



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

This legislation is administered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). For more information please see:

Website: <http://www2.nzqa.govt.nz>

Contact phone: 0800 697 296

Contact address: PO Box 160, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2026

These Rules are made under section 452 of the Education and Training Act 2020 by the Board of NZQA and the Minister of Education.

Contents

	Page
1 Title	2
2 Commencement	2
3 Interpretation	2

Part 1

Programme approval and recognition criteria and applications

4 Criteria for approval of programmes for institutions under section 439 of the Act	4
5 Applications for approval of programmes	5
6 New Zealand programme recognition	6

Part 2

Accreditation criteria and applications

7 Criteria for accreditation of institutions to provide approved programmes or parts of approved programmes under section 441 of the Act	7
8 Applications for accreditation to provide approved programmes, recognised New Zealand programmes or parts of those programmes	8
9 University accreditation applications	8

Part 3

Granting of programme approval, recognition and accreditation

10 Granting of programme approval, recognition and accreditation (<i>other than universities</i>)	9
11 Granting of programme approval and granting of accreditation to universities	9

Part 4

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance

12	Requests for Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance	9
----	---	---

Part 5

Maintaining programme approval, New Zealand programme recognition and accreditation

13	Requirements to be met to maintain programme approval	10
14	Requirements to be met to maintain New Zealand programme recognition	10
15	Requirements to be met to maintain accreditation	10

Part 6

Changes to approved programmes

16	Changes to approved programmes by institutions (<i>other than universities</i>)	11
17	Process and notification of result of application for Type 2 programme changes	11
18	Changes to New Zealand programmes	11
19	Programme changes by universities	12

Part 7

Miscellaneous matters

20	Special reviews	12
21	English language requirements for international students	13
22	Revocation	14

Schedule 1

Internationally Recognised English Proficiency Outcomes for International Students

Schedule 2

English Proficiency Grade and Level Specified for the following European Countries

Rules

1 Title

These are the Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2026.

2 Commencement

These Rules come into force on 19 January 2026.

3 Interpretation

In these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires,—

accreditation means accreditation to provide all or part of an approved programme (*including a New Zealand programme*) under section 441 of the Act

Act means the Education and Training Act 2020

approval means approval of a programme under section 439 of the Act

consent and moderation requirements means the standard-setting body requirements listed for standards that relate to the particular skills and knowledge of teachers and

assessors, any special resources required for assessing against the standards, learner access to resources, practical experience, and national external moderation

credit recognition and transfer means a formal process whereby credit for outcomes already achieved by a student in relation to a qualification is recognised as credit for comparable outcomes in another qualification

industry qualification means a qualification maintained by a WDC for the purposes of section 366(1)(c) of the Act

institution has the same meaning as in section 10(5) of the Act

ISB means an Industry Skills Board established under section 362 of the Act

level means any of levels 1 to 10 on the NZQCF

national curriculum means a national curriculum for a qualification developed and maintained by a standard-setting body for the purposes of section 438A of the Act

New Zealand programme means a national curriculum developed by an approved standard-setting body for the purposes of section 438A of the Act

NZQCF means the Qualifications and Credentials Framework described in section 436 of the Act

programme has the same meaning as in section 10(1) of the Act, and by virtue of section 438C of the Act includes a New Zealand programme

qualification means a qualification listed on the NZQCF

qualification-type description means the description for the relevant qualification type set out in Schedule 2 of the Qualification and Micro-credential Listing and Operational Rules

recognised New Zealand programme means a New Zealand programme recognised by NZQA under section 438B of the Act

recognition of prior learning means a process that involves formal assessment of a student's relevant and current knowledge and skills (gained through prior learning) to determine achievement of learning outcomes of a programme leading to a qualification for the purpose of awarding credit towards that qualification; and for the avoidance of doubt it does not include credit recognition and transfer

standard-setting body means an approved standard-setting body as described in section 438(1) of the Act

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance means applying Te Hono o Te Kahurangi whare ako framework and quality assurance tools for programmes and accreditation, as that framework and those tools are published by NZQA from time to time on its website

Type 1 change means one or more changes to components of an approved programme which do not impact on the programme as a whole

Type 2 change means one or more changes to components of an approved programme which do have an impact on the programme as a whole

Universities New Zealand means the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee continued by section 311 of the Act.

Part 1

Programme approval and recognition criteria and applications

4 Criteria for approval of programmes for institutions under section 439 of the Act

- (1) The following are the criteria for approval of programmes for institutions unless exempted in the criteria or under rule 4(2):

Criterion 1 Qualification to which the programme leads

The programme meets both the listing details for the qualification it relates to and the qualification-type description.

Criterion 2 Title, aims, learning outcomes and coherence

The title, aims, stated learning outcomes, and coherence of the whole programme are suitable for the qualification it relates to.

Criterion 3 Delivery methods

The delivery methods are adequate and appropriate, given the stated learning outcomes for the programme. Where specific resources are necessary for the programme to be provided, those resources are clearly outlined.

Criterion 4 Acceptability of the programme and consultation

There is a written summary of the consultation undertaken, the views expressed, and consideration of the views. The consultation and summary must articulate the need for and acceptability of the programme to the relevant communities (*including ākonga, whānau, hapū, iwi and where appropriate, hāpori Māori*) and other key stakeholders (*including the qualification developer and any relevant academic, employer, industry, professional and other bodies*). Any required endorsement by an ISB under section 367(1)(f) of the Act must have been obtained, and if it has been obtained, information need not be provided by the applicant institution and NZQA will not consider this criterion in assessing the application.

Criterion 5 Regulations

There are clear, relevant, and appropriate regulations that specify requirements for:

- (a) admission:
- (b) credit recognition and transfer:
- (c) recognition of prior learning:
- (d) programme length and structure:
- (e) integration of practical and work-based components:
- (f) assessment procedures, including authenticity of student work:
- (g) normal progression within the programme, and completion.

Criterion 6 Assessment and moderation

Assessment methodology is fair, valid, consistent and appropriate given the stated learning outcomes.

There is an effective system for moderation of assessment materials and decisions.

Criterion 7 Programme review

The institution:

- (a) assesses the currency and content of the programme:
- (b) has adequate and effective processes for the ongoing review of the programme, taking account of the results of any review of the qualification:
- (c) has adequate and effective processes for monitoring the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders, and for reviewing programme regulations and content:
- (d) updates the programme accordingly.

Criterion 8 Research required for degrees and post-graduate qualifications

The links between research and the curriculum are clear, adequate, and effective.

- (2) Where a qualification consists entirely of skill standards, institutions applying for programme approval:
 - (a) do not need to provide information relating to criteria 2, 4, 7, or 8 of rule 4(1):
 - (b) may provide only indicative information for the purposes of criterion 5(g) of rule 4(1):
 - (c) do not need to provide information relating to criterion 5(e) and (g) of rule 4(1).

5 Applications for approval of programmes

- (1) Applications by institutions (*other than universities*) for approval of programmes must contain all of the following information:
 - (a) programme documentation that includes:
 - (i) a clear statement of the title and aims of the programme;
 - (ii) a clear articulation of the structure, components and length of the programme;
 - (iii) clearly identified links between the programme component learning outcomes and the qualification graduate profile outcomes;
 - (iv) specified learning outcomes for each component of the programme; and
 - (v) allocation of appropriate levels and credits for each component:
 - (b) information that demonstrates the programme meets the criteria specified in rule 4(1):
 - (c) evidence of internal quality assurance approval of the programme by the institution.
- (2) Applications by institutions (*other than universities*) for approval of programmes at levels 1 to 6, and under-graduate diplomas at level 7 must also contain:

- (a) in the programme documentation, clear identification of any standards used in the programme that are taken from the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards; and
 - (b) a copy of any required endorsement of an ISB under section 367(1)(f) and 367(2) of the Act.
- (3) Applications by universities for programme approval must be made to Universities New Zealand.

6 New Zealand programme recognition

- (1) An application for recognition of a New Zealand programme under section 438B by a standard-setting body must contain the following information unless exempted in the criterion, and will be assessed against that information:

Criterion 1 Title and purpose statement

The title identifies the qualification to which the New Zealand programme leads.

There is a suitable purpose statement.

Criterion 2 Structure, length, coherence, and relationship to qualification

The structure (*including components and learning outcomes*), length, and coherence of the whole New Zealand programme are suitable for the qualification it relates to.

Any standards to be used in the New Zealand programme are to be identified.

The New Zealand programme meets both the listing details for the qualification it relates to and the qualification-type description.

Criterion 3 Delivery methods

The delivery methods must be adequate and appropriate, given the stated learning outcomes for the programme. Where specific resources are necessary for the programme to be provided, those resources are clearly outlined.

Criterion 4 Collaboration, acceptability and consultation

There is a written summary of the collaborative process and consultation undertaken, the views expressed, and consideration of the views. The consultation and summary must identify the bodies that participated and articulate the need for and acceptability of the programme to the relevant communities (*including ākonga, whānau, hapū, iwi and where appropriate, hāpori Māori*) and other key stakeholders (*including the qualification developer, institutions that will be providing the programme, other standard-setting bodies, and any relevant academic, employer, industry, regulatory, professional and other bodies*). Where the applicant standard setting body is not an ISB, any required endorsement by an ISB under section 367(1)(f) of the Act must have been obtained, and if it has been obtained, information need not be provided by the applicant standard-setting body and NZQA will not consider this criterion in assessing the application.

Criterion 5 Regulations

There are clear, relevant, and appropriate regulations that specify requirements for:

- (a) admission:
- (b) credit recognition and transfer:
- (c) recognition of prior learning:
- (d) programme length and structure:
- (e) integration of practical and work-based components:
- (f) assessment procedures, including authenticity of student work:
- (g) normal progression within the programme, and completion:
- (h) details for transitioning from an approved programme to the recognised New Zealand programme, for both students and accredited institutions.

Criterion 6 Assessment and moderation

Assessment methodology is fair, valid, consistent and appropriate given the stated learning outcomes. Any assessment requirements, in addition to those specified in standards used in the programme, are identified.

There is an effective system for moderation of assessment materials and decisions.

Criterion 7 Review

The approved standard-setting body:

- (a) assesses the currency and content of the programme:
- (b) has adequate and effective processes for the ongoing review of the programme, taking account of the results of any review of the qualification:
- (c) has adequate and effective processes for monitoring the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders, and for reviewing programme regulations and content:
- (d) updates the programme accordingly.

Part 2

Accreditation criteria and applications

7 Criteria for accreditation of institutions to provide approved programmes or parts of approved programmes under section 441 of the Act

- (1) The following are the criteria for accreditation of institutions to provide approved programmes or recognised New Zealand programmes or parts of those programmes:

Criterion 1 Assessment and moderation

The institution has the capability and capacity to ensure assessment materials and decisions are fair, valid, consistent and appropriate for the level, given the stated learning outcomes.

Criterion 2 Resources

The institution has the capability and capacity to support sustained delivery of the programme through appropriate academic staffing, teaching facilities, educational and physical resources, and support services.

Criterion 3 Support for delivery

If the applicant institution is not the holder of the programme approval, there is support from the holder of the programme approval.

Criterion 4 Programme review

There must be adequate and effective review of programme performance and the institution's capability to support the programme.

There must be monitoring of improvement following review, and processes for determining whether the programme should continue to be delivered.

Criterion 5 Research activity required to deliver degrees and post-graduate qualifications

Research facilities and the support of staff involved in research are adequate, the levels of research activity of staff involved in the programme are satisfactory, and the ways by which the research-teaching links are made in the curriculum are appropriate.

8 Applications for accreditation to provide approved programmes, recognised New Zealand programmes or parts of those programmes

- (1) This rule 8 applies to applications by institutions (*other than universities*) for accreditation to provide:
 - (a) an approved programme; or
 - (b) a recognised New Zealand programme; or
 - (c) part of an approved programme or recognised New Zealand programme.
- (2) Applications to which this rule 8 applies must contain the following information:
 - (a) information that demonstrates the institution meets the criteria specified in rule 7(1); and
 - (b) evidence of internal quality assurance approval by the institution.
- (3) Where the programme or part of the programme for which accreditation is sought includes assessment of standards listed on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards, and the applicant is not the holder of a consent to assess against those standards under section 449 of the Act the applicant must also provide evidence of the applicant's ability to meet the consent and moderation requirements for those standards.

9 University accreditation applications

- (1) Applications by universities for accreditation to provide an approved programme, a recognised New Zealand programme, or parts of them must be made to Universities New Zealand.

Part 3

Granting of programme approval, recognition and accreditation

10 Granting of programme approval, recognition and accreditation (*other than universities*)

- (1) NZQA will advise applicant institutions (*other than universities*) if any of the details in the application require further work.
- (2) NZQA may establish a panel to assess the application.
- (3) NZQA may carry out a site visit for accreditation applications.
- (4) Where NZQA is satisfied with the details in the relevant application, NZQA will grant, and advise the applicant institution of:
 - (a) approval of the programme or recognition of the New Zealand programme:
 - (b) accreditation to provide the approved programme, the New Zealand programme or part of the programme.
- (5) Where NZQA is not satisfied with the details in the application, NZQA will not approve the application, and will advise the applicant.
- (6) NZQA will publish on its website up to date and appropriate details of approved programmes, recognised New Zealand programmes and details of institutions accredited to provide approved programmes, New Zealand programmes or parts of them.

11 Granting of programme approval and granting of accreditation to universities

- (1) Where satisfied with the content of an application, Universities New Zealand will, under section 453 of the Act and in accordance with any procedures set up for inter-university course approval and moderation under section 312(a) of the Act, grant the relevant:
 - (a) programme approval:
 - (b) accreditation.

Part 4

Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance

12 Requests for Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance

- (1) When applying for programme approval, New Zealand programme recognition or accreditation, an applicant may request that Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance is used for assessment of the application.
- (2) An applicant making a request under rule 12(1), in addition to providing the relevant information required under rules 4 to 7, must provide the information that the Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance framework and tools require, including a self-reflective summary which shows how the applicant meets the criteria expressed through ngā kaupapa o Te Hono o Te Kahurangi.
- (3) NZQA will evaluate a request made under rule 12(1), together with the information supplied, in accordance with Te Hono o Te Kahurangi quality assurance.

Part 5

Maintaining programme approval, New Zealand programme recognition and accreditation

13 Requirements to be met to maintain programme approval

- (1) To continue to maintain a programme approval, institutions (*including universities*) must ensure:
 - (a) the criteria specified in rule 4(1) continue to be met; and
 - (b) regular reviews of the programme are undertaken.
- (2) To continue to maintain approval for a programme leading to a qualification at levels 1 to 6 or for an under-graduate diploma at level 7, institutions (*other than universities*) must also ensure that:
 - (a) relevant information is provided where requested by NZQA for the purposes of reviews of suites of qualifications and of individual qualifications; and
 - (b) where requested by NZQA, participation and cooperation for the purposes of carrying out those reviews.
- (3) Where the programme to which the accreditation relates contains standards, institutions must continue to comply with rules made under section 452(1)(c) for the purposes of maintaining the consent to assess for those standards.

14 Requirements to be met to maintain New Zealand programme recognition

- (1) To continue to maintain New Zealand programme recognition the standard-setting body must:
 - (a) ensure the criteria specified in rule 6(1) continue to be met; and
 - (b) ensure regular reviews of the programme are undertaken.

15 Requirements to be met to maintain accreditation

- (1) To continue to maintain accreditation to provide an approved programme, a New Zealand programme, or part of them, institutions (*other than universities*) must:
 - (a) ensure the criteria specified in rule 7(1) continue to be met;
 - (b) provide the programme (*or part*) as it was approved, including adhering to the programme regulations, unless a specific change has been approved in writing by NZQA; and
 - (c) comply with the requirements of the Quality Assurance of Tertiary Education Providers Rules made from time to time under section 452(1)(t) of the Act (*if the institution is a tertiary education provider*).
- (2) To continue to maintain accreditation to provide an approved programme, a New Zealand programme, or part of them at levels 1 to 6, or for an under-graduate diploma at level 7, institutions (*other than universities*) must also provide relevant information where requested by NZQA for the purposes of reviews of suites of qualifications and of individual qualifications.
- (3) To continue to maintain accreditation to provide a programme, New Zealand programme, or part of them, universities must:

- (a) ensure the criteria specified within rule 7(1) continue to be met; and
 - (b) ensure regular reviews of the provision of the programme are undertaken.
- (4) Where the programme or New Zealand programme to which the accreditation relates contains standards, institutions must continue to comply with rules made under section 452(1)(c) for the purposes of maintaining the consent to assess for those standards.

Part 6

Changes to approved programmes

16 Changes to approved programmes by institutions (*other than universities*)

- (1) Before an institution (*other than a university*) carries out a Type 1 change to an approved programme, the institution must notify NZQA of the change.
- (2) Before an institution (*other than a university*) carries out a Type 2 change to an approved programme, the institution must obtain approval from NZQA for the change after applying to NZQA and providing the information in rule 16(3).
- (3) The information required for the purposes of an application for a Type 2 change under rule 16(2) is:
 - (a) full details of the changes made to the approved programme and any impacts on the accreditation of institutions to provide the programme or part of the programme;
 - (b) information that demonstrates the programme continues to meet the criteria specified in rule 4(1);
 - (c) evidence of internal quality assurance approval by the institution.

17 Process and notification of result of application for Type 2 programme changes

- (1) NZQA will advise applicants if any of the details in the application for a Type 2 change requires further work.
- (2) NZQA may establish a panel to assess the application.
- (3) NZQA may carry out a site visit.
- (4) Where NZQA is satisfied with the details in the application, NZQA will approve the application and advise the applicant.
- (5) If there are a significant number of changes made to the programme NZQA may decline the application and require a new programme approval application to be submitted.
- (6) Where NZQA is not satisfied with the details in the application, NZQA will decline the application, and will advise the applicant.
- (7) NZQA will publish on its website up to date and appropriate details of the approved changes to the programme.

18 Changes to New Zealand programmes

- (1) Before a standard-setting body carries out a Type 1 change to a New Zealand programme, the standard-setting body must:

- (a) consult institutions accredited to provide that programme on the proposed changes and consider their views;
 - (b) notify institutions accredited to provide that programme of the changes made after considering their views; and
 - (c) notify NZQA of the changes.
- (2) Before a standard-setting body carries out a Type 2 change to a New Zealand programme, the standard-setting body must:
 - (a) consult institutions accredited to provide that programme on the proposed changes and consider their views;
 - (b) obtain approval from NZQA for the change after applying to NZQA and providing the information described in rule 18.3; and
 - (c) notify institutions accredited to provide the programme of the changes.
- (3) The information required for the purposes of an application for a Type 2 change under rule 18(2) is:
 - (a) full details of the changes made to the New Zealand programme and any impacts on the accreditation of institutions to provide the programme or part of the programme;
 - (b) information that demonstrates the New Zealand programme continues to meet the criteria specified in rule 6(1);
 - (c) evidence of internal quality assurance approval by the standard-setting body.

19 Programme changes by universities

- (1) Universities New Zealand will, under section 453 of the Act and in accordance with any procedures set up for inter-university course approval and moderation under section 312(a) of the Act, approve programme changes for universities.

Part 7

Miscellaneous matters

20 Special reviews

- (1) Where concerns are raised with or come to the attention of NZQA about a programme approval, New Zealand programme recognition, or accreditation to provide an approved programme or recognised New Zealand programme, NZQA may undertake (*as appropriate*) a special review of:
 - (a) the programme approval (*other than a university programme approval*);
 - (b) the New Zealand programme recognition held by a standard-setting body;
 - (c) the accreditation to provide the programme (*other than a university accreditation*) or the New Zealand programme.
- (2) Before NZQA undertakes a review described in rule 20(1), NZQA must give reasonable notice to the relevant institution or standard-setting body.
- (3) The relevant institution or standard-setting body must provide relevant information and otherwise cooperate with NZQA for the purposes of the special review.

21 English language requirements for international students

- (1) An institution (*other than a university*) must:
 - (a) verify, prior to enrolling an international student in a programme (*other than an English language programme or a programme taught in a language other than English*) for a qualification at level 3 or above, that the student has the necessary English language proficiency as demonstrated through the use of evidence of one of the kinds described in rules 21(2) to 21(4); and
 - (b) retain a copy of that evidence for at least two years from the date the student is enrolled in that programme.
- (2) Evidence that the student has:
 - (a) achieved NCEA level 3 and has met New Zealand university entrance requirements; or
 - (b) been awarded an International Baccalaureate Diploma or Cambridge A-level qualification for which the teaching and assessment was conducted in English; or
 - (c) been awarded the Cambridge Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (*CELTA*) or the Trinity College London Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (*CertTESOL*); or
 - (d) achieved, within the two years preceding the start date of the programme for a qualification in which the student is enrolled, one of the internationally recognised proficiency test outcomes specified in the Table in Schedule 1 for the level of that qualification.
- (3) Evidence that the student has:
 - (a) completed all primary education (*being the equivalent of New Zealand primary school years 1 to 8*) and at least three years of secondary education (*being the equivalent of three years from New Zealand secondary school years 9 to 13*) at schools in one of the countries listed in rule 21(5) where the student was taught using English as the language of instruction; or
 - (b) completed at least five years of secondary education (*being the equivalent of New Zealand secondary school years 9 to 13*) at schools in one of the countries listed in rule 21(5) where the student was taught using English as the language of instruction; or
 - (c) been awarded a Bachelor's degree, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Bachelor Honours Degree, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, Master's Degree or Doctoral Degree with English as the language of instruction from a tertiary education provider from one of the countries listed in rule 21(5); or
 - (d) met the English level and grade specified for the European countries listed in the Table in Schedule 2.
- (4) Evidence that the student has been granted a Manaāki New Zealand Short Term Training Scholarship offered by the New Zealand government and has:
 - (a) completed all primary education (*being the equivalent of New Zealand primary school years 1 to 8*) and at least three years of secondary education (*being the equivalent of three years from New Zealand secondary school years 9 to 13*) at

schools where the student was taught using English as the language of instruction;
or

- (b) completed at least five years of secondary education (*being the equivalent of New Zealand secondary school years 9 to 13*) at schools where the student was taught using English as the language of instruction.
- (5) The countries for the purpose of paragraphs (a) - (c) of rule 21(3) are: New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- (6) Nothing in this rule 21:
- (a) prevents an institution from requiring from a student a higher level of evidence of English proficiency than that set out in this rule 21; or
 - (b) requires an institution to enrol a particular student who has the relevant evidence of English proficiency set out in this rule 21.

22 Revocation

- (1) The Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2025 are revoked.

Schedule 1

Internationally Recognised English Proficiency Outcomes for International Students

Acronyms used in the Table below

C1 Advanced – the qualification of Cambridge Assessment English of that name, found at <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/advanced/>

C2 Proficiency – the qualification of Cambridge Assessment English of that name, found at <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/proficiency/>

B2 First – the qualification of Cambridge Assessment English of that name, found at <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/first/>

B2 First for Schools – the qualification of Cambridge Assessment English of that name found at <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/first-for-schools/>

IELTS – the International English Language Testing System, jointly owned by the British Council, IDP Education Australia, and Cambridge English Language Assessment, found at <http://www.ielts.org>

LanguageCert - a set of English Language qualifications owned by PeopleCert Qualifications Limited, member of the PeopleCert Group, found at www.languagecert.org

LRW – listening, reading, and writing.

NZCEL – the New Zealand Certificates in English Language listed on the NZQCF (NZQA being the qualification developer).

OET – the Occupational English Test of Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment, found at <http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/>

PTE – the Pearson Test of English (Academic), found at <https://pearsonpte.com>.

TOEFL – the Test of English as a Foreign Language of the Educational Testing Service, whose headquarters are in Princeton, United States, found at <http://www.ets.org/toefl>

Trinity ISE – the Trinity College London Integrated Skills in English, found at <http://www.trinitycollege.com/site/?id=3192>

TABLE for Internationally Recognised English Proficiency Outcomes for International Students					
Internationally recognised proficiency tests	Qualification Level for programmes and required outcome taking into account the Criteria listed under this Table that must be applied				
	Level 3 Qualification	Level 4 Qualification	Level 5 Qualification	Level 6 / 7 Qualification	Level 8 - 10 Qualification
IELTS test	General or Academic score of 5 with no band score lower than 5	General or Academic score of 5.5 with no band score lower than 5	Academic score of 5.5 with no band score lower than 5	Academic score of 6 with no band score lower than 5.5	Academic score of 6.5 with no band score lower than 6
TOEFL Internet-based test (iBT) (see explanatory notes)	Score of 35 (with a writing score of 14)	Score of 46 (with a writing score of 14)	Score of 46 (with a writing score of 14)	Score of 60 (with a writing score of 18)	Score of 79 (with a writing score of 21)
Cambridge English Qualifications	B2 First or B2 First for Schools with a score of 154. No less than 154 in each skill	B2 First or B2 First for schools with a score of 162. No less than 154 in each skill	B2 First or B2 First for schools with a score of 162. No less than 154 in each skill	B2 First, B2 First for schools, C1 Advanced, or C2 Proficiency with a score of 169. No less than 162 in each skill	B2 First, B2 First for schools, C1 Advanced or C2 Proficiency with a score of 176. No less than 169 in each skill
OET	Minimum of Grade C or 200 in all sub-tests	Minimum of Grade C or 200 in all sub-tests	Minimum of Grade C or 200 in all sub-tests	Minimum of Grade C or 200 in all sub-tests	Minimum of Grade C+ or 300 in all sub-tests
NZCEL	Level 3 (General)	Level 3 (Applied) or (Academic)	Level 4 (General) or (Employment)	Level 4 (Academic)	Level 5 (Academic)

Pearson Test of English (Academic)	PTE (Academic) score of 36 with no band score lower than 36	PTE (Academic) score of 42 with no band score lower than 36	PTE (Academic) score of 42 with no band score lower than 36	PTE (Academic) score of 50 with no band score lower than 42	PTE (Academic) score of 58 with no band score lower than 50
LanguageCert	International ESOL B1 Achiever with overall PASS and no less than 25/50 in each skill or Academic with a minimum score of 55 overall and no skill below 55	International ESOL B2 Communicator with overall PASS and no less than 25/50 in each skill or Academic with a minimum score of 60 overall and no skill below 55	International ESOL B2 Communicator with overall HIGH PASS and no less than 25/50 in each skill or Academic with a minimum score of 60 overall and no skill below 55	International ESOL C1 Expert with overall PASS and no less than 25/50 in each skill or Academic with a minimum score of 65 overall and no skill below 60	International ESOL C1 Expert with overall HIGH PASS and no less than 25/50 in each skill or International ESOL C2 Mastery with overall PASS and no less than 25/50 in each skill or Academic with a minimum score of 70 overall and no skill below 65
Trinity ISE	ISE I with no less than distinction or 71 in any band	ISE II with no less than pass or 80 in any band	ISE II with no less than merit or 90 in any band	ISE II with no less than distinction or 96 in any band	ISE III with no less than pass or 105 in any band

General Criteria that must be applied:

- (a) The listed outcomes represent the minimum scores or grades for each test or qualification that qualify a student for enrolment at each programme level
- (b) Students with higher scores or grades than required for a particular programme level may still enrol at that level
- (c) Where the entry requirements for a programme are for a higher English proficiency outcome than is listed in the relevant row of the Table for the programme level in which the student is being enrolled, the student must meet that higher level
- (d) Test results for any student must be verified through the test provider

Test-specific Criteria that must be applied:

- (e) The Cambridge English Qualifications must be taken at an authorised exam centre, school or external venue. All test scores must be from a single Statement of Results.
- (f) The IELTS test must be taken at an official IELTS test centre. The scores must be from a single Test Report Form. The IELTS One Skill Retake can be accepted.
- (g) The LanguageCert test must be taken at a LanguageCert approved test centre. All test scores must be from a single Test Report, except for the International ESOL where the results may be provided in a single Statement of Results for Written (LRW) and a separate statement of results for Spoken (S).
- (h) The OET test must be taken at an OET venue. All test scores must be from a single Statement of Results.
- (i) The Pearson Test of English (PTE) test must be taken at a PTE test centre. All test scores must be from a single Score Report.
- (j) The TOEFL Internet-based test (iBT) must be taken entirely at an authorised TOEFL iBT test center. The iBT paper edition has one component (speaking) assessed outside an authorised test centre, so cannot be accepted. All test scores must be from a single Score Report. The 'My Best Scores' option cannot be accepted. See explanatory notes.
- (k) The Trinity ISE test must be taken at a Trinity registered exam centre. All test scores must be from a single Certificate.

Schedule 2
English Proficiency Grade and Level Specified for the following European Countries

Country	English level and grade
Denmark	Studentereksamen English A grade 7 or English B grade 10
Finland	Ylioppilastutkinoto or Studentexamen, English Language grade 5 (0-7 grading scale) Upper Secondary School Certificate English A or English A Language grade 8 (4-10 grading scale)
Germany	Abitur English Language grade 3 (1-6 grading scale) or grade 10 (1-15 grading scale) DAAD test B2 in all three sections
Netherlands	Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (VWO) (Gymnasium A/B and Atheneum A/B) Diplomas (university preparatory education) English Language grade 9 (0-10 grading scale)
Norway	Vitnemal English Language grade 4 (1-6 grading scale)
Sweden	Hogskoleforberedande examen English 6 grade C

Click here to enter text.

Made by:

Board Chair signature: 

Date: 8 December 2025

City or town where signed: Wellington City

Minister of Education signature: Date:.....

City or town where signed:

Board of NZQA and the Minister of Education

Explanatory note

This note is not part of these Rules but is intended to indicate their general effect.

These Rules set out, in relation to programme approval, recognition and accreditation,-

- (a) the processes for making applications:
- (b) requirements for approval, recognition or accreditation to be granted:
- (c) requirements to maintain approval, recognition and accreditation:
- (d) where NZQA consent is needed for changes:
- (e) when and how special reviews may occur:
- (f) English language proficiency requirements for enrolment in a programme at level 3 and above.

These Rules were re-issued on 19 January 2026 to:

- (a) adjust terminology to reflect amendments made by the Education and Training (Vocational Education and Training System) Amendment Act 2026 (eg: *the change from WDCs to ISBs*):
- (b) removing references to external evaluation and review following its replacement with self-review and monitoring, and removal of references to consistency reviews as they are discontinued with effect from 1 January 2026:
- (c) reducing requirements where a programme approval application relates to a qualification consisting entirely of skill standards:
- (d) remove the sub-contracting rule and programme monitoring (*which are now in the Quality Assurance of Tertiary Education Providers Rules made from time to time under section 452(1)(t) of the Act*):
- (e) removing the need for ISB endorsement for Type 2 changes to programmes:
- (f) language simplification in rule 21 and the Table in Schedule 1.

A new TOEFL iBT test format and scoring system was launched on 21 January 2026. This new test is not the same test as that in the Table – it has the same name but different scoring.

Tests taken prior to 21 January 2026 will have been done with the correct scoring. After 21 January 2026, the TOEFL iBT Australia / New Zealand test will have the correct scoring. These tests can be accepted.

This is secondary legislation issued under the authority of the Legislation Act 2019 .	
Title	Programme Approval, Recognition, and Accreditation Rules 2026
Principal or amendment	Principal
Consolidated version	No
Empowering Act and provisions	Education and Training Act 2020, section 452
Replacement empowering Act and provisions	Not applicableClick or tap to enter text
Maker name	Board of NZQA and the Minister of Education
Administering agency	New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)
Date made	[day month year] <i>[Insert date of signing/approval. For consolidations use the publication date of the original “as-made” principal version].</i>
Publication date	Click or tap to enter a date <i>[Insert date first published/made available. For consolidations use the publication date of the original “as-made” principal version]</i>
Notification date	Not applicableClick or tap to enter a date
Commencement date	19 January 2026
End date (when applicable)	Not applicableClick or tap to enter a date
Consolidation as at date	Not applicable Click or tap to enter a date
Related instruments	Click or tap to enter textNot applicable