

**TONGA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
AND
ACCREDITATION BOARD**



**QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES
2024**

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1. OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This document summarises the key Quality Assurance (QA) Policies of the Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Board (TNQAB) in respect of the quality assurance of Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) providers and programmes in the Kingdom of Tonga.

It aims to advise and fully inform PCET providers of the TNQAB regulatory and quality assurance responsibilities, the QA Standards that providers must comply with and the policies that TNQAB has adopted. A complementary document, the Tonga Qualifications Framework (TQF), provides related policies on qualifications (see Section 1.4).

The document will help PCET institutions and providers to:

- Understand TNQAB's approach to regulation and identify their desired ways to work with TNQAB
- Prepare for QA activities and undertake internal quality assurance activities
- Create and apply practices, processes, and systems that meet the requirements of the TNQAB Quality Standards.

For the public, including learners, this document provides information on what can be expected from a registered PCET provider and the programmes that it delivers, and on the complaints process. It updates the TNQAB's 2009 Quality Assurance Policies document and introduces some changes to clarify the processes and improve efficiency, drawing on feedback from stakeholders and improvements self-identified by TNQAB. Further information is available in more detailed policies and guidelines for particular processes.

There is a separate document, 'Glossary of Acronyms and Terms', for TNQAB quality processes.

This document comes into effect on a date to be determined by the Board, after a suitable period for TNQAB and providers to make adjustments.

1.2 CONTEXT AND HISTORY

The context for this document is provided by various major development plans, including:

- Tonga Strategic Development Plan II 2015 – 2025
- Ministry of Education Corporate Plan 2019 – 2022
- Pacific Regional Education Framework 2018 -2030 (PacREF).

In 1987, Cabinet approved the establishment of the Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Board (TNQAB). The resulting Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Bill

was drafted in 1998, approved by Parliament in mid-2004 and enacted by Privy Council on 12 December 2007. The Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Board Act 2004 (as reflected in the 2020 Revised edition) is the official version. Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations were first drafted in 1999, reviewed in 2006 and presented to Cabinet in 2007, with updated Regulations approved in 2010 (as reflected in the 2020 Revised edition).

The Board's quality assurance responsibilities are outlined in Part II (8), of the TNQAB Act (2020 Revised edition):

- (b) Establish policies, criteria, accreditation, monitoring, reviewing, register, and listing of providers of post compulsory education and training (PCET).

Its quality assurance functions are detailed in Parts III and IV of the Act and in Parts IV and V of the Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition).

1.3 SCOPE

All PCET providers who are registered, or wish to become registered, must observe these Policies, so the qualifications they deliver can be registered on the Tonga Qualifications Framework (TQF). Qualifications registered on the TQF can be recognised across countries in the Pacific, thus supporting mobility and opportunities for graduates. For providers, this recognition will attract new students.

This document covers the key Quality Assurance (QA) processes of TNQAB. It should be read in conjunction with the Tonga Qualifications Framework, which includes additional policies (see Section 1.4). This QA Policies 2024 document does not include policies for the Recognition of Overseas Qualifications awarded to individuals.

PCET providers are expected to develop and undertake their own measures to assure the quality of the education and training they provide, through processes of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA). TNQAB then undertakes the quality assurance processes described in this document, to provide External Quality Assurance (EQA).

This Quality Assurance Policies 2024 document will be updated by TNQAB to reflect changes at least every five years.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TNQAB QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES AND TQF

These TNQAB Quality Assurance Policies and the Tonga Qualifications Framework (TQF), with its policies for formal educational qualifications, are complementary. PCET providers in Tonga need to be meet the requirements of both.

The Tonga Qualifications Framework is the classification system for formal PCET qualifications in Tonga. The TQF document explains the characteristics of a qualification, the distinction between National Qualifications and Provider Qualifications, and the policies for qualifications such as their naming and the registration of qualifications on the TQF.

Qualifications are described through their titles and related information on the learning that has been completed, such as the units required to achieve expected outcomes. This information is registered (listed) on the. Examples of qualification titles are ‘Certificate in Tour Guiding Level 3’ and, for National Qualifications, ‘National Certificate in Tour Guiding Level 3’.

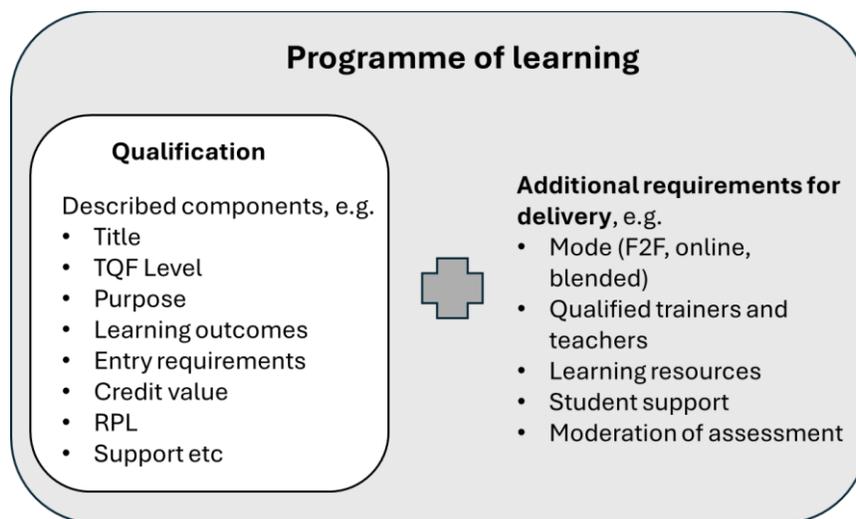
A unit is a component of a qualification that can also be described by reference to its title, purpose, credit points, and learning outcomes.

There is an interdependent relationship between a qualification and a programme. The word ‘qualification’ is used in one sense to mean a “formal proof of successfully completed learning according to an agreed standard” (UNESCO-UNEVOC 2021). A learner who has successfully completed a ‘course of study’ or ‘programme of learning’ is awarded a qualification. This qualification is at a specific level of the TQF and has a specific name as a certificate, diploma or degree. However, the term ‘qualification’ can also refer to the required description of the qualification, which must include a title, TQF level, purpose statement, learning outcomes and other components. This sense of the term ‘qualification’ is used by TNQAB in its quality assurance processes.

A ‘programme’ (or ‘programme of learning’, or ‘course of study’ is a coherent set of units (units of competency, modules or subjects) designed to meet the requirements of a qualification. Successful completion of the programme results in the award of the qualification. The description of the programme gives additional information on how the units will be taught or delivered, who will deliver them, who will assess the output produced by learners, and the resources that will be provided to support learners. All these aspects are important to assure the quality of a qualification when it is offered to learners.

The relationship between a ‘qualification’ and a ‘programme’, as used by TNQAB for quality assurance purposes, is indicated in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. Relationship between a qualification and a programme



Elements of TNQAB’s Quality Standards 2 and 3 set out the requirements that must be met for a programme to be accredited and a qualification to be listed on the TQF.

A qualification must be developed before an entity or institution can apply for programme accreditation (see Section 5).

1.5 TNQAB ACT AND DOCUMENT HIERARCHY

The TNQAB uses a hierarchical structure to indicate the level of authority of its documents. The *Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Board Act (2020 Revised edition)* and the *Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition)* have the full force of law. They impose requirements on the TNQAB. The **Act** can only be changed by Parliament. The Regulations can be changed by the Minister of Education and Training with the consent of Cabinet.

This document contains frequent references to the TNQAB Act and Regulations. However, it is no substitute for reading the full legislation, which is available on the TNQAB website. Providers are encouraged to read the Act and Regulations in full and to approach TNQAB if they have any questions.

The **Regulations** include the Quality Standards that PCET institutions and programmes must meet. TNQAB’s major role is to check that providers, programmes and qualifications meet these Quality Standards, to ensure that PCET in Tonga is of adequate quality.

Decisions on whether or not the Quality Standards are met are made by the TNQAB Board. A copy of the Quality Standards is at **Appendix A**.

TNQAB **Policies** are authoritative statements approved by the Board of the TNQAB (the Board), including any associated Procedures. They state the principles and requirements that must be met by providers. They can be changed by the Board of TNQAB.

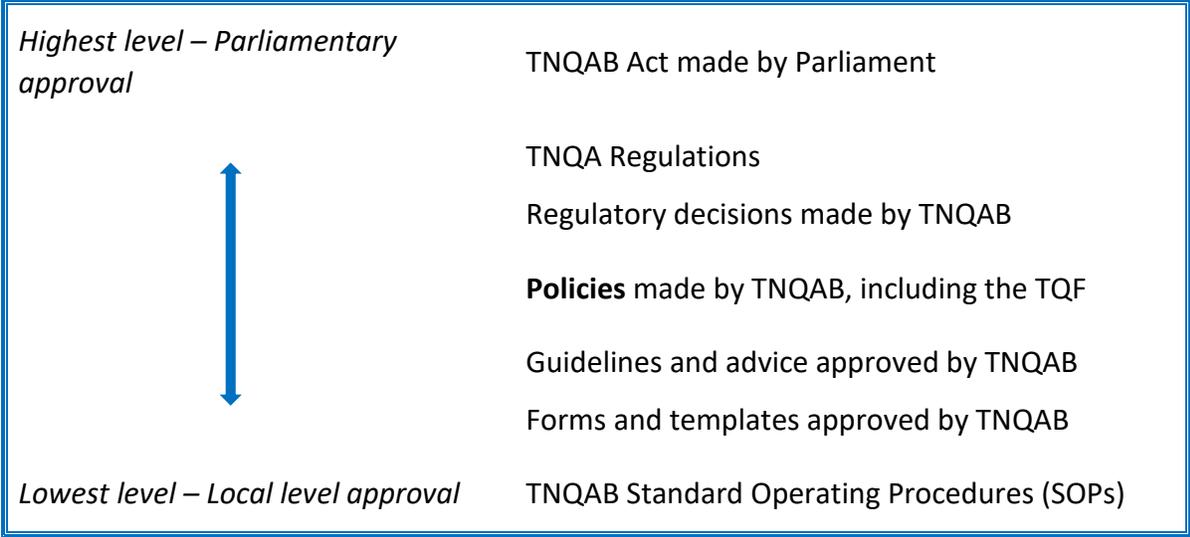
PCET providers are required to observe these Quality Assurance Policies of TNQAB, which have authority under the TNQAB Act and Regulations.

TNQAB **Guidelines** are subordinate to Policies. They provide advice and information for providers and other stakeholders to help them meet their obligations to TNQAB. Providers should follow the requirements to comply with the TNQAB Policies. These documents can be changed by the Board of TNQAB, or by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) under delegated authority. A list of the associated Guidelines and forms referred to in this Quality Assurance Policies document is at **Appendix E**.

TNQAB **Forms and templates** are operational documents to assist providers. TNQAB will update the forms and templates to reflect changes in TNQAB policies and processes. **TNQAB Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** are internal documents to guide TNQAB in fulfilling its functions. They can be changed by the CEO of TNQAB.

The TNQAB Document Hierarchy is shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2. TNQAB Document Hierarchy



2. APPROACH TO PCET QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.1 PURPOSES

The broad purpose of TNQAB's quality assurance activities is to improve the quality of PCET in Tonga. TNQAB also has a 'gatekeeper' role, to protect consumers from poor quality education and training.

The specific purposes are:

1. To assure and enhance the quality of PCET in the Kingdom of Tonga, particularly in respect of formal qualifications on the Tonga Qualifications Framework
2. To protect prospective and enrolled PCET students, their families and the community from harm caused by a lack of clear information or poor quality post-compulsory education and training, including overseas providers
3. To ensure PCET providers have their qualifications registered on the TQF, to contribute to regional opportunities for learners
4. To advise on policies for PCET in the Kingdom of Tonga that will help to improve quality
5. To support regional activities to enhance the quality and quantity of PCET across the Pacific.

2.2 PRINCIPLES

TNQAB uses international principles and guidelines for good practices in external quality assurance of PCET. These include the Good Practice Guidelines of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the European Standards and Guidelines 2015 (ESG) and the Pacific Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF).

TNQAB applies the following principles to its activities:

Integrity: TNQAB will provide an ethical and trustworthy quality assurance system that instils mutual trust, confidence and understanding of education and training systems in Tonga. Members of quality assurance panels – whether internal or external – will be adequately trained to fully understand and carry out their roles.

Evidence-based: TNQAB will ensure that findings and decisions are based on factual evidence that is accurate and directly related to the area being investigated. Reports produced will be complete, accurate and objective, covering both the strengths and weaknesses of a system or process. TNQAB uses an internal peer review process to ensure the quality of reports that contain recommendation to the Board for a regulatory decision. The three Quality Standards and their elements are shown at **Appendix A**.

Standards-based: TNQAB will use publicly available standards in reviewing providers, institutions and programmes, to aid transparency and confidence in its processes.

Independent: TNQAB will ensure that any quality assurance activity being conducted (e.g., accreditation or audit) is implemented by people who are independent of the area under review and who remain impartial until the activity is completed. The reports and conclusions of a quality assurance activity are those of the reviewers or panel and not influenced by external parties.

Confidential: TNQAB will ensure that any information collected is protected from unauthorised access and use, and the privacy of informants is protected, subject to the need to make general information available to the public and Government.

Responsive: TNQAB's processes will encourage provider self-regulation and continuous improvement. They will take account of the scale and complexity of the provider's PCET operations. They will be responsive to the needs of providers for capacity development but also to the risk of deliberate non-compliance by a provider (see Section 2.6).

2.3 USE OF QUALITY STANDARDS

TNQAB decisions on quality assurance are made against a set of Quality Standards that all providers or programmes are expected to achieve. The Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition) set out three Quality Standards for the registration of post compulsory education and training providers and the accreditation of their courses of study. Each has a list of elements that have to be met. The Quality Standards and elements are reproduced in **Appendix A** of this document. Specific elements under a Standard must be met for different TNQAB processes, as explained in this document and shown at **Appendix B**.

The use of Quality Standards and associated elements helps in creating a baseline for operational quality, responsiveness and integrity from which all providers can continue to promote excellence and diversity.

TNQAB applies the Quality Standards as the basis of its regulatory and QA activities. This ensures that TNQAB activities are aligned, relevant and focused on continuous improvement.

For each QA activity delivered by TNQAB, providers and entities planning to become providers will be advised of the Standards that are applicable. TNQAB will provide details of the evidence that is required from providers in order to meet the Quality Standards. This evidence is found in associated Guidelines, application forms, templates and checklists.

Registered providers are expected also to meet requirements stated in the TNQAB Act and Regulations, such as the requirement to notify TNQAB of significant changes (see Section 4).

2.4 KEY TNQAB QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

TNQAB's QA processes provide a series of checks on providers (and prospective providers), qualifications and programmes, to ensure that the Quality Standards are met. In this way, the public and Government in the Kingdom of Tonga can have confidence in the PCET that is being delivered, and so can regional and international bodies.

The processes used by TNQAB use terms such as 'registration', 'accreditation', 'monitoring', 'review' and 'quality audit'. The first two describe the approval of a status for a provider, a qualification or a programme. The last three are processes for checking on whether a provider, a qualification or a programme meets the Quality Standards and so can maintain the status.

The key TNQAB processes are:

Initial approval, of a provider (registration), qualification (registration on the TQF) or a programme (accreditation), as a result of a decision by the Board of the TNQAB.

Monitoring, of a registered provider through an annual process.

Review, of a National Qualification or a programme.

Renewal, of a National Qualification or a programme accreditation, as a result of a decision by the Board of the TNQAB.

Intervention, by a compliance notice or special purpose quality audit, as directed by the Board of TNQAB, possibly as a consequence of a significant change by the provider. An intervention can lead to further compliance or remedial action by the provider but could also lead to cancellation of programme accreditation or provider registration.

Table 1 summarises these key processes.

Table 1 TNQAB Key Processes

Process	Provider	Qualification	Programme
Outcome of initial application	Registration	Registration on the TQF	Accreditation
Monitoring	Annual monitoring		
Review	-	Review (National Qualification) Programme Quality Review	Mid-term Programme Review Programme Quality Review
Renewal application	-	Registration	Accreditation
Intervention	Compliance action Special purpose quality audit	Compliance action Special purpose quality audit	Compliance action Special purpose quality audit

2.5 CHANGES BETWEEN 2009 AND 2024 QA POLICIES AND PROCESSES

Table 2 shows the key changes to TNQAB’s Quality Assurance Policies and processes between the 2009 and 2024 document. The substantial changes are the processes for programme accreditation, a new process for renewal of accreditation and a more limited focus for quality audit.

The need for these changes was identified by TNQAB and reinforced by feedback from stakeholders. Streamlining of processes was highlighted, so the checking of elements under Standard 1 has been rationalised. A requirement in the TNQAB Act (2020 Revised edition) for a programme review every two years is agreed by all to be too short a timeframe, so a less comprehensive process than a full quality audit has been proposed, in the form of a mid-term programme review. The Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition) allow the Board to specify a time period for accreditation, so this can be used, with a 4-year period suggested as the default. The accreditation of the programme can then be renewed after a substantial review of compliance with Quality Standards 2 and 3. **Appendix B** shows which elements of the Quality Standards will be checked for each of the main processes.

Table 2 Changes to TNQAB Key Quality Assurance Policies

Existing Quality Assurance Policies		Revised Quality Assurance Policies	
QA Process	Frequency	Key Process	Frequency
Provider Registration – Quality Standard 1	<i>Once – Regulatory Decision</i>	Provider Registration – Quality Standard 1	<i>Once – Regulatory Decision</i>
Provider Annual Monitoring	<i>Annual data collection / fees</i>	Provider Annual Monitoring – Quality Standards 1.3 and 1.4	<i>Annual data collection / fees / monitoring visit/</i>
Registration of National Qualification	<i>Once – Regulatory Decision</i>	Registration of National Qualification	<i>Once – Regulatory Decision</i>
Renewal of registration of National Qualification	<i>Every 5 years – Regulatory Decision</i>	Re-registration of National Qualification	<i>Every 5 years – Regulatory Decision</i>
Programme Accreditation – Quality Standards 2 and 3; registration of Provider Qualification	<i>Once (initial) – Regulatory decision</i>	Programme Accreditation – Quality Standards 2 and parts of 3; registration of Provider Qualification	<i>Once (initial) – Regulatory Decision</i>
-	-	Renewal of Programme Accreditation – Quality Standards 2 and parts of 3; Programme Quality Review – Standards 2 and 3	<i>Every 5 years or shorter for a Provider Qualification, or 5 year or longer if a National Qualification– Regulatory Decision</i>
Quality Audit – Standards 1, 2 and 3	<i>Every 2 years, Regulatory Decision</i>	Mid-term programme review – Parts of Standard 3	<i>Every 2 years</i>
Quality audit – Special purpose	<i>As required, possible regulatory decision</i>	Quality audit – Special purpose	<i>As required, possible regulatory decision</i>

Minor changes = Pale yellow shading; Major changes = orange shading.

2.6 RESPONSIVE REGULATION

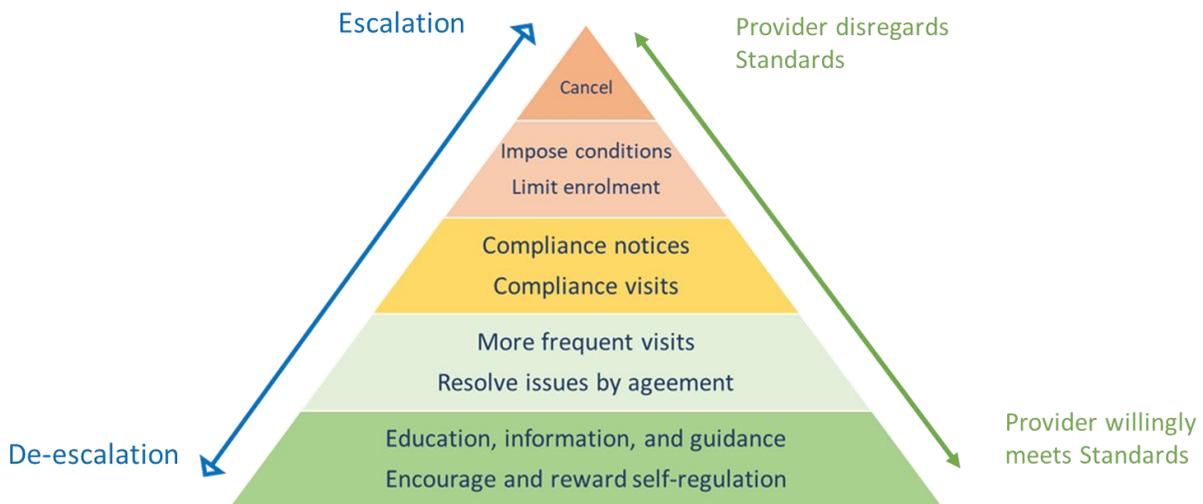
The key to enhancing the quality of education and training is to enhance each PCET provider's capacity for self-improvement, through a quality management system that enables the provider to identify and implement changes.

To be a responsive regulator, TNQAB will use the model of a regulatory pyramid in its relations with providers, as shown in **Figure 3**. TNQAB seeks to understand all its providers - their institution and their vision, missions, ethos, and values.

All providers will be supported to self-regulate, through education and guidance. For those providers that show continuous improvement and a desire meet the TNQAB Quality Standards, most of TNQAB's activity will be concentrated at the base of the pyramid.

However, providers that show less interest in meeting Standards can expect increased oversight by TNQAB. This monitoring may result in conditions on programme accreditation or even cancellation of accreditation and registration. Providers that are suspected of fraud or other activity resulting in harm will be referred to the police if there is alleged illegal conduct.

Figure 3. TNQAB regulatory pyramid



Source: Adapted from Ayers and Braithwaite (1992) as refined in a model used by the Tertiary Education and Standards Agency in Australia.

Reference: Ayers, I. & Braithwaite, J. (1992). *Responsive Regulation: Transcending the Deregulation Debate*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. Figure 2.3, p. 39.

3. REGISTRATION OF PROVIDERS

3.1 REGISTRATION

Registration is the recognition given by the TNQAB Board that an entity has the governance and management capability to deliver PCET programmes to meet the Quality Standards. It is an evaluation of the capability of an institution or entity to provide and maintain a well organised, sound and stable learning environment.

For an organisation that wishes to set itself up as a legitimate education and training provider, registration is permission granted to enter the education and training market in Tonga. The Board maintains a Register of all registered education and training providers.

Providers must meet Accreditation Standard 1, elements 1.1 to 1.5 in order to be registered. See **Appendix C** in respect of policies that must be in effect.

Providers must make an application to TNQAB on the approved TNQAB form. The information to be submitted includes that required in clause 10 of the TNQAB Act (2020 Revised edition), plus additional items. The assessment of the application will be undertaken by TNQAB and must include a site visit to the institution.

Institutions that apply for registration will be charged an initial registration fee.

The decision by the TNQAB on the application will be one of:

- Register
- Do not register.

The Board may approve a provisional registration in exceptional circumstances. Registration continues unless it is cancelled by TNQAB.

Once registered, providers are required under the Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition) to meet Standards 1, 2 and 3 on an ongoing basis.

After granting provider registration to an organisation, TNQAB will issue a Certificate of Registration (see also Section 5.8).

If an application for registration is not granted, the notification to the applicant shall include reasons. A provider may apply again after they have addressed issues notified by TNQAB.

Associated documents for Provider Registration:

TNQAB Guidelines for Registration of Providers of Post Compulsory Education and Training

TNQAB Application Form for Provider Registration

3.2 PROVIDER ANNUAL MONITORING

A provider's registered status will be maintained annually through the payment of the annual registration renewal fee by 31st January of each year.

TNQAB will undertake an annual collegial monitoring visit to the provider. The main purposes of the Provider Annual Monitoring are to:

- **Confirm the ongoing operations** of a registered PCET provider, including the updating of the provider's key personnel, contact details, selected policies and their implementation, and other information and data relevant to the provider.
- Inform TNQAB of the **improvements made** by a PCET provider in relation to maintaining and meeting the requirements of the Quality Standards.
- Inform TNQAB of the PCET provider's **planned improvements** for the coming year.
- Provide TNQAB with **an overview of the risks and challenges** faced by providers, in order for TNQAB to support the PCET sector to address these risks and challenges, where applicable.
- **Maintain good relations** and collaboration between TNQAB and PCET providers including gathering feedback on their interactions between TNQAB and providers.
- Provide TNQAB with a **comprehensive view of the operations, improvements, and challenges of the PCET sector** which in turn is reported back to the sector as a PCET Annual Report.

During the visit, TNQAB will ask the provider a series of questions related to meeting elements in the Quality Standards. However, the intent is to build trust and communication between the provider and TNQAB, so efforts should be made to resolve any concerns through dialogue.

The annual monitoring visit will explore the ways the provider is meeting aspects of Quality Standards 1.3 and 1.4.

If TNQAB finds any significant issues that cannot be resolved in dialogue with the provider, it will report these to the Board of TNQAB. A provider must provide data annually to TNQAB, in the format required and with all information. A refusal or inability to provide these data may lead to an intervention or compliance notice by TNQAB.

Associated documents for Provider Annual Monitoring:

TNQAB Provider Annual Monitoring To Do List

3.3 INTERVENTION

If TNQAB becomes aware of any issues at a provider or institution that suggest is not meeting Standards, it will make a compliance visit to discuss the issues with the provider. TNQAB will seek information or a response from the provider. Compliance action by TNQAB may then escalate through a compliance notice, special purpose quality audit or the imposition of conditions on a provider's registration, as set out in Sections 8 and 9.

If the Board of TNQAB imposes any requirements on a provider, such as a compliance notice or conditions, TNQAB will follow up on any conditions or compliance requirements imposed by the Board. If a provider fails to comply with requirements, TNQAB can initiate action to cancel accreditation of a programme or provider registration.

Examples of the types of conditions that could be imposed include requiring a provider to:

- Develop and implement specific policies
- Make arrangements to refund students' fees in the event of closure
- Provide reports and data to review performance
- Keep various records
- Maintain a particular staffing profile for a programme
- Provide access to particular facilities for a programme
- Provide particular support services
- Refrain from admitting new students for a period of time.

3.4 FOREIGN PROVIDERS (see also Section 14)

Please see Section 14 for the TNQAB Policy on Cross Border Education and Training.

Cross border education encompasses all types of education study programmes, courses of study, or educational services (including all forms of open and distance learning) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based.

TNQAB does not regulate programmes offered by foreign providers that are offered entirely online. Potential students and the public are urged to carefully check whether the providers of online qualifications are registered and their programmes accredited in their home country.

Providers based in countries other than Tonga may wish to offer qualifications in Tonga through face to face teaching or a hybrid combination of face to face and online teaching. The most common arrangements involve either a foreign provider establishing a campus in Tonga or a

‘franchise’ arrangement whereby the foreign provider that awards the qualification enters into an agreement with a local organisation that supplies infrastructure, personnel and resources to teach the qualification.

Foreign providers can only enter into ‘franchise’ arrangements with providers that are registered in Tonga by TNQAB.

TNQAB will make available all relevant information on Tonga’s qualifications, registration, accreditation and quality audit processes to foreign providers who wish to offer cross border education and training in Tonga. TNQAB will work closely with Government, and all PCET providers in Tonga to ensure protection of students and learners from investing in cross border education that is of low or dubious quality.

For foreign providers operating in Tonga in their own right, TNQAB will only regard Standard 1 as satisfied if the provider is registered with a government or otherwise credible external quality assurance agency in its home country and is already offering programmes at the same or higher TQF levels as the programmes it intends to offer in Tonga.

For foreign providers operating in Tonga under a ‘franchise’ arrangement, TNQAB will only regard Standard 1 as satisfied if there is a detailed agreement between the foreign provider and a registered provider in Tonga that sets out all of the requirements, schedules and standards to be met to ensure the quality delivery of programmes in Tonga, including internal quality assurance by the provider of its activities in Tonga.

The agreement should clearly state who will recruit qualified teachers, how the policies of the foreign provider will be adhered to in Tonga, and the arrangements for student welfare. The arrangements between the foreign provider and the Tongan registered provider must collectively ensure that all the Quality Standards are met.

The registered PCET provider must apply for accreditation for each of its programmes. To meet Standard 3, a foreign provider must award the qualification itself, give the same full recognition of its qualifications delivered in Tonga to those delivered in its home country, and ensure that the programme is at the same level and quality as when offered in its home country.

Local registered PCET providers that establish any arrangement with a foreign provider must take note of the following before confirmation of intent to do so:

- Local providers must amend their quality management systems to take additional responsibility for the delivery of cross border education and training courses of study
- Providers and individuals must closely examine all information and guidance provided by foreign institutions and providers to ensure that they do not fall victim to dubious quality

assurance and accreditation claims and low-quality provision, leading to qualifications of limited validity.

If there is doubt about the reputation and standards of a potential foreign provider, their courses of study or qualifications, the Board must be consulted immediately, and full contact details of the foreign provider must be submitted to facilitate and the provision of further information

The Board will strengthen international co-operation and networking in partnership with international quality assurance and accreditation bodies in quality assuring cross border providers, since cross border education and training involves the sending country as much as Tonga, which is the receiving country.

The Board will coordinate and facilitate the process of recognition or establishing equivalence between the Tonga Qualifications Framework and those of other countries, based on procedures and criteria mutually agreed to.

3.5 PROTECTED TERMS AND UNIVERSITY STATUS

One of the elements for registration by TNQAB is: “The provider’s name is appropriate and does not mislead learners about the nature of the education and training provision”. Applying this requirement to current education and training providers in Tonga indicates significant issues with only one group – those that use the term ‘University’ or ‘Univesiti’.

In some countries (for example United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand) the use of the term ‘University’ is restricted to those institutions that meet defined characteristics, based on their breadth of programmes, the level of the qualifications they offer, their maturity or the extent of their research activities.

In the Pacific region, there are restrictions on the use of the title ‘University’ in several nations. Given Tonga’s place in the Pacific, there is as a risk that allowing providers in the Kingdom to use the term ‘University’ or ‘Univesiti’ without restriction could mislead others about the standing of an institution.

Therefore, the Board will only register an education and training provider that uses the term ‘University’ or ‘Univesiti’ in its name if it already has (or as a new public institution is clearly planned to have within the next 5 years) all of the following characteristics:

- The provider consistently meets all the Quality Standards
- The provider facilitates wide diversity of teaching and research, especially at a higher level
- The provider is primarily concerned with more advanced learning, the principal aim being to develop intellectual independence

- The provider’s research and teaching are closely interdependent and most of its teaching is done by people who are active in advancing knowledge
- The provider meets international standards of research and teaching
- The provider is a repository of knowledge and expertise
- The provider accepts a role as critic and conscience of society.

The phrase ‘international standards of research and teaching’ is assessed by reviewing the institution’s current or projected outputs and outcomes against the following measures, and other measures to be agreed by the independent panel assessing the application:

- Research publications in reputable international peer-reviewed journals
- Research publications in established regional peer-reviewed journals
- Research projects, including consultancies, conducted by the institution’s researchers for the Government and public sector or for private industry or other stakeholders, either in the Kingdom of Tonga or overseas
- Proportion of academic staff with doctoral qualifications
- External professional accreditation of relevant institutional qualifications
- International peer reviews of the institution’s qualifications (for example, through TNQAB programme accreditation processes)
- International recognition of the institution’s qualifications
- Publications in reputable journals on the scholarship of learning and teaching.

For public providers, the proposal must have the support of Government.

An application for approval to use the title ‘University’ or ‘Univesiti’ needs to be made by a registered provider on a separate form. This application can only be made by a registered provider, not by a provider that is yet to be registered, except for a foreign provider or a new public university. For foreign providers, the provider or institution must already have approval to use the title in its home country (see Section 3.4).

The assessment of the application will be through an independent panel process.

Associated documents for University Status:

Guidelines for Registration of Provider as a University 2010

Application form for use of the title ‘University’ or ‘Univesiti’.

3.6 PROVIDER SUPPORT AND FEEDBACK

TNQAB will continue to provide policy guidance and advice to registered providers, consistent with its regulatory approach of encouraging self-regulation and continuous improvement.

TNQAB will alert providers to significant international issues that impact education and training and, when needed, consult with providers on measures to safeguard the quality of PCET in the Kingdom of Tonga.

TNQAB will provide other opportunities for providers to meet to showcase improvements and undertake professional development. TNQAB will also hold consultative meetings with providers as needed to exchange views on positive developments and on current issues, in a spirit of mutual cooperation.

TNQAB will seek feedback from providers, panelists and other stakeholders on its performance and ways it can improve its performance.

4. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO A PROVIDER OR PROGRAMME

4.1 CHANGES TO A PROVIDER

Under clause 20 of the Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition), a registered provider must notify the Board in writing, within 14 days, of any changes that may affect the validity of any previous decision by the Board to issue registration or grant accreditation, including changes to:

- a) ownership
- b) legal status
- c) legal and or trading name
- d) decision to cease operations
- e) location of any head office
- f) the composition of the governing body
- g) senior management personnel
- h) funding sources
- i) any franchising or partnership arrangements
- j) delivery site, and
- k) mode of delivery of any course covered by the accreditation, where significant.

On receiving this notification, the Board will investigate the consequences of the change in terms of the provider continuing to meet the Quality Standards. This investigation could take the form of an intervention such as a compliance visit or a special purpose quality audit (see Sections 8 and 9).

The Regulations state that the “Board may decide as a result of such an investigation, and acting on a written report from the Chief Executive Officer, to:

- a) initiate formal processes towards the cancellation, in whole or in part, of the accreditation granted to the accredited body
- b) impose additional conditions to the accreditation granted, or
- c) allow the accreditation to continue until the next scheduled review or quality audit.”

Relevant changes will be entered into the list of registered providers.

4.2 CHANGES TO PROGRAMMES

If a developer or provider wishes to change the title, level, outcome statement, credit value, entry requirements or any component of a qualification registered on the TQF, approval must be sought from TNQAB as soon as practicable.

The provider must complete the form 'Application for approval of changes to Qualifications and Short Courses' and submit it to TNQAB 3 months before the change is expected to be implemented. The changes should not be implemented until they have been approved by TNQAB.

TNQAB will seek advice on significant changes during its annual monitoring visit to a provider. If a provider fails to update TNQAB on significant changes on three or more occasions, TNQAB will consider taking compliance action.

Associated documents for Changes to Programmes:

Application form for approval of changes to Qualifications and Short Courses

5. PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

5.1 OVERVIEW

Accreditation is granted by the Board of TNQAB when it is satisfied that a programme of learning satisfies the criteria for a qualification to be listed on the Tonga Qualifications Framework and has met relevant Quality Standards, including standards for delivery.

The aim of the programme accreditation process is to ensure that every qualification and programme of learning has been assured to be of adequate quality.

Initial provider registration should be granted by TNQAB before the registered provider applies for the accreditation of a programme. However, an application for the accreditation of programmes can be submitted concurrently with an application for registration.

The process of programme accreditation involves the assessment of both the qualification and the arrangements to deliver the programme. Providers use a single application form, which considers elements of the Quality Standards in two parts.

A provider may offer a Provider Qualification, i.e., a qualification that the provider develops itself (or through a contract) for delivery only by itself. For providers that wish to offer a National Qualification, there is a streamlined assessment process, as the qualification requirements have already been quality assured.

Before developing a Provider Qualification and applying for programme accreditation, a provider must give TNQAB notice of its intention to do so.

5.2 NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DEVELOP A PROVIDER QUALIFICATION

Only registered providers can have a programme accredited. To commence the process, a registered provider must give TNQAB a Notice of Intention to develop a Provider Qualification. (There is a similar but separate notification process for those interested in developing a National Qualification.)

A provider should advise TNQAB even if it is already delivering a similar programme as a non-accredited programme. If a provider wishes to offer a qualification developed by another entity, other than a National Qualification, the provider must ensure that it has evidence of the owner of the copyright in the content and that the provider has completed any licences required to deliver the programme and award the qualification.

TNQAB will work with the provider for up to six months to help ensure that the Provider Qualification is properly scoped and developed, to increase the chances of a successful outcome

for programme accreditation. TNQAB's role will be to advise providers but any TNQAB officers who provide advice will take no part in the assessment of the application, to avoid any conflict of interest.

If a Provider Qualification is to include nested qualifications, as defined in the Tonga Qualifications Framework, then these qualifications can be developed and scoped at the same time and can be included in a single initial application for programme accreditation.

Foreign providers should advise TNQAB of their intention to seek TNQAB accreditation of a qualification that the provider is already delivering and is accredited in the provider's home country, using the Notice of Intention process. Such providers need to apply for programme accreditation from TNQAB.

TNQAB reserves the right not to accept an application for programme accreditation until at least three months after a Notice of Intention has been submitted by the provider.

5.3 INITIAL PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

The Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition) grant authority to the Board of TNQAB to accredit a programme of learning for a specified period, provided that at the end of that period an application for review shall be made to the Board. The Regulations also grant authority to the Board to impose conditions on a programme accreditation.

When an application for programme accreditation is submitted, TNQAB will make a preliminary assessment of application and if it appears not to meet the Quality Standards, may advise the provider to revise and re-submit their application (with no additional fee). The provider may take this advice or may decide to proceed with the assessment. The provider will be asked to show evidence that they own the copyright in the programme documentation or have an appropriate licence for use.

The assessment of the entire application will be undertaken by one panel. The process will assess against all of Standard 2 and the provider's capability to deliver the programme, using most elements of Quality Standard 3, namely 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.12 (see **Appendix B**).

In assessing an application by a foreign provider to offer in Tonga a qualification that it is delivering in its home country, TNQAB will check that the programme has been accredited by a government-authorised accreditation agency or in the home country, or under self-accrediting authority granted to the provider, or that the provider is authorised to offer the qualification.

As part of the assessment of Standard 3.5, the panel will review the provider's compliance with the TNQAB Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning and Non-Formal Learning.

Programmes must meet the characteristics of a qualification (Standards 2.1 to 2.4), Standards 2.5 and 2.6, and most elements of Standard 3 in order to be accredited.

A site visit will be undertaken and a report prepared.

The TNQAB Board decision will be one of:

- Accredit the programme for a specified time period (5 years is the default but the period may be shorter than this, or 5 years or longer for a National Qualification), starting from the date of the Board’s decision, and register the qualification on the TQF
- Accredit the programme for a specified time period (5 years is the default but the period may be shorter than this or 5 years or longer for a National Qualification), starting from the date of the Board’s decision, subject to the provider meeting particular conditions within a specified time period, and register the qualification on the TQF. If the conditions are not met, the accreditation of the programme and registration of the qualification will be cancelled
- Do not accredit the programme and do not register the qualification on the TQF.

The provider whose programme is being accredited will be invoiced for the costs incurred by TNQAB.

In the event that an application for accreditation is not granted, the notification to the applicant will include reasons.

Associated documents for Initial Programme Application:

TNQAB Guidelines for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration

Application for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration

TNQAB Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning.

5.4 WORKPLACE ACCREDITATION

When workplace learning is considered to be an essential element in a programme of learning that has been submitted for programme accreditation, the arrangements will be reviewed as part of the assessment of the application for programme accreditation.

Other aspects of this process are under development by TNQAB.

5.5 MID-TERM PROGRAMME REVIEW

Once a programme has been accredited by TNQAB for a specified period of time, the provider is able to deliver it. TNQAB will schedule a review of the programme at approximately the mid-term of the period of programme accreditation, which is expected normally to 2 to 3 years after the start of the period of programme accreditation.

The purpose of the Mid-term Programme Review is to check the quality of the delivery of the programme. This Mid-term Programme Review is designed to meet the requirements of clause 17 of the TNQAB Act (2020 Revised edition). It will include an investigation of the following:

- (a) the ability of the provider to continue delivering their accredited education and training courses of study
- (b) the quality of each accredited course of study
- (c) the appropriateness of each qualification; and
- (d) the resources provided for the delivery of each course of study.

This review will be undertaken against elements of Standard 3, namely 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11.

The review will be undertaken by a panel of at least two people, as stated in the Act, namely

- (a) a Chairman nominated from the Board
- (b) a representative with content expertise and industry focus
- (c) a representative from Tonga or overseas with the educational expertise in the field of the course of study.

The TNQAB Board will approve the Chairman from one of the two representatives in the Mid-Term Programme Review panel. TNQAB will provide support to the panel throughout the process.

There will be a site visit of one day and the provider will be notified in advance of the documents and evidence that must be available on-site. The review team will make a report to the Board of TNQAB of the extent to which delivery of the programme meets the requirements.

If the panel recommends improvements, the Board shall notify the provider of this recommendation. The Board will allow the provider 3 months to make the improvements that were recommended. If the provider has not carried out the improvements notified by the Board and based on the review, the Board is able to cancel the accreditation of the programme.

Associated document for Mid-Term Programme Review:

TNQAB Guidelines for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Recognition.

5.6 RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION AND PROGRAMME QUALITY REVIEW

The provider of an accredited programme must apply for renewal of programme accreditation at least six months before the end of the period of accreditation. (For existing programmes that have been accredited without any end date, TNQAB will advise the due date.) This requirement applies to a provider that offers a National Qualification as well as those providers who offer their own provider qualifications.

The application for renewal of programme accreditation will be accompanied a Programme Quality Review. This is a self-evaluation by the provider of the outcomes achieved by the current programme and any gaps it has identified in meeting Standards 2 and 3 for the programme since the date of accreditation. Providers should start preparing their Review 12 months before the end of the period of accreditation.

The Programme Quality Review is largely retrospective, looking at the provider's experience of the specific programme and its QMS. However, it also includes a forward-looking description of the changes proposed to address any gaps identified through the self-evaluation. The Programme Quality Review addresses all elements of Standards 2 and 3.

The assessment of the Programme Quality Review and the application for renewal of programme accreditation will be undertaken as one integrated process, with a single panel.

If a complete application for a Programme Quality Review and renewal of accreditation has been submitted to TNQAB, the status of the existing accreditation will be 'pending, subject to renewal of accreditation' until the TNQAB has made a decision of the application, even if this is longer than six months.

Separate to the Programme Quality Review self-evaluation, the application for renewal of programme accreditation must contain:

- an updated description of the qualification and the programme of learning
- updated information on programme delivery.

The renewal application must include all required information and be current, otherwise it will be regarded as incomplete and rejected as an application by TNQAB.

The application will be assessed by experts in the field using a panel process and must include a site visit. As for initial programme accreditation, the assessment will be made against all criteria for Quality Standard 2 and the following elements of Quality Standard 3: 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.12.

Programmes and providers must meet the characteristics of a qualification (Standards 2.1 to 2.4), Standards 2.5 and 2.6, and most elements of Standard 3 in order for the programme accreditation to be renewed.

The TNQAB Board decision will be one of:

- Renew the accreditation of the programme for a specified time period (5 years is the default but the period may be shorter than this, or 5 years or longer for a National Qualification), starting from the date of the Board’s decision, and continue the registration of the qualification on the TQF
- Renew the accreditation of the programme for a specified time period (5 years is the default but the period may be shorter than this, or 5 years or longer for a National Qualification), starting from the date of the Board’s decision, subject to the provider meeting particular conditions within a specified time period, and continue the registration of the qualification on the TQF. If the conditions are not met, the accreditation of the programme and registration of the qualification will be cancelled.
- Renew the accreditation of the programme only for the time it takes to teach-out the programme or provide each student with a suitable alternative programme, with the same or another provider. After this time, the accreditation of the programme will cease and the qualification will be removed from the TQF.

Providers that do not wish to continue the programme must still complete a Programme Quality Review when they advise TNQAB that a programme will be taught out.

Associated documents for Renewal of Programme Application:

TNQAB Guidelines for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration

Programme Quality Review Report form

Application for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration

5.7 INTERVENTION

If TNQAB has reason to believe that a programme is not meeting the Quality Standards, an intervention process will be commenced (see Sections 8 and 9).

5.8 CERTIFICATE OF PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

The Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition) state that after granting accreditation, the Board will “authorise the issue of a Certificate of Accreditation, and, where the person, organisation or institution has not been previously registered, a Certificate of Registration.

Registration or accreditation shall be deemed to run from the date of issue of the Certificate of Registration or Accreditation subject to any time limits placed on the registration or accreditation by the Board.

TNQAB will record issuance of all Certificates in the Register of Accredited Providers by recording the following:

- (a) the legal name (and trading name where this is different) of the provider
- (b) the accreditation number
- (c) the date accreditation was granted by the Board of TNQAB
- (d) the period of accreditation granted and the end date of accreditation
- (e) the site for which accreditation has been granted
- (f) the scope of accreditation granted, and
- (g) any accreditation conditions imposed by the Board.

Providers shall display their Certificate of Registration and Certificate of Accreditation in a prominent place”.

TNQAB will meet these requirements to the best of its ability, noting that the TNQAB Act (2020 Revised edition) requires a separate process for the registration of providers. For the purposes of effective administration, the date of issue of the certificate of registration or accreditation will be treated as the date of the Board approval.

6. CANCELLING A PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION OR REGISTRATION

Quality Standards must be met by providers on an ongoing basis for each course of study delivered, in order to maintain TNQAB programme accreditation (see **Appendix A**). Programme accreditation and registration can be cancelled in whole or in part should the Board have good cause to believe that a provider no longer meets the Standards. The policy statement below reflects requirements from the TNQAB Act 2004 and the TNQAB Regulations 2010.

Before cancelling an accreditation, the Board will write to the CEO and the governing body of the provider:

- a) notifying them that the Board has good cause to believe that the accreditation criteria are no longer being met
- b) specifying the grounds constituting this belief
- c) indicating the steps that must be taken for accreditation to remain valid, and
- d) inviting a submission on the matter.

Following consideration of any submission made to it, the Board may then decide to:

- (a) reconfirm the accreditation until the next scheduled review or quality audit
- (b) reconfirm the accreditation with conditions imposed, or
- (c) cancel the accreditation and remove the qualification from the TQF.

The date the cancellation will take effect is to be specified by the Board, to allow a period of 'teach-out' of the programme or a winding up of the institution. The Board shall update the Register of Accredited Providers should conditions be imposed or an accreditation be cancelled.

Where accreditation of a programme has been cancelled, the accredited provider must return the Certificate of Accreditation to the Board. Where new conditions have been imposed, a suitably revised Certificate of Accreditation shall be issued to the provider.

Where a provider has had the accreditation for all courses of study cancelled, it shall be removed from the Board's Register of Providers, its Certificate of Registration shall be cancelled, and such cancellation shall be published.

Where a provider's programme accreditation or registration is cancelled, the provider shall refund any relevant fee, or portion thereof, to affected students and make suitable alternative arrangements for students to complete their programmes.

Where a provider's registration or accreditation has been cancelled, the provider may apply for re-registration or re-accreditation after 6 months of the cancellation.

7. SHORT COURSES AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The TNQAB Act (2020 Revised edition) refers to short courses, which it defines as meaning “a course which is less than 12 months -

- (a) that may contain a component or components of an accredited course of study; and
- (b) for which a participant on successful completion shall receive an award or credit specifying the level of competency attained.”

The Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition) imply that the TNQAB Board can accredit short courses. However, it is evident that there is intended to be a distinction between a course of study (programme of learning), which could lead to a formal TQF qualification or credential, and a short course, which does not lead to a TQF qualification.

The Board of TNQAB has developed Policy and Guidelines for Approval of Short Courses that make clear the different types of courses that can be offered. It has also developed criteria for approval of a short course.

The Board of TNQAB has also developed Guidelines and Application Forms for Recognition of Community Education in Tonga 2018, including criteria for the recognition of community education.

The Board of TNQAB is developing policy on the types of credentials, such as micro-credentials, that could be recognised through being registered on the TQF.

At present, TNQAB is not accrediting or recognising short courses or community education. Consolidated guidelines and advice on these non-TQF credentials are under development.

Associated documents for Short Courses and Community Education:

TNQAB Policy and Guidelines for Approval of Short Courses 2018

Guidelines and Application Forms for Recognition of Community Education in Tonga 2018

8. COMPLIANCE ACTION BY TNQAB

If TNQAB becomes aware of any quality issues at a provider or institution, it will make a compliance visit to discuss the issues with the provider. TNQAB may seek information or a response from the provider.

After this, TNQAB may issue a compliance notice to the provider, requiring it to make improvements in respect of one or more elements of the Quality Standards. The compliance notice may require the provider to take, or refrain from taking, a particular action in relation to its registration or programme accreditation status.

Every compliance notice will be in writing from the Board and will:

- give the date on which it is issued
- specify a time on or before which, or a period within which, the provider must comply with the notice, and
- state the consequences or possible consequences of non-compliance with the notice.

The Board may publish any compliance notice, or a summary of a compliance notice, in a manner designed to inform the public of the compliance notice.

A provider that receives a compliance notice must comply with it within the time period specified. The Board may extend the period of time for a provider to rectify compliance. If the provider does not comply with the compliance notice, the Board may impose new, amend or revoke any existing conditions on the provider's accreditation.

If further investigation is needed, TNQAB will commence a special purpose quality audit of the provider to check whether the Quality Standards are being met.

9. SPECIAL PURPOSE QUALITY AUDIT

A quality audit is a systematic and independent review of some or all of a registered provider's activities to confirm if the Quality Standards are being met and to investigate any issues or problems that have arisen.

A special purpose quality audit of a provider can be conducted by TNQAB as a result of a complaint investigation (see Section 13) or if there is plausible evidence that a provider is not meeting the Standards at **Appendix A**, including evidence of poor governance or management.

The special purpose quality audit will be conducted against specified Quality Standards drawn from Standards 1, 2 and 3 or conducted against all Standards. It may involve only one programme or activity or it could involve all the provider's activities.

The special purpose audit and its scope must be approved by the Board of TNQAB.

TNQAB will undertake a planning process for the audit, establish a panel and prepare a list of documentation to be submitted by the provider. All required documents must be submitted by the provider by the due dates, according to the timelines in the audit plan.

If there is time for an extended audit, the PCET provider can be asked to conduct a self-evaluation against the scope of the quality audit. The self-evaluation should establish the extent to which the provider is meeting the Quality Standards within the scope of the audit. The TNQAB quality audit team will seek to validate the provider's self-evaluation by undertaking further investigations.

However, if the matter is urgent, for example if it involves allegations of harm or fraud, the self-evaluation stage should be omitted and arrangements will be made for an immediate site visit to the provider with interviews, inspections and on-site viewing of documents.

Details of a special purpose quality audit are contained in the Guidelines for Review and Quality Audit of PCET Providers.

Audit panel members are to be independent of the provider being audited and shall consist of a minimum of-

- (a) a Chair nominated from the Board with expertise in quality audit or review;
- (b) a representative with an industry or community focus; and
- (c) a representative from Tonga or overseas with educational expertise relevant to the scope of the special purpose quality audit.

The audit panel will undertake a site visit to the provider.

If the Board approves the panel's requirements and recommendations for improvement, the Board shall notify the provider of these requirements and recommendations. The Board shall

allow the provider 3 months to implement the improvements identified and meet the requirements. If the provider has not carried out the improvements notified by the Board and based on the audit, the Board may cancel the provider's accreditation and, if appropriate, the provider's registration (see Section 6 above).

Nothing in this process for special purpose quality audit shall prevent TNQAB from notifying relevant authorities if it appears from the audit there is illegal activity being conducted by the provider or at the provider's premises.

Associated document for Special Purpose Quality Audit:

Guidelines for Review and Quality Audit of PCET Providers

Self-evaluation form (with scope) for Special Purpose Quality Audit

10. TNQAB INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES

TNQAB uses a variety of internal mechanisms to ensure the quality of its regulatory and quality assurance activities. Two of these are its processes for appointing and using panel members and its process for the internal peer review of draft reports prepared by panels.

10.1 PROCEDURES FOR PANEL MEMBERS

TNQAB has developed procedures to ensure that appropriately qualified and experienced panel members are appointed to the panels that assess applications for programme accreditation. These procedures also guide panel members in what to do and how to do it.

TNQAB has also identified the need for panel members to commit to certain ethical behaviours when undertaking quality audits on behalf of TNQAB. To this end, it has developed a Code of Ethics that members of quality audit panels must agree to before the start of the panel process.

These documents will be revised to be consistent with the QA Policies 2024.

Associated documents for Panel Members:

Programme Accreditation Manual for Panel Members 2010

Code of Ethics for Quality Audit Panel Members.

10.2 PROCESS FOR INTERNAL PEER REVIEW OF REPORTS

TNQAB panel reports and some internal documents contain information and recommendations that will lead to regulatory decisions by the Board of TNQAB that can have major consequences for providers. To assure the quality of these reports, TNQAB has a process for an internal peer review of reports. The internal peer review checks that information is correct, that processes are followed and documented and that the language and tone of a draft report is appropriate.

Associated document for Peer Review of Reports:

Guidelines for Peer Review 2015.

11. APPEALS AGAINST TNQAB DECISIONS

Any appeals against a decision of the Board will be in writing and filed with the Board within 3 weeks of the date of the decision.

The notice of appeal shall be in writing and shall contain a statement of the grounds of appeal.

An Appeal Committee shall be established by the Minister of Education and Training and consist of the Chair and 2 others. The decision of the Appeal Committee shall be final.

The Appeal Committee shall have the powers to summon, call for the production of documents, examine witnesses, administer oaths and record evidence.

12. COMPLAINTS BY PCET PROVIDERS ABOUT TNQAB

Providers may lodge a complaint of irregularity or non-compliance with procedures relating to registration, accreditation or audit decisions against the Board or its agents.

A complaint should initially be made in writing to the CEO of TNQAB, who may deal with it directly.

If the complainant is not satisfied that the complaint has been satisfactorily resolved by the CEO, or where the complaint relates directly to the CEO, they may write to the Chair of the Board of TNQAB. The Chair may deal with the complaint directly or, if it is not easily resolved, refer it to an ad hoc complaints committee made up of two members of the Board and, where appropriate, up to two external members from other PCET providers.

Associated document for Complaints by PCET Providers:

TNQAB Complaint form.

13. COMPLAINTS ABOUT PCET PROVIDERS

Students and other persons with a complaint about a PCET provider are strongly encouraged to resolve the issue with the provider before approaching TNQAB.

When a written complaint from a student of a PCET provider is received by TNQAB, a record and log of the complaint is maintained.

If the complaint is not resolved easily, the Board may write to the CEO of the provider seeking a response to the matters raised.

If the Board considers the response to be inadequate, an investigation will be undertaken to establish the facts and determine a course of action.

The Board may then issue a compliance notice to the provider.

When there is a clear case for proceeding further as a result of an investigation, a special purpose quality audit can be conducted (see Section 9).

Persons other than students may make complaints about PCET providers to TNQAB if the person believes the provider is not meeting the Quality Standards. TNQAB will follow up with the provider if it has the resources to do so.

14. CROSS BORDER PROVISION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

TNQAB's Policy on Cross Border Provision of Education and Training is as set out below. Providers of cross-border education and training are encouraged to discuss their plans with TNQAB at an early stage. TNQAB's Guidelines for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration and the associated application form seek information to help in the assessment of cross border programmes.

1. Cross border education encompasses all types of education study programmes, courses of study, or educational services (including all forms of open and distance learning) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based.
2. The Board will work closely with Government, and all Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) providers in Tonga to ensure protection of students and learners from investing in cross border education that is of low or dubious quality.
3. Courses of study will be subject to accreditation by the Board if they are provided in Tonga in an organised and directed manner where students enrol, pay fees and attend guided instruction at a particular location or locations.
4. The Board will make available all relevant information on Tonga's qualifications, registration, accreditation and quality audit processes to foreign providers who wish to offer cross border education and training in Tonga.
5. The Board will strengthen international co-operation and networking in partnership with international quality assurance and accreditation bodies in quality assuring cross border providers, since cross border education and training involves the sending country as much as Tonga who is the receiving country.
6. The Board will coordinate and facilitate the process of recognition or establishing equivalence between the Tonga Qualifications Framework and those of other countries, based on procedures and criteria mutually agreed to.
7. Local PCET providers that establish any arrangement with a foreign provider must take note of the following before confirmation of intent to do so:
 - a. Providers must amend their quality management systems to take full responsibility for the delivery of cross border education and training courses of study;
 - b. Local PCET providers and individuals must closely examine all information and guidance provided by foreign institutions and providers to ensure that they do not fall victim to dubious quality assurance and accreditation claims and low-quality provision, leading to qualifications of limited validity;

- c. Where there is doubt about the reputation and standards of a potential foreign provider, their courses of study or qualifications, the Board must be consulted immediately, and full contact details of the foreign provider must be submitted to facilitate and expedite solicitation of information;
- d. Local providers must ensure that the courses of study they offer on behalf of a foreign provider or institution are of the same level and quality as those offered in the country of origin;
- e. Local providers must have in place appropriately qualified staff to provide supplementary student support as well as all other relevant resources that support the courses of study offered;
- f. Assessment standards must be relevant, fair and consistent with course of study outcomes, context and the parent organisation's processes in the sending country.

APPENDIX A REGISTRATION AND ACCREDITATION QUALITY STANDARDS

Extracted from Schedule C of Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Regulations (2020 Revised edition)

For the purposes of this Schedule, “External stakeholders” may include teaching staff from other providers delivering similar courses of study, industry representatives, professional bodies, community representatives, government ministry representatives.

The following are minimum standards for post compulsory education and training providers. A new provider shall meet Standard 1, elements 1.1 to 1.5, before being registered. Accreditation Standard 2, elements 2.1 to 2.6, shall be met for each qualification, course of study and short course prior to delivery.

In addition to Accreditation Standards 1 and 2, Accreditation Standard 3, elements 3.1 to 3.12, shall be met by the provider on an ongoing basis.

Accreditation Standard 1: The provider is established and organised to provide quality education and training

- 1.1 The provider or its governing body is a legally established or recognised enduring body.
- 1.2 The provider has measurable goals and objectives for education and training.
- 1.3 The provider has a coherent, documented quality management system of policies and procedures.
- 1.4 The provider has adequate and appropriate governance and management to achieve its education and training goals and objectives.
- 1.5 The provider’s name is appropriate and does not mislead learners about the nature of the educational and training provision.

Accreditation Standard 2: An educationally sound and effective process is used for the development, approval and review of all qualifications and courses associated with the provider.

For each qualification, course of study and short course:

- 2.1 The title is appropriate and complies with the requirements of the Tonga Qualifications Framework.
- 2.2 The learning outcomes have been developed and reviewed, where appropriate, in consultation with relevant external and internal stakeholders.
- 2.3 The learning outcomes and credit requirements are clearly defined and consistent with the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework.

- 2.4 The entry requirements are defined and are fair.
- 2.5 The assessment system is appropriate and relevant to the learning outcomes.
- 2.6 There is an appropriate system to moderate assessments.

Accreditation Standard 3: The provider is delivering quality education and training.

- 3.1 The provider's quality management system is effectively applied to the whole organisation, and is regularly reviewed and updated.
- 3.2 The provider has adequate and appropriate physical and learning resources to deliver its qualifications and courses of study.
- 3.3 Staff qualifications and experience meet the requirements of the Act.
- 3.4 Appropriate staff development plans, based on identified needs, are implemented and outcomes monitored to ensure effectiveness.
- 3.5 Appropriate entry and selection criteria for each course of study and short course are well publicised and applied consistently.
- 3.6 Timely, effective and appropriate student guidance and support systems are provided.
- 3.7 The provider defines and implements effective teaching and learning practices that are educationally sound and appropriate to the course of study and mode of delivery.
- 3.8 Course delivery undertaken in partnership with, on behalf of, or by another organisation either inside Tonga or outside Tonga, meets the standards set in the provider's quality management system.
- 3.9 Any off-site practical or workplace components of courses of study are effective and integrated into curricula.
- 3.10 The assessment of learning outcomes is fair, valid and consistently applied.
- 3.11 Notification of results and reporting on student achievement is adequate and appropriate.
- 3.12 Where degree courses of study are offered, adequate resources and support are provided to meet the provider's defined research goals and objective.

APPENDIX B QUALITY STANDARDS TO BE CHECKED BY KEY QA PROCESSES

Quality Standards	Provider Registration	Programme Accreditation		Mid-term Review	Programme Quality Review	Provider Annual Monitoring	Quality Audit (Special Purpose)
		Qual and Programme	Delivery				
Accreditation Standard 1: The provider is established and organised to provide quality education and training							
1.1 The provider or its governing body is a legally established or recognised enduring body.	X						TBA
1.2 The provider has measurable goals and objectives for education and training.	X						TBA
1.3 The provider has a coherent, documented quality management system of policies and procedures.	X					X	TBA
1.4 The provider has adequate and appropriate governance and management to achieve its education and training goals and objectives.	X					X	TBA
1.5 The provider's name is appropriate and does not mislead learners about the nature of the educational and training provision.	X						TBA

Quality Standards	Provider Registration	Programme Accreditation		Mid-term Review	Programme Quality Review	Provider Annual Monitoring	Quality Audit (Special Purpose)
		Qual and Programme	Delivery				
Accreditation Standard 2: An educationally sound and effective process is used for the development, approval and review of all qualifications and courses associated with the provider.							
For each qualification, course of study and short course:							
2.1 The title is appropriate and complies with the requirements of the Tonga Qualifications Framework.		X			X		TBA
2.2 The learning outcomes have been developed and reviewed, where appropriate, in consultation with relevant external and internal stakeholders.		X			X		TBA
2.3 The learning outcomes and credit requirements are clearly defined and consistent with the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework.		X			X		TBA
2.4 The entry requirements are defined and are fair.		X			X		TBA
2.5 The assessment system is appropriate and relevant to the learning outcomes.		X			X		TBA
2.6 There is an appropriate system to moderate assessments.		X			X		TBA

Quality Standards	Provider Registration	Programme Accreditation		Mid-term Review	Programme Quality Review	Provider Annual Monitoring	Quality Audit (Special Purpose)
		Qual and Programme	Delivery				
Accreditation Standard 3: The provider is delivering quality education and training.							
3.1 The provider's quality management system is effectively applied to the whole organisation, and is regularly reviewed and updated.			X		X		TBA
3.2 The provider has adequate and appropriate physical and learning resources to deliver its qualifications and courses of study.			X	X	X		TBA
3.3 Staff qualifications and experience meet the requirements of the Act.			X	X	X		TBA
3.4 Appropriate staff development plans, based on identified needs, are implemented and outcomes monitored to ensure effectiveness.					X		TBA
3.5 Appropriate entry and selection criteria for each course of study and short course are well publicised and applied consistently.			X	X	X		TBA
3.6 Timely, effective and appropriate student guidance and support systems are provided.			X	X	X		TBA
3.7 The provider defines and implements effective teaching and learning practices that are educationally sound and appropriate to the course of study and mode of delivery.			X	X	X		TBA
3.8 Course delivery undertaken in partnership with, on behalf of, or by another organisation either inside Tonga or outside Tonga, meets the standards set in the provider's quality management system.			X	X	X		TBA

Quality Standards	Provider Registration	Programme Accreditation		Mid-term Review	Programme Quality Review	Provider Annual Monitoring	Quality Audit (Special Purpose)
		Qual and Programme	Delivery				
3.9 Any off-site practical or workplace components of courses of study are effective and integrated into curricula.			X	X	X		TBA
3.10 The assessment of learning outcomes is fair, valid and consistently applied.			X	X	X	X	TBA
3.11 Notification of results and reporting on student achievement is adequate and appropriate.				X	X		TBA
3.12 Where degree courses of study are offered, adequate resources and support are provided to meet the provider's defined research goals and objective.			X		X		TBA

APPENDIX C REQUIRED POLICIES FOR PROVIDER REGISTRATION

Institutions are required to document and implement the following policies and procedures in order to meet Element 1.3 of Quality Standard 1:

- i) Academic honesty, including avoidance of plagiarism and use of artificial intelligence tools
- ii) Admission (entry) and selection of students, including RPL and credit
- iii) Assessment and moderation
- iv) Code of Conduct (staff, students, visitors)
- v) Notification and reporting student achievement
- vi) Physical and learning resources
- vii) Programme delivery in partnership with or on behalf of another organisation (where appropriate)
- viii) Programme development, approval and review
- ix) Records Management
- x) Research (where appropriate)
- xi) Reviews of QMS policies and procedures
- xii) Staff recruitment
- xiii) Staff appointment, appraisal and development
- xiv) Student fee protection
- xv) Student guidance and support
- xvi) Student progression and completion
- xvii) Teaching and learning practices
- xviii) Work-integrated learning / off-site placements and practicums.

APPENDIX D LIST of ASSOCIATED TNQAB DOCUMENTS IN USE

This list shows the associated TNQAB documents referred to in the text that are in use.

QA Process	Section of this document	Documents
Provider Registration	3	TNQAB Guidelines for Registration of Providers of Post Compulsory Education and Training TNQAB Application Form for Provider Registration
Provider Annual Monitoring	3	Guidelines for Provider Annual Monitoring Visits
University Status	3	Guidelines for Registration of Provider as a University 2010 Application form for use of the title 'University' or 'Univesiti'.
Changes to Programmes	4.2	Application form for approval of changes to Qualifications and Short Courses
National Qualification development	5.2	Guidelines for National Qualification Development and TQF Registration 2010 NQ application forms and guides: Proposal Report ITAC Application Template for Development of a National Qualification Descriptor Unit of Competency Planning to Assess a Unit of Competency Template for Registration (qualification descriptor) Template for Registration (Units of Competency) Validation Form 1 (Qualification Characteristics) Validation Form 2 (Units of Competency)
National Qualification review	5.4	Guidelines for Review of Qualifications 2019 Review of National Qualifications: Developer's Review Report Form 1 (for Component Units of a Qualification) Form 2 (for Qualification Characteristics).

Initial Programme Accreditation	6.3	TNQAB Guidelines for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration Application form for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration (Initial and Renewal) TNQAB Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning
Mid-term Programme Review	6.5	TNQAB Guidelines for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration, including Appendices
Renewal of Programme Accreditation and Programme Quality Review	6.6	TNQAB Guidelines for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration Application form for Programme Accreditation and Qualification Registration (Initial and Renewal) Programme Quality Review Report form
Special Purpose Quality Audit	10	TNQAB Guidelines for Review and Quality Audit of PCET Providers Self-evaluation form (with scope) for Special Purpose Quality Audit
Procedures for Panel Members	11.1	Programme Accreditation Manual for Panel Members 2010 Code of Ethics for Quality Audit Panel Members
Process for Internal Peer Review of Reports	11.2	Guidelines for Peer Review 2015
Associated document for Complaints by PCET Providers	13	TNQAB Complaint form