The standard review process

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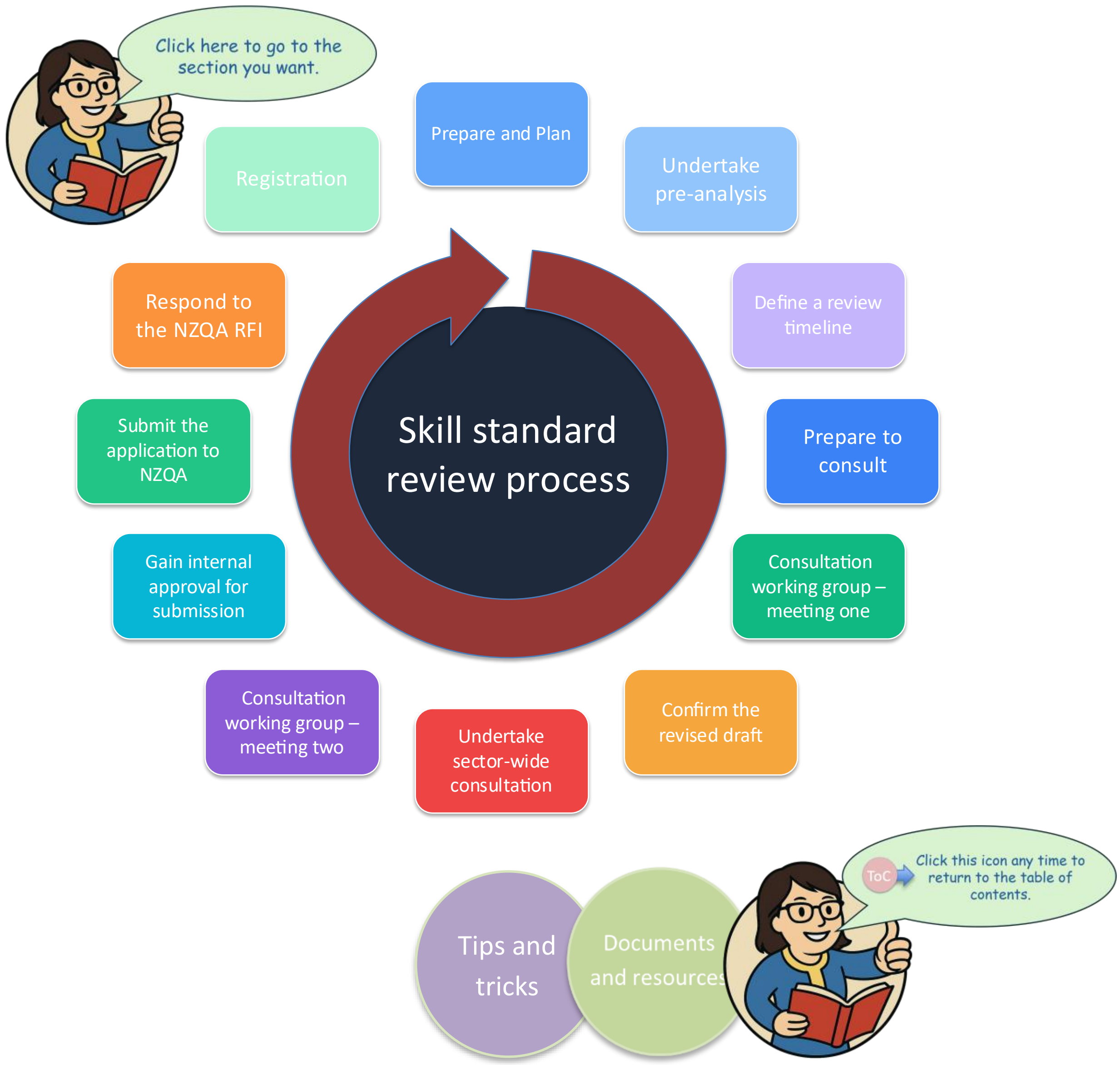

Prepare and Plan ToC

Establish the review scope and rationale. Collect background information.

- Define the rationale for review. For example: the designated review date has been reached, changes to industry processes require changes to the standards, new or amended regulations or legislation require changes to the standards, changes to qualifications outcomes or a review of a qualification have triggered a standard review, feedback from the sector indicates the standards are not fit for purpose, or the standards are not being used and have been designated expiring. Confirm the rationale with the manager who has oversight for the review.
- Define the review scope. The review could be standard specific, domain specific, or context specific (for example, the review standards could be only those used to contribute towards a qualification outcome). Confirm the scope with the manager who has oversight for the review.
- Request a review support package from NZQA here. (Allow ten working days for a response.) The review support package contains:
  - copies of the standards to be reviewed
  - a qualification impact report - spreadsheets including NZQCF qualifications that might be affected by the review in terms of specific standards or NZQCF classifications listed in qualification electives
  - a provider impact report - a text file listing all organisations that have consent to assess against the standards that might be affected by the review at field, subfield, domain or standard level
  - a draft change report with current standard details in the summary table.
- Request moderation reports and any relevant feedback from the Industry Skills Board (ISB) internal moderator and any moderator's interpretations associated with the standards being reviewed. These can contain information about problems with the registered standards and any solutions already agreed with the sector.

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Undertake pre-analysis ToC

Undertake pre-review analysis to give the consultation working group a clear understanding of the status of the standards and any suggested changes.

Close read the standards and correct any errors to format, punctuation, and grammar. Collate all relevant documents: the current skill standard, usage data, moderation reports, stakeholder feedback, and related legislation or codes of practice.

- Check the standard usage data for the last five years (NZQA Report: R0650 – Traffic Light Report). If a standard has had no or very little use, the standard may be a candidate for expiry. Check with the manager who has oversight for the review in case there has been any industry contact or feedback about such standards. If the manager agrees with the proposal for expiry, communicate that option to the consultation working group before the initial meeting. Sometimes an industry or sector group will have plans for standards that have seen little use, so it is not a given that they should be expired in every case.
- Increment the version number in the header by one.
- Check any listed pre-requisites and update or amend them as required. Sometimes unit or skill standard pre-requisites may not be within your ISB's gazetted coverage meaning they may have been reviewed or revised and the details may have changed without your ISB being notified.
- Check references for currency and ensure they are correctly formatted using MLA style. Use WorldCat to check references – click the quote marker (") under the cover picture of the reference book. It will generate a citation using MLA style. If any references have been superseded or are obsolete, track in superseding references or, where there is no direct replacement, propose an alternative for consideration by the consultation working group.
- Check hyperlinks for currency. If any hyperlinks are broken, track in alternatives for consideration by the consultation working group.
- Check legislation and regulations for currency. Track in any superseding or proposed alternative legislation or regulations for consideration by the consultation working group.
- Close read the outcomes and assessment criteria for sense and for grammar and punctuation. If you have to re-read a criterion to understand its meaning, the criterion may need to be re-written:
  - Apply common sense and prioritize clarity over other considerations.
  - Avoid complicated run-on sentences. (If a criterion cannot be phrased clearly in a single sentence, use two or more sentences. Inserting, 'and,' to join complicated sentences will not usually fix problems with clarity.)
  - Do not use phrases like, 'in terms of', or 'in accordance with'. Be especially careful if you are converting a unit standard to a skill standard. Such phrases are common in unit standards but they complicate requirements unnecessarily.
  - Do not use metaphors.
- Check the assessment specifications:

    - Remove any range statement that does not connect directly to a professional competence requirement (which may cover things like minimum speed on a processing line). Do not include arbitrary range statements.
    - Ensure that the assessment environment and conditions are specified. The assessment specifications might include conditions such as:
        - ‘This standard must be assessed against in a workplace using evidence generated in the workplace.’
        - ‘This standard may be assessed against in a workplace or in simulated conditions that reflect workplace conditions.’
        - ‘To ensure the safety of participants, this standard must be assessed against in simulated conditions.’ (This is used when the activity being assessed may present a danger to individuals and is therefore unsuitable for uncertified workers such as involved in emergency response situations.)
    - If there are any unusual assessment specifications in the standard, consider whether they should be included in the corresponding CMR. (This would require a change process for the CMR which is similar to a standard review and can take some time, so confirm with the manager responsible if changes to a CMR are proposed.)
    - Check the corresponding CMR for any special assessment conditions that should be included in the skill standard assessment specifications. These are not common, but they do exist and should be consistent across the two types of document.
- Track in any amendments triggered by any existing moderator’s interpretations.
- Check the indicative content to ensure that the assessment criteria allow an opportunity to assess the skills and knowledge specified there. Provide examples where necessary. For example, if the indicative content specifies the use of hand tools in a given context, provide examples of suitable tools. Examples using stems like, ‘such as…’ can be used as a type of indicative assessment range; however, do not insert arbitrary range statements that are not directly tied to a standard of professional competence.
- Check the resources references to ensure citations are accurate and current. If any resources are out of date or not available, track in updated references for the consultation working group to consider.
- Determine the next planned review date. The maximum allowable time for a scheduled review is five years from the standard’s latest registration date. In practice, review dates should always be set to 31 December of the year in which the version is registered. This may mean that more than five years will elapse before the next scheduled review date, but this is usually allowable. If NZQA queries the review period, move it back to the previous year while maintaining the date of 31 December. (The 31 December date allows training establishments to more easily plan enrolments and introduce new learning resources at the start of the academic year.) Unless there is a very good reason, never make the scheduled review period less than five years after the registration date – short review periods have a negative impact on workflow and workload.

- Confirm the standard setting body (SSB) contact information is correct in the footers and the contact information statement at the end of the standard.

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Define a review timeline ToC

Develop a review plan and schedule with milestones.

Develop a review plan with milestones and a proposed timeline. Identify any dependencies such as related standard, qualification, or CMR reviews. Consider holiday periods or periods when subject matter experts may not be available. (For example, working farmers would not be available during lambing season.) Confirm the plan with the manager who has oversight for the review.

Timeframes to consider (22 weeks total):

- Documentation should be supplied to the initial consultation group two weeks before the first meeting. (2 weeks total.)
- Documentation amended as a result of the feedback from the consultation working group meeting should be supplied to the consultation group for review and endorsement no later than two weeks after the first meeting. (4 weeks total.)
- A further two weeks should be allowed for the consultation working group to provide a response to the amended drafts. (6 weeks total.)
- The amended drafts should be made available for wider sector consultation for four weeks. Wider consultation must include notification to the sector ITO, phone calls and email notifications to significant stakeholders not included in the initial consultation group, and a form email to every Tertiary Education Organisation that has reported credits against the affected standards. Where the standards have been awarded by secondary schools, the Ministry of Education must be provided with an opportunity to provide feedback. (10 weeks total.)
- Two weeks must be allowed for the initial consultation group to review and provide feedback about the amendments made in response to wide sector consultation. (12 weeks.)
- Allow eight weeks for an RFI (request for information) from the date of submission to NZQA. (20 weeks total.)
- Allow two weeks to make any changes and undertake further consultation as required by the RFI. (22 weeks total.)

Depending on NZQA workload, the quality assurance and RFI phase could take many weeks to complete or it could proceed quickly. Typically, standards are registered in batches on the second Tuesday of each month. If registration cut-off has been missed, standards will not appear on the DASS until the following month; however, a registration letter is confirmation of registration and can be taken as assurance that the standards will appear on the DASS following the next available registration day.

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Prepare to consult ToC

Identify and engage key stakeholders.

Form a consultation working group. This group should be no more than five members plus the ISB analyst (not including ancillary staff).

- Check with the relationship manager for existing stakeholder groups or committees.
- Other personnel sources may include Industry Training Organizations, industry representatives, providers, assessors, WDC advisory groups, and Māori partners.
- For standards with Māori-specific educational outcomes and for standards with significant Māori representation in the sector group (such as the fisheries), the consultation working group must reflect the content and the make-up of the sector. It should also be considered unusual for there to be no Māori representation for a review irrespective of the subject matter. If there is no direct Māori representation on a consultation working group, a phone call and personal email should be made to the ISB staff member with oversight for Te Ao Māori and the ISB's Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and considerations.
- Sector representatives who have provided feedback before the review and providers who have registered high numbers of completions should also be prioritized for the inclusion in the consultation working group.

Set a date for the meeting of the consultation working group. Supply the group with any required documentation two weeks before the meeting date.

- Documents supplied to the consultation working group must include:
  - A cover letter detailing the rationale for the review, the timeline, and any unusual circumstances which should be considered by the panel. The cover letter should also detail any standard the ISB is considering for expiry due to low use.
  - Tracked change (or clean if there are no proposed changes arising from the pre-review analysis) copies of the standards under review
  - A consolidated document showing the proposed changes to legislation, regulations, references, and resources (original text and replacement text)

Do not supply the consultation working group with documentation you do not intend them to read in detail. Subject matter experts often come from a trades background and have fulltime jobs to keep up with; excessive documentation can be off-putting and make it difficult to focus on the standards. Keep moderator's interpretations, feedback received, and any other background documentation at hand and be ready to answer any questions about them.

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Consultation working group – meeting one ToC

Gather and analyse stakeholder feedback on the current standard's relevance and fitness for purpose.

The consultation working group meeting should take about two hours depending on the number of standards under review. The meeting should never be scheduled for more than three hours. If there are too many standards for one meeting, consider forming additional consultation working groups and divide the standards between them.

- Request in the cover letter that proposed changes to references etc be checked and endorsed or amended by email before the meeting. You may wish to nominate a person from the group for this task so that work is not being duplicated.
- Record the meeting and correct the transcript afterwards.
- During the meeting, keep a copy of the standard on the screen and track in changes and comments as you go.
- During the meeting, focus on the learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment specifications and indicative content. Begin with the indicative content. Modify, add, or remove indicative content under the working group's direction. Check the indicative content for alignment with the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- Confirm the assessment specifications (conditions under which the assessment can proceed) and make any changes required to reflect changes to the outcomes and assessment criteria.

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Confirm the revised draft ToC

Gain endorsement from the consultation working group for changes made to the standards.

As soon as possible following the meeting, tidy up and track the proposed consultation working group changes into the standard document.

- Where advice or preferences differ, include options as tracked changes and a recommended option with a rationale. (It is helpful to give a recommendation as it allows the group a point to argue for or against.)
- Circulate the tracked change versions of the standards to the consultation group and gain endorsement for the amendments.
- Supply a cover letter to the consultation working group explaining how the consultation will proceed following their endorsement of the drafts.

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Undertake sector-wide consultation ToC

Give the wider industry sector an opportunity to provide feedback about the drafts.

Prepare tracked change copies of the standards for publication on the ISB website. Keep comments within thew standards to a minimum (less is more).

- Prepare a comms statement for publication with the amended standards on the ISB website. The statement should include:
  - the rationale for the review
  - the public consultation period start and end dates (usually four weeks but can be less in pressing circumstances)
  - a brief summary of the process so far and to follow.
- Alert the relevant relationship manager to the wider-sector consultation phase.
- Prepare a form email to be sent to all providers that have registered completions of the standard.
- Prepare personalized emails for any significant stakeholders who have taken an interest in the review but were able to take part in the consultation working group.
- Consider phoning any significant stakeholders who have taken an interest in the review but were able to take part in the consultation working group.
- Send the form emails as soon as the website consultation period goes live.

As feedback comes in from the wider sector, prepare a consolidated feedback document for the consultation working group. Consider tracking in any changes to the standards which appear reasonable and are likely to be endorsed by the group. For other changes (specified in the consolidated feedback document), allow the group to discuss them before tracking them in.

Remember, the feedback provided by the wider sector group is equally as valid as that provided by the consultation working group.

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Consultation working group – meeting two ToC

Gain endorsement from the consultation working group for the draft standards.

At the end of the public consultation period, schedule a second consultation working group meeting. Email to the group a consolidated feedback document and any standard documents in which you have included tracked changes.

- Request comment about the changes from the working group and provide an option for them to give further comment by email before the second meeting. (It is desirable to receive the working groups reaction to public consultation early and include it in the drafts so that the standards are as near to complete as possible before the second meeting.)
- During the second meeting, incorporate and further changes agreed by the group and gain endorsement for the draft standards to proceed to the internal approval phase.

If you can address any issues with individual members before the second meeting, that meeting can be better used to correct minor errors and technicalities rather than holding white paper discussions about points of contention.

If endorsement for the amended standards cannot be gained during the meeting, isolate the areas of disagreement, consider solutions and make changes, then circulate the changes and gain endorsement by email.

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Gain internal approval for submission ToC

Gain endorsement from the internal approval committee to submit the reviewed standards to NZQA for quality assurance.

An ISB will typically have an established internal approval committee. Such a committee will often comprise the manager with oversight for the review, the relevant relationship manager, the moderator responsible for the subject matter, and one other analyst peer.

- Prepare clean and tracked change drafts for the internal approval committee.
- Prepare a short summary of the review process. Include any sticking points or areas of disagreement.
- Email the documentation to the internal approval committee. Allow one week for the committee to read and provide comment before the endorsement meeting.
- Gain endorsement to submit the standards to NZQA for quality assurance.
- Complete any required internal paperwork documenting the committee's decision and any significant comments or caveats.

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Submit the application to NZQA ToC

Finalise and submit the reviewed standards for NZQA quality assurance.

Complete and compile the NZQA submission documentation:

- application form
- change report
- clean and tracked copies of the new versions of standards. (If standards are designated expiring, do not include copies. NZQA will prepare the expiring standard documents.)
- if required, a cover letter outlining anything unusual about the review that you wish to communicate to the NZQA evaluator.

Evidence of consultation and a summary of the review summary should be filed ready but not submitted. If NZQA has any queries about the review, they may ask for this documentation.

Save a dated copy of all the submission documents in the ISB designated storage medium.

Submit the documentation through the NZQA provider login or provide the documentation to the person delegated responsibility for NZQA submissions. You will need an Education Sector Login to access the portal, which can be requested here.

How to get an Education Sector Logon

An Education Sector Login (ESL) account is required to use the applications on the NZQA site. The Delegated Authoriser (DA) for your organisation is responsible for sending you an ESL invitation to create your account. If this has not been done, please check with your manager.

https://applications.education.govt.nz/education-sector-logon-esl/how-get-education-sector-logon

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Respond to the NZQA request for information (RFI)

ToC

Receive and address and return any NZQA quality assurance queries.

It is normal to receive an RFI from NZQA following quality assurance. You will receive an RFI response document. Any queries raised in that document must be responded to in that document. Address each of the queries in detail.

Queries raised as comments in draft standards need only be responded to as a reply to the initial comment in the standard.

- Address any queries and connect your response to the relevant publication criterion or guideline.
- Suggestions not covered by the criteria or guidelines may be declined. If declining a suggestion, you can provide a short rationale as a comment in the standard document or the RFI response document, or simply note that the suggestion has been considered and declined.
- Where an NZQA analyst appears to be providing drafting instructions that do not reflect any published guideline or criteria, discuss the instruction with the manager who has oversight for the review and agree a response.

Email the RFI response directly to the NZQA evaluator from whom it originated. (Do not return the response through the ESL portal.) At times, NZQA may request further information following the response to the initial RFI. Respond to any additional requests in the usual way and discuss anything unusual or concerning with the manager who has oversight for the review.

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Registration ToC

Register the new versions of the standards.

NZQA will send an approval confirmation email when the quality assurance process has been completed and the standards are ready for registration on the Directory of Assessment and Skill standards (DASS).

NZQA will typically register standards in batches on the second Tuesday of each month.

- File the registration confirmation and forward it to the manager who has oversight for the review and any other relevant analysts, relationship managers, or ancillary staff.
- File any relevant documentation in the CRM database and any other applicable intranet locations.
- Update your personal log and check that all correspondence has been filed in Outlook.

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Tips and tricks ToC

- Always ensure that the standards are submitted on a current template and that the template has not been accidentally changed or corrupted.
- Work with show/hide markers on – in the ribbon it looks like a paragraph marker: '¶'. The markers reveal format inconsistencies and errors that cannot be seen if the show/hide is turned off. It is a mistake to assume that standards can be written to meet the NZQA format requirements without using this feature. It may look strange at first, but you will quickly get used to it.
- Set up your keyboard for Māori macrons by following this guide.
- Use Ctrl+T to right align paragraphs in bullet points (or Ctrl+Shift+T to align left). Under no circumstances should multiple 'space' characters be used to align text.
- Use a separate email chain for each distinct review and for distinct queries within a review. Give the email a clear subject that identifies the review and the specific issue discussed in the email. File all emails in an Outlook subfolder named after the review (usually the domain name or if there are multiple domains, use a name that clearly and concisely identifies the review subject matter).
- When sending an email, cc it to yourself and then file the cc'd mail in the review subfolder. This will allow you to see what has been sent without searching through the Outlook 'sent' folder.
- Record every action and decision is it happens. Sometimes an organisation will have an effective customer relationship management (CRM) database, but if not an Excel spreadsheet works well as a personal log which you can consult quickly and address any queries. (An Excel sheet is **not** a replacement for a CRM entry. It should be used as your personal record only.)

Documents and emails get lost, misplaced, and forgotten. When sending documentation for action, at minimum, record the action taken, who is responsible for the next action, and the date.

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Documents and resources

Documentation

Documentation and templates for skill standards can be found on the NZQA website on the, 'Listing standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards,' page.

- Skill standard template
- Change report template
- Application form
- Writing learning outcomes guide
- Request a review support package

Rules and guidelines

- Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Listing and Operational Rules 2022
- Guidelines for listing skill standards on the DASS

Other resources

- WorldCat
- Māori macron keyboard set-up guide

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