of funding collected from the organisations involved, as is currently the case with the Academic Audit Unit? Or should the government recognise that this information has a value to the wider public rather than just to the organisations being audited, and provide funding that can be distributed to the quality assurance bodies to fully or partly pay for this work?81

Either approach has some merits, but the most important thing is that whatever approach is taken it be applied consistently. It would not be appropriate, for instance, for public money to pay for thematic reports covering private training establishments, ITOs and the other organisations audited by the Approvals, Accreditation and Audit unit, because the unit is based within a government agency, if institutes of technology and polytechnics and universities were expected to resource the production of thematic reports themselves.

The reform of the quality and monitoring system as part of the Next Steps work programme provides a valuable opportunity to consider this proposal.

### Recommendation 47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That a consistent approach be developed for financing the production of thematic reports compiled from the findings of quality assurance audit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation to:</td>
<td>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission, for advice to the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the implementation of the tertiary education reform work programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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80 See [www.aau.ac.nz.nzuaau_site/publications/asq/asq.htm](http://www.aau.ac.nz.nzuaau_site/publications/asq/asq.htm).

81 While ERO’s National Reports are fully funded by the government, so are its reviews of individual schools, so there is not a direct analogy there.
Part Five: CONCLUSION
Chapter 14. Conclusion – Towards a unified work programme

14.1 This is not the first time that the tertiary education system has grappled with the issues of ‘pathways and staircasing’ – it has been an important theme ever since the *Learning for Life* reforms of the late 1980s. Nor will it be the last time.

14.2 Partly, this reflects the general fact that systems for ‘pathways and staircasing’ are something that we need to keep constantly improving. We are unlikely to ever reach a stage when we can say that task is finished.

14.3 But it also reflects the particular historical point we are at. Some providers have been developing well with arrangements for credit recognition and transfer in particular in place for many years. Nonetheless, the situation is uneven overall, especially with regard to cross-sector recognition and progression. A formal Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy was only introduced at the end of 2002 and we can expect that there will be quite a leap forward over the next few years. Therefore, this Review should be seen as marking a step in the journey, but not the final leg.

14.4 It is timely to have a review at this juncture. In particular, the current situation gives us a good vantage point from which to identify some of the key information gaps that will need to be filled if we are to make progress. It is also a chance to begin developing an approach to some other aspects of ‘pathways and staircasing’ such as articulation and admission/selection, now that the basic policy parameters are in place for credit recognition and transfer, which has tended to be the main focus up until now.

14.5 But we should not simply adopt a collection of recommendations and leave things until the next group of people decide to have another look at the issues. A central component of the approach taken in this report is that a specific ‘pathways and staircasing’ work plan should be drawn up by the relevant government agencies with timelines and milestones. At the end of this work programme, ‘pathways and staircasing’ should be reviewed again, to see what has been achieved and whether it is timely to adopt further initiatives.

**Recommendation 48**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>That a joint multi-year work programme be developed for implementing the recommendations of this Strategic Review, and that at the end of the period of this work programme, ‘pathways and staircasing’ be reviewed again, to assess what has been achieved and whether further initiatives are needed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible agency:</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, in consultation with other agencies as relevant (eg. Career Services and the Ministry of Social Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for consideration:</td>
<td>As part of the overall negotiation of the work programme for tertiary education (including the tertiary education reforms) with the government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

82 Indeed, one could trace it further to the Fraser/Beeby idea that “The Government’s objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to fullest extent of his powers.”
14.6 An indicative ‘first cut’ at a work programme has been included, following, to illustrate how this approach might work. The formal development of this work programme will, however, need to be undertaken by officials in order to ensure that all the relevant considerations, including competing work priorities, are taken into account.

14.7 Also, the exact composition of the work programme will depend upon the extent to which the finalised recommendations of this Review are agreed by the relevant agencies.

14.8 Finally, other affected agencies, quality assurance bodies and the sector will all need to have a say in relation to particular items on the work programme.

14.9 For all of these reasons, the table on the next three pages should be seen very much as an indicative ‘first cut’. Nonetheless, it serves two useful functions:

- It provides an indication of what was envisaged in the recommendation above.
- Perhaps more importantly, it shows the extent to which the Review envisages the recommendations in this working paper will be carried out in sequence over a period of years, rather than all 45 recommendations needing to be achieved or even begun within the first year.
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand Qualifications Authority and quality assurance bodies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oversight of Register</td>
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<tr>
<td>R6: (With Career Services) Investigate how to allow website users to automatically see Register information</td>
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<tr>
<td>R35: Register provision on further pathways for Māori qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over-arching quality assurance (w/ TEC)</td>
<td>R7: Articulation, credit rec in review of quality assurance standards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R8: Course approvals – articulation with existing programmes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R10: Guidelines and best practice on credit recognition</td>
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<td>R11: Course approvals – credit recognition requirements</td>
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<td>R12: audit – consistency w/ credit recognition policy</td>
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<td>R13: QA Standard for ITOs – credit recognition and transfer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R43: (With TEC) Agree on approach for QABs to provide information to the TEC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R45: Consult on possible further work on student complaints</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy and Strategic</td>
<td></td>
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<td>R28: National principles and guidelines for RPL/RCC, including agreed definitions</td>
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<td>Oversight of National Qualifications</td>
<td></td>
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<td>R34: Priority national qualifications for achieving pre-arranged credit transfer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality assurance bodies (including NZQA’s AAA unit)</td>
<td>R9: joint regional workshops for providers (across sub-sectors) about articulation expectation (Rec 8) (all QABs)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R14: Report on credit recognition and transfer and RPL routinely in Summary Audits (ongoing) (NZQA-AAA &amp; ITPQ)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R15: AAU: Cover credit recognition and RPL as themes in the next audit cycle.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R16 &amp; R47: Undertake thematic reports on credit recognition and transfer and RPL (ITPQ and NZQA-AAA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design of funding and regulatory system</td>
<td>R20: Use further education information in Register (R5) as an indicator of the need to undertake ASR discussions</td>
<td>R24: (Ongoing) When carrying out a ‘portfolio analysis’, include consideration of gaps</td>
<td>R29: if ‘intensive’ approach taken, funding for assessment centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>R18: (With Ministry of Social Development) Include charges for recognition in Loan tuition borrowing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>R26: Funded work programme of future direction of recognition of prior learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint agencies</td>
<td>R27: Consultation on future direction for recognition of prior learning (‘extensive’ versus ‘intensive’ approaches)</td>
<td>R31: Research and information-gathering programme on recognition of prior learning</td>
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<td>R33: Investigate value of programmes for RPL applicants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R46: Principle that government-purchased education and training be quality-assured</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R48: Develop ‘Pathways and Staircasing’ work programme</td>
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<td>National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence</td>
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<td>R32: Conference or forum for RPL/RCC practitioners</td>
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<td>Career Services</td>
<td>R1: (Ongoing) Frame learning as a lifelong endeavour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R2: Produce material specifically aimed at people aged 25 and older who are considering returning to study</td>
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<td>R3: (Ongoing) Prompt learners to think about progression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Studylink</td>
<td>R4: (Ongoing) Encourage learners to access Career Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sector</td>
<td>R38: (Ongoing) Develop mutual arrangements for pre-arranged credit transfer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R39: Cross-reference existing mutual arrangements</td>
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<td>R40: Standard template</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R41: VCC: Remove moratorium on applications for recognition of 'university foundation programmes' for domestic students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R42: Look at option of offering national qualifications</td>
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<td>R44: (With agencies) Record of Learning for the full Register of Quality-Assured Qualifications (ongoing)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations with no action required – 17, 19, 30
## Appendix 1: Membership of the Sector Reference Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>May 2005 Representatives</th>
<th>May 2006 Representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representing learners:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand University Students’ Association(^83)</td>
<td>Andrew Kirton and Camilla Belich (Co-Presidents), Liz Hawes, Extramural Students’ Society</td>
<td>Conor Roberts and Joey Randell (Co-Presidents), Liz Hawes, Extramural Students’ Society, Kane O’Connell (Research Officer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEC Learners Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Stefan Lawrence, Industry Training</td>
<td>Mike Coxon, Bethlehem Tertiary Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aotearoa Tertiary Students Association(^84)</td>
<td>Matthew Davies (President), Fred Zinsli, Wairariki Institute of Technology Students Association</td>
<td>Veronica Tawhai (Kaituhono)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Mana Akonga</td>
<td>Helen Potter (Kaituhono), Veronica Tawhai (Kaituhono)</td>
<td>Veronica Tawhai (Kaituhono)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representing quality assurance bodies:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee on University Academic Programmes</td>
<td>Prof. Peggy Koopman-Boyden, University of Waikato, Professor Dugald Scott, Victoria University of Wellington (Deputy Chair)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit</td>
<td>Les Holborow (Chair), Les Holborow (Chair)</td>
<td>Peter Scanlan (Director), Peter Scanlan (Director)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutes of Technology and Polytechnic Quality</td>
<td>Peter Scanlan (Chair, Director)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approvals Accreditation and Audit unit of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority</td>
<td>Chris Winstanley (Acting Group Manager)</td>
<td>Chris Winstanley (Acting Group Manager), Sue Walbran (Manager, Course Approval and Accreditation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representing tertiary education institutions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand Vice-Chancellors’ Committee</td>
<td>See Committee on University Academic Programmes above</td>
<td>See Committee on University Academic Programmes above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutes of Technology and Polytechnic New Zealand</td>
<td>Dr Sheila Grainger, Universal College of Learning</td>
<td>Dr Sheila Grainger, Universal College of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Tauihou o nga Wānanga</td>
<td>Monte Ohia, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa</td>
<td>Monte Ohia, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Colleges of Education New Zealand(^85)</td>
<td>Richard Winder (Executive Director)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Representing Industry Training Organisations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry Training Federation</td>
<td>Darel Hall (Executive Director), Elaine Taylor, NZ Seafood Industry Training Organisation</td>
<td>Dave Guerin, on behalf of Darel Hall, Elaine Taylor, NZ Seafood Industry Training Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representing Private Training Establishments:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand Association of Private Training Providers</td>
<td>Michael Hadley, Design and Arts College (executive member)</td>
<td>Michael Hadley, Design and Arts College (executive member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Tertiary Institutions</td>
<td>Michael Hanson, Carey Baptist College</td>
<td>Michael Hanson, Carey Baptist College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aotearoa Maori Providers of Training, Education and Employment</td>
<td>Tamati Cairns, Ata Hou Trust (Te Apou)</td>
<td>Tamati Cairns, Ata Hou Trust (Te Apou)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Island Tertiary Education Providers of New Zealand</td>
<td>John Fiso, New Zealand Institute of Sport</td>
<td>Enosa Auva’a, Mount Albert Primary School (National Secretary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representing Adult and Community Education:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEC Adult and Community Education (ACE) Reference Group</td>
<td>Gareth Rees, Buller Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP)</td>
<td>Geoff Pearman, University of Canterbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representing external stakeholders:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Business New Zealand</td>
<td>Neil Miller (Consultant, Education Training and Productivity)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand Council of Trade Unions</td>
<td>Don Farr (Learning Representatives Project)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{83}\) Now known as the New Zealand Union of Students’ Associations.

\(^{84}\) The Aotearoa Tertiary Students Association was disestablished in 2005.

\(^{85}\) The Association of Colleges of Education New Zealand was disestablished at the end of 2005.
## Appendix 2: Register Qualification Types and Levels

This information is sourced from [www.kiwiquals.govt.nz](http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz)

### Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Credit requirements</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Relationship with other qualifications</th>
<th>Other issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Certificate</strong></td>
<td>Certificates may be used in a wide range of contexts across all levels up to and including level 7, and are often used to prepare candidates for both employment and further education and training.</td>
<td>A certificate must comprise a minimum of 40 credits at levels 1-7. The level of a certificate is determined by beginning with the highest level credits and counting back until a total of 40 credits is reached. The level at which the total of 40 is reached determines the level of the certificate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz">www.kiwiquals.govt.nz</a> also has information on national certificates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Diploma** | Diplomas often prepare learners for self-directed application of skills and knowledge. These qualifications often build on prior qualifications or experience and recognise capacity for initiative and judgement  
  - across a broad range of educational and vocational areas  
  - in technical, professional, and/or management roles. | A diploma must:  
  - be registered at level 5, 6 or 7, with the top 72 credits defining the level at which it can be registered; and  
  - have at least 120 of all credits contributing to the qualification at level 4 or above.  
The level of a diploma is determined by beginning with the highest level credits and counting back until a total of 72 credits is reached. The level at which the total of 72 is reached determines the level of the diploma. |          |                                        | [www.kiwiquals.govt.nz](http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz) also has information on national diplomas. |
A Bachelors Degree is a systematic and coherent introduction to the knowledge, ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject (or subjects, in the case of a double degree or a double major).

It requires meeting specified requirements, as set down in the relevant degree regulations, and involves at least one sequential study programme in which content is progressively developed to the point where a candidate is prepared for postgraduate study and supervised research. It prepares a candidate for advanced study as well as directed research and scholarship in the major subject(s) of the degree.

Bachelor degree programmes are taught mainly by people engaged in research; and emphasise general principles and basic knowledge as the basis for self-directed work and learning. (s254 The Education Act, 1989)

A programme of study leading to a Bachelors Degree builds upon prior study, work or experience and is open to those who have met the specified entrance requirements.

Bachelor Degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit requirements</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Relationship with other qualifications</th>
<th>Other issues</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Bachelors degree requires a minimum of 360 credits from levels 4 to 7. Some Bachelors Degrees, notably in professional fields such as engineering, the health sciences and law, encompass additional credits and may require a longer period of study. Of the credits required for a Bachelors Degree, a minimum of 72 credits should be at level 7. A maximum of 20 credits should be at level 4 (such that the integrity of the qualification at the higher levels is maintained). The degree should specify a spread of credit across levels so that the qualification reflects the requirements of the degree definition and achieves the associated learning outcomes in a way that is appropriate to the subject area.</td>
<td>A graduate of a Bachelors Degree programme is able to: • demonstrate knowledge and skills related to the ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject (or subjects, in the case of a double degree or a double major) • demonstrate the skills needed to acquire, understand and assess information from a range of sources • demonstrate intellectual independence, critical thinking and analytic rigour • engage in self-directed learning • demonstrate communication and collaborative skills.</td>
<td>A person who holds a Bachelors Degree may be able to enrol for the Postgraduate Diploma or the Masters Degree.</td>
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A Bachelors Degree with Honours may be awarded with honours to recognise advanced or distinguished study in advance of a level 7 Bachelors Degree.

This may occur by: • recognising outstanding achievement in a 480-credit (or more) Bachelors Degree especially in relation to work of a research nature (typically at level 8); or • achieving 120 credits at level 8 following a level 7 Bachelors Degree (either as part of an integrated honours degree or as a separate qualification).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Certificate</th>
<th>Credit requirements</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Relationship with other qualifications</th>
<th>Other issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A Graduate Certificate is designed primarily as a vehicle for degree graduates to pursue further study at an undergraduate level. The Graduate Certificate can be designed as a bridging programme for candidates developing educational, professional or vocational knowledge in a new discipline, professional or subject area and/or as a broadening or deepening of skills or knowledge already gained in an undergraduate programme. | The Graduate Certificate:  
- can be registered at levels 6 or 7  
- requires at least 60 credits from levels 5 to 7  
- has its level defined by the top 40 credits. | Entry is usually open to degree graduates or to those who have been able to demonstrate equivalent practical, professional or educational experience of an appropriate kind. This may include other level 6 or 7 qualifications. | A person with a Graduate Certificate is able to:  
- acquire and possess knowledge, analyse and solve problems, work and study independently; and  
- demonstrate intellectual independence, analytical rigour and sound communication skills. | The Graduate Certificate may provide an entry point to postgraduate study. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Diploma</th>
<th>Credit requirements</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Relationship with other qualifications</th>
<th>Other issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A Graduate Diploma is designed as a vehicle for degree graduates to pursue further study at an undergraduate level. The programme can be designed to broaden knowledge and skills in a familiar subject or discipline or develop knowledge in a new area. | A Graduate Diploma:  
- is registered at level 7 and requires a minimum of 72 credits at level 7; and  
- requires a minimum of 120 credits from levels 5 or above. | Entry is usually open to degree graduates or to those who have been able to demonstrate equivalent practical, professional or educational experience of an appropriate kind. This may include other level 6 or 7 qualifications. | A person with a Graduate Diploma is able to:  
- engage in self-directed learning and advance study; and  
- demonstrate intellectual independence, analytical rigour, and the ability to understand and evaluate new knowledge and ideas. | A Graduate Diploma may provide the basis for postgraduate study. |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Postgraduate Certificate</th>
<th>Credit requirements</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Relationship with other qualifications</th>
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</table>
| A Postgraduate Certificate involves credits from a specified subject and, where appropriate, the cognate areas. It serves as a qualification recognising continuing professional development in the same area as the candidate’s original degree. A candidate will normally have completed all requirements of a Bachelors Degree or, in special circumstances, a Bachelors Degree with Honours. The Postgraduate Certificate is designed to extend and deepen a candidate’s knowledge and skills through formal instruction and directed inquiry. | A programme leading to the Postgraduate Certificate requires a minimum of 40 credits at level 8. | Postgraduate Certificates require a Bachelors Degree in a cognate subject or relevant skills and knowledge acquired through appropriate work or professional experience. | A graduate of a Postgraduate Certificate programme is able to:  
- acquire and assess knowledge, analyse and solve problems, work and study independently; and  
- demonstrate intellectual independence, analytical rigour and sound communication. | A Postgraduate Certificate provides the basis for further postgraduate study. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Postgraduate Diploma</th>
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| A Postgraduate Diploma is designed to extend and deepen a candidate’s knowledge and skills by building on attainment in the principal subject(s) of the qualifying degree. It provides a candidate with a systematic and coherent survey of current thinking and research in a particular body of knowledge and may include instruction in the relevant research methodologies. | The Postgraduate Diploma requires a minimum of 120 credits from levels 7 and above with a minimum of 72 credits from level 8. | A candidate for the Postgraduate Diploma in a specified subject or, where appropriate, a related area will normally have completed all requirements of the relevant Bachelors Degree. A provider may also admit to a programme leading to the Postgraduate Diploma a person who has completed all requirements of the Bachelors Degree with Honours in a related subject, or who is deemed to have acquired the relevant skills and knowledge through appropriate work or professional experience. | A graduate of a Postgraduate Diploma programme is able to:  
- engage in self-directed learning and advanced study  
- demonstrate intellectual independence, analytic rigour, and the ability to understand and evaluate new knowledge and ideas  
- demonstrate the ability to identify topics for original research, plan and conduct research, analyse results and communicate the findings to the satisfaction of subject experts. | A Postgraduate Diploma may be awarded with distinction. It prepares a candidate for independent research and scholarship in the principal subject of the diploma. A person who holds a Postgraduate Diploma may be enrolled for a Masters Degree or a Doctoral Degree. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Masters Degree</th>
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| A Masters Degree is normally designed to build on the principal subject(s) of the qualifying degree. Alternatively, a Masters Degree may build on relevant knowledge and skills derived from occupational experience, as in the Master of Business Administration (MBA). Different discipline areas have different traditions. Thus national and international comparisons are relevant for a Masters Degree in a particular area. Typically they require students to demonstrate mastery of theoretically sophisticated subject matter; to evaluate critically the findings and discussions in the literature; to research, analyse and argue from evidence; to apply knowledge to new situations; and to engage in rigorous intellectual analysis, criticism and problem-solving. A Masters Degree programme contains a significant element of supervised research. The results of that research are normally embodied in a thesis, dissertation or substantial research paper, but in some cases are incorporated in a series of papers. Creative work may also contribute to the research output. The research should demonstrate a capacity in the candidate for independent thinking. | The Masters Degree requires either:  
- 240 credits at levels 8 and 9, with a minimum of 40 credits at level 9; or  
- when a candidate has a relevant Postgraduate Diploma or Bachelors Degree with Honours - or equivalent professional experience - 120 credits at levels 8 and 9 with a minimum of 40 credits at level 9.  
Note that the 40 credit level 9 research aspect of the Masters degree may be met by a dissertation or in some instances a series of papers. | A candidate for the Masters Degree will normally have completed the Bachelors Degree, the Bachelors Degree with Honours, the Postgraduate Diploma or, in special circumstances, the Postgraduate Certificate.  
A provider may enrol a person who is not a graduate but who is deemed to have acquired the relevant skills and knowledge through work and/or professional experience. Before being enrolled, a person must have attained through formal study, work or other experience, a high order of knowledge about the principal subject(s) of the degree or diploma, and have demonstrated interest in, and an aptitude for, original research. | A graduate of a Masters Degree programme is able to:  
- provide appropriate evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist body of theoretical and applied topics relevant to the degree programme  
- demonstrate the capacity for self-directed study and the ability to work independently  
- plan and carry out, to internationally recognised standards, a piece of original research or scholarship which demonstrates a high order of skill in analysis and critical evaluation  
- demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills. | A person who holds the Masters Degree may be admitted to a programme of advanced study and original research leading to a Doctoral Degree. |
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| Doctoral Degree        | With the exception of the honorary doctorate, the doctorate is a research degree that is at a significantly higher level and of significantly higher status than a Masterate. It is normally the culmination of a structured sequence of instruction at educational institutions that begins at the Bachelor level and reaches a stage beyond the Masterate when the student becomes an increasingly independent scholar and makes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge. For the PhD/DPhil and the named doctorate this development takes place under the guidance of recognised experts in the field of study and under circumstances that allow the student access to appropriate research resources. The doctorate is awarded on the basis of an original and substantial contribution to knowledge as judged by independent experts applying contemporary international standards. The hallmark will be the candidate’s capacity for substantial independent research or creative activity as attested (for the PhD/DPhil and the named doctorate) by his/her educational institution and/or as demonstrated by submitted work. | A doctorate requires at least 240 credits worth of advanced research at level 10. | With the exception of the honorary doctorate the major component of all doctorates is original research. The body of work that leads to the award of a doctorate will be one of the following:  
- a thesis (the PhD/DPhil)  
- creative work in the visual or performing arts (the PhD/DPhil)  
- a thesis or equivalent creative work in combination with coursework (the named doctorate)  
- a thesis in combination with a creative work in the visual or performing arts (the named doctorate)  
- published work (the higher doctorate)  
- exceptional contribution to society (the honorary doctorate). | The following types of doctoral degree are recognised: Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD/DPhil)  
Doctorate in a specified field or discipline - the named doctorate (eg EdD or the DMus)  
Higher Doctorate (eg the DSc or the DLitt)  
Honorary Doctorate | See www.kiwiquals.govt.nz for further information                                       |
<table>
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<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>PROCESS</th>
<th>LEARNING DEMAND</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY</th>
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</table>
| 1     | Carry out processes that:  
• are limited in range  
• are repetitive and familiar  
• are employed within closely defined contexts  | Employing:  
• recall  
• a narrow range of knowledge and cognitive skills  
• no generation of new ideas  | Applied:  
• in directed activity  
• under close supervision  
• with no responsibility for the work or learning of others  |
| 2     | Carry out processes that:  
• are moderate in range  
• are established and familiar  
• offer a clear choice of routine responses  | Employing:  
• basic operational knowledge  
• readily available information  
• known solutions to familiar problems  
• little generation of new ideas  | Applied:  
• in directed activity  
• under general supervision and quality control  
• with some responsibility for quantity and quality  
• with possible responsibility for guiding others  |
| 3     | Carry out processes that:  
• require a range of well developed skills  
• offer a significant choice of procedures  
• are employed within a range of familiar contexts  | Employing:  
• some relevant theoretical knowledge  
• interpretation of available information  
• discretion and judgement  
• a range of known responses to familiar problems  | Applied:  
• in directed activity with some autonomy  
• under general supervision and quality checking  
• with significant responsibility for the quantity and quality of output  
• with possible responsibility for the output of others  |
| 4     | Carry out processes that:  
• require a wide range of technical or scholastic skills  
• offer a considerable choice of procedures  
• are employed in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts  | Employing:  
• a broad knowledge base incorporating some theoretical concepts  
• analytical interpretation of information  
• informed judgement  
• a range of sometimes innovative responses to concrete but often unfamiliar problems  | Applied:  
• in self-directed activity  
• under broad guidance and evaluation  
• with complete responsibility for quantity and quality of output  
• with possible responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others  |
| 5     | Carry out processes that:  
• require a wide range of specialised technical or scholastic skills  
• involve a wide choice of standard and non-standard procedures  
• are employed in a variety of routine and non-routine contexts  | Employing:  
• a broad knowledge base with substantial depth in some areas  
• analytical interpretation of a wide range of data  
• the determination of appropriate methods and procedures in response to a range of concrete problems with some theoretical elements  | Applied:  
• in self-directed and sometimes directive activity  
• within broad general guidelines or functions  
• with full responsibility for the nature, quantity and quality of outcomes  
• with possible responsibility for the achievement of group outcome  |
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</table>
| 6     | Carry out processes that:  
- require a command of wide-ranging highly specialised technical or scholastic skills  
- involve a wide choice of standard and non-standard procedures, often in non-standard combinations  
- are employed in highly variable routine and non-routine contexts | Employing:  
- specialised knowledge with depth in more than one area  
- the analysis, reformatting and evaluation of a wide range of information  
- the formulation of appropriate responses to resolve both concrete and abstract problems | Applied:  
- in managing processes  
- within broad parameters for defined activities  
- with complete accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes |
| 7     | Carry out processes that:  
- require a command of highly specialised technical or scholastic and basic research skills across a major discipline  
- involve the full range of procedures in a major discipline  
- are applied in complex, variable and specialised contexts | Requiring:  
- knowledge of a major discipline with areas of specialisation in depth  
- the analysis, transformation and evaluation of abstract data and concepts  
- the creation of appropriate responses to resolve given or contextual abstract problems | Applied:  
- in planning, resourcing and managing processes  
- within broad parameters and functions  
- with complete accountability for determining, achieving and evaluating personal and/or group outcomes |
| 8     | Involves skills and knowledge that enable a learner to:  
- provide a systematic and coherent account of the key principles of a subject area; and  
- undertake self-directed study, research and scholarship in a subject area, demonstrating intellectual independence, analytic rigour and sound communication |
| 9     | Involves knowledge and skills that enable a learner to:  
- demonstrate mastery of a subject area; and  
- plan and carry out - to internationally recognised standards - an original scholarship or research project. Demonstrated by:  
- The completion of a substantial research paper, dissertation or in some cases a series of papers. |
| 10    | Involves knowledge and skill that enable a learner to:  
- Provide an original contribution to knowledge through research or scholarship, as judged by independent experts, applying international standards. |
INTRODUCTION

The assessment of prior learning (also known as Recognition of Prior Learning or RPL) has emerged as an alternative approach to traditional on-course assessment. It enables learning that has occurred through work or life experience to be assessed against educational standards.

These Assessment of Prior Learning Practice Guidelines have been developed as part of a research project funded by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The purpose of the guidelines is to facilitate best practice in the evaluation of an individual’s prior learning against educational qualifications and/or National Qualifications Framework unit standards.

The guidelines focus on key issues that need to be addressed to promote effective assessment of prior learning procedures. The guidelines are in the form of questions to prompt the thinking and practice of lecturers and managers. However, the list of questions is not exhaustive and could be altered to suit provider needs/contexts.

Organisations, course teams and individuals are encouraged to use these prompts to trigger discussion and to select options relevant to their situation. Feedback to the research team on the applicability and helpfulness of these guidelines would be appreciated. Please address feedback to:

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Auckland Institute of Technology, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1020
Ph: (09) 307 9999 Ext: 5559, Fax: (09) 307 9769, Email: Maureen.Reid@ait.cc.nz

These Guidelines do not provide best practice recommendations for credit transfer.

PRINCIPLES

The Assessment of Prior Learning Practice Guidelines have been developed on the basis of the following principles:

- learning arises from life experience, work experience, informal and/or formal education and training
- all learning irrespective of source may earn credit towards appropriate levels of qualifications
• a learner’s performance is measured against pre-determined educational standards (standards based assessment)
• evidence of learning can come from a diverse range of sources
• assessment of prior learning is a process through which evidence of learning is evaluated against educational standards
• educational providers are committed to making explicit to students the learning requirements of course

DEFINITIONS

ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING is the process through which an applicant seeks academic credit based on the relevant learning he/she has already acquired.

COURSE is the smallest recognisable component of a programme of study leading to a qualification; it may also be known as a module or paper.

CREDIT is the basic measure or currency for defining a qualification and for recording student achievement for the purpose of contributing to the requirements of a qualification. Credit is a measure of student learning.

CREDIT TRANSFER is the application towards one qualification of credit gained towards another qualification outside the provider. Credit transfer recognises some or all of a student’s previous formal learning for the purpose of another qualification.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSOR. A person who assesses evidence of prior learning against course learning outcomes/educational standards for the purpose of awarding academic credit.

PRIOR LEARNING CREDIT (for Recognition of Prior Learning) is the application of credit towards one qualification, awarded following formal appraisal of prior learning in respect of learning arising from life experience, work experience, informal and/or formal education or training.

PRIOR LEARNING CO-ORDINATOR. A person who has responsibility for the development and delivery of an effective RPL service within an organization.

PRIOR LEARNING FACILITATOR. A person who assists applicants to prepare and present evidence of prior learning for assessment. A facilitator may also assist prior learning assessors to clarify course learning outcomes/educational standards and to select valid and reliable assessment methods.

UNSPECIFIED AND SPECIFIED CREDIT. Both credit transfer and prior learning credit may result in unspecified or specified credit.
• **SPECIFIED CREDIT** is the granting of credit where there is a substantial fit between previous learning and the specific courses for which academic credit is sought.

• **UNSPECIFIED CREDIT** is the granting of credit where previous learning is broadly relevant to the programme of study, rather than the individual courses that make up the programme.

**GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

**MAINTAINING SYSTEMS FOR ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING**

The successful implementation of prior learning assessment is largely dependent on designation and training of prior learning personnel (facilitators and assessors), adequate resourcing, and some degree of central co-ordination in organisations.

(Reid, Ker, Melrose, Horsburgh1995: 15-19)

**Prompts**

1. Have you developed an institutional policy on assessment of prior learning?

2. How comprehensive is your institutional policy on assessment of prior learning? Consider provision for the following:

   • the intent of the policy
   • definitions of terms
   • information available to applicants
   • process of facilitation and assessment
   • personnel training
   • the credit decisions that are permitted (refer to Prompt 23)
   • the group/academic committee responsible for credit decisions
   • fee structure
   • appeal process
   • maintenance of quality systems (including reviews/audits)

3. How do you ensure that your institutional policy and procedures for assessment of prior learning are reviewed regularly?

4. Have people responsible for the assessment of prior learning process been designated? (co-ordinator, facilitators, assessors)

5. Are the personnel responsible for the assessment of prior learning process resourced in a manner consistent with the volume of assessment of prior learning activity and the stage of development of prior learning systems?

6. How do you ensure that information is published and readily accessible to prior learning applicants?
7. How comprehensive is your information?

Consider the following details:
- the process for applying for RPL credit
- course outlines including statements of intended learning outcome and content
- assessment criteria – either achievement or competency standards or unit standards
- suggestions of sources of evidence which may meet the assessment criteria
- the process for appealing against prior learning credit decisions
- the limitations on prior learning credit (if any)
- the contact people for the assessment of prior learning process (for the organisation/each course)

8. What procedures have been developed to ensure that the published information is reviewed annually?

9. How do you ensure that feedback from applicants on the assessment of prior learning process is obtained?

10. What systems do you use for recording applicant’s progress? (application, facilitation, assessment decisions, assessment outcomes, organisational database)

11. Is the assessment of prior learning fee structure available/transient to applicants?

ENSURING QUALITY FACILITATION

There is a clear link between the quality of facilitation and the efficiency and reliability of prior learning assessment. Where applicants have access to good quality support, the evidence presented for assessment has been carefully matched to standards or learning outcomes. Assessors can evaluate the evidence more efficiently and draw conclusions with greater reliability.

(Reid, Ker, Melrose, Horsburgh 1996: 13-16)

Prompts

12. What provision have you made to set up a quality facilitation service?

13. Have you developed an appropriate job description/person specification for a prior learning facilitator?

Consider the following:
- experience in curriculum development
- knowledge of a variety of assessment methods including standards based assessment
• knowledge of the assessment of experiential learning and related issues of validity and reliability
• sound communication skills
• the ability to act as an applicants’ advocate
• negotiation skills in order to liaise with the applicant, prior learning assessor and other institutional personnel

14. What provision have you made for the training and ongoing professional development for facilitators?

15. What strategies do you adopt to cover a range of facilitation options for applicants?

Consider the following:
• self assessment guide
• one on one facilitation/personal assistance
• group seminars
• applicant handbook
• guidelines about a range of evidence to meet specific course learning outcomes/assessment criteria
• guidelines about the presentation of evidence relevant to assessment methods (portfolio, challenge examination, interview, attestation)

16. What record keeping strategies are in place for applicants and the facilitation process?

ENSURING QUALITY ASSESSMENT
For assessment of prior learning to be successfully implemented by organisations in a fair transparent way, assessors:
• are willing to see equivalence of learning between on-course students and prior learning applicants
• are open to different approaches to assessment
• accept diverse sources of evidence to demonstrate competency

(Reid, Ker, Melrose, Horsburgh 1996 12.–16)

Prompts

17. Is prior learning assessment available in all courses/modules offered by your organisation?

18. Have you developed an appropriate job description/person specification for a prior learning assessor?

Consider the following:
• understanding of course/curriculum requirements
• familiarity with standards based assessment
• familiarity with the assessment of experiential learning
19. What provision have you made for the training and ongoing professional development for assessors?

20. How will you ensure that assessors select an appropriate assessment strategy? (portfolio, challenge examination, workplace observation)

21. What provision has been made to ensure that assessors will consider diverse evidence of learning?

22. What provisions have been made to ensure that prior learning evidence has been assessed against pre-determined criteria?

23. Have you clarified the assessment decisions that are permitted? (full credit, partial credit, no credit further evidence required, unspecified credit, specified credit, grades, merit/pass/fail)

24. How do you deal with situations where insufficient evidence is supplied by the applicant?

25. What methods have you established to document assessment of prior learning decisions?

26. How do you ensure that assessors record justification of their decisions?

27. What system of moderation of assessment methods/decisions is in operation?

28. What opportunities exist for appeal against assessment of prior learning credit decisions?

29. What provisions have you made to audit assessment of prior learning decisions?