

Purpose of this guide

Te whāinga o tēnei puka aratohu

All ACE providers receiving funding from the ACE funding pool are subject to quality assurance (QA) arrangements. Directly funded ACE providers are subject to a quality review or audit as a condition of funding.

This guide is to support you as you put the Quality Assurance Arrangements into practice. You will probably find that you are already doing much of what is required.

Quality assurance (QA) in the ACE sector is not new. The specified arrangements, which are required to be followed, which were developed and trialled with representatives of the ACE sector in 2004 and reviewed in 2015. The guide is intended to support you, whether you:

- are new to quality management,
- have some quality systems in place which need strengthening, or
- want to take a fresh look at your established systems.

The arrangements outlined in Quality Assurance Arrangements for Providers of Adult and Community Education (NZQA 2005) are based on the concept of 'fit for purpose' – it's all about showing that your ACE provision is working as you intend, and as well as it can.

What's needed in the six defined areas of quality assurance will depend on:

- the size and nature of your ACE provision
- whether or not you are part of a larger organisation or institution
- what systems and processes are already in place.

QA never stops. It is your commitment to continually review practice and look for ways to improve – it is not a destination, but a journey. And, most likely, it is the journey you are already on as an ACE provider.

The good and creative work practices in the sector, and the many people who are committed to providing the best possible opportunities for learners, have contributed to the content of this guide.

The best systems are usually the simplest and this guide tries to keep to that principle.

Why does the ACE sector need QA arrangements at all?

The QA Arrangements are a way for you, as an ACE provider, to:

- meet the needs of your community and its ACE learners
- give you the confidence that your organisation is sound and sustainable
- put ACE providers on a solid base as members of the tertiary education sector
- be able to demonstrate the quality of your ACE's contribution
- give the government – and the public – confidence in how the money is spent
- continually improve your services and your efficiency.

The QA Arrangements:

- are designed to ensure that ACE is as useful and relevant as it can be to as wide a range of people as possible
- are a 'health check' of your organisation's needs
- address the quality of providers' practice (not the individual activities offered)
- are based on the belief that good systems provide a strong base from which to deliver activities that meet community needs
- should free up your time, by helping you establish that your systems and processes ensure things runs smoothly and effectively (whether you are there or not).

The QA Arrangements cover six areas:

- outcomes and objectives
- systems to achieve outcomes and objectives
- personnel
- physical and learning resources
- learner outcomes, needs and information
- development, delivery and review of ACE activities.

This guide takes each area of the arrangements in turn, explains the intention behind it, and how it benefits ACE learners. Each requirement within the six areas is addressed, with some examples of ways providers are meeting these requirements.

Scope of this guide

This guide helps you to implement the QA Arrangements and provides you with practical ideas, examples and pointers.

Quality is a continuing journey – nationally, as well as in your own organisation. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), Education Review Office (ERO) and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) have a lead role in quality assurance and will expect all ACE providers to have a quality assurance system in place.

Pointers

THINKING ABOUT IMPROVEMENT

The QA Arrangements are not an exam – no grades will be awarded. They are an opportunity for you to:

- review your practice
- demonstrate the quality of what you do
- think about ways your practice could be improved.

KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE

Remember that just as your quality management system needs to fit the size of your ACE provision, so does the way you demonstrate how you attend to quality.

- A small provider needs just simple systems for meeting the requirements, and the way those systems are documented also needs to be simple.
- A larger provider offering more ACE activities will need a more comprehensive quality management system, and that too will need to be appropriately documented.

MAKING PROGRESS – NOT BEING PERFECT

It is reasonable to expect that a quality assurance body will want to verify that you are delivering a quality service that you are on the right track and prepared to examine your own practice with a view to making improvements.

Providers have the opportunity to negotiate with quality assurance bodies as to how deficiencies will be reported where they have been identified.

Getting started

STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

You need to understand what the QA Arrangements mean for your organisation.

STEP 2: REVIEW YOUR PERFORMANCE

You need to assess how well you are doing now, and what additional things you need to do. This kit includes a self-review checklist to help with:

- providing a framework you could use when reviewing your current QA practice (ACE Sector Outcomes Framework).
- gauging how well your current practices meet the QA Arrangements
- providing direction for the preparation of an action plan setting out what you need to do, and what your priorities are.

When you undertake your self-review, ask the following questions with the ACE priorities and QA Arrangements in mind:

- What are we doing now?
- What evidence do we have?
- What needs to be done?
- What are our priorities?

Everyone in your organisation involved in ACE should help complete the relevant sections of the self-review checklist.

Although all the QA areas need to be reviewed, you may choose to prioritise your QA activities around areas 1, 5 and 6 as these requirements relate closely to the requirements for the ACE priorities which can be found on the Tertiary Education Commission website at <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Funding/Fund-finder/ACE/>.

The coordinator at a secondary school might:

- find out what policies and procedures have already been developed around the six areas
- look back over their past year's diary to find what happened that fits with the QA Arrangements
- make self-review an item on the agenda for an advisory committee meeting
- get others' ideas on the questions posed in the self-review.

A *tertiary institute* (where many more people are involved in ACE planning and provision) might already be linked into the organisation's quality management system. The first stage of self-review might then be for the ACE management team to explore how well the existing quality management system matches the QA Arrangements.

STEP 3: PREPARE YOUR ACTION PLAN

Once you have completed the self-review, you will need to develop an action plan. This kit includes an action plan template that will help you to:

- plan your approach to achieving the QA Arrangements by identifying areas for improvement
- set initial priorities
- demonstrate to reviewers or auditors your planned activities
- inform your reporting

Developing an action plan is an annual activity. Quality is ongoing – it relies on you continually looking for ways to improve your practices. Everyone in your organisation who is involved in ACE should participate in developing the action plan.

The action plan should identify:

- what needs to be done
- what the evidence will be
- who will do it
- when it will be done by.

STEP 4: REPORTING TO THE TEC

Most providers of ACE will be funded through the TEC and will have to meet specific reporting requirements. Those reporting requirements should be clarified with your funder.

STEP 5: PREPARE FOR REVIEW OR AUDIT

ACE providers will be audited by the quality organisation for their sector:

- adult community education providers – self-review, attestation
- schools – Education Review Office (ERO)
- polytechnics – Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP Quality)
- universities – the quality agents of the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee (NZCVV)
- other registered providers – New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)

Your review/audit organisation will provide details of the review/audit process and the timing of your next review/audit.

You need to show that your systems are appropriate to the size and nature of your organisations, and how these systems help you improve the quality of your services to learners.

You are responsible for scheduling a self review/audit or complete the attestation process. Attestation forms can be accessed on the NZQA website and once complete, must be submitted to TEC.

Evidence

You should be able to find evidence that shows your practices are working.

This guide offers examples of 'evidence' that might be useful to demonstrate quality with each area of the QA Arrangements. These are ideas and suggestions for you to pick and choose from, alongside your other sources (networks, reading, etc). In some cases, the same types of evidence might demonstrate how well you meet the requirements of two or more areas.

A provider's story:

A branch of a national Treaty-based organisation had only one part-time paid staff member when it picked up on a quality assurance initiative from the national body.

The start was made by inviting staff, volunteers, trustees and the learners to identify and prioritise what needed to be done within the organisation to make it strong enough to be in a position to offer formal qualifications to learners. The meeting generated a huge number of ideas, but in an attempt to be realistic about what they could achieve, the group decided that four projects a year, each led by a different person, was as much as they could manage. They decided that their priorities for the first year were to develop a business plan, to clarify the roles of governance and management, to develop clear financial processes, and to work out a human resources plan.

The local organisation used some of the resources developed at a national level, but members were clear that they had to do the work themselves in order to fully understand what was needed, and for the result to be theirs.

Five years on, the work is still continuing, but the base is strong and the systems are in place.

'You take ownership of different sections within the QA standards and develop them in the way you need them to be understood and to work. You know what's in the national documents, but they're not documents that can be fully utilised until you determine how the documents fit with your group.'