



7 September 2010

Improving Performance in Tertiary Education
Quality Assurance Division
NZQA
PO Box 160
WELLINGTON

Tēnā koe

Re: Improving Performance in Tertiary Education: using quality assurance incentives and sanctions

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposals to use incentives and sanctions in the quality assurance framework to drive quality improvements in tertiary education. We have consulted with our members and staff, in particular: professional nursing advisors, policy and research advisors, and members of our National Student Unit.

In general we support the provisions for incentives and sanctions that are proposed in the document. Nursing education is provided in 14 polytechnics throughout New Zealand each with a different curriculum and different internal course approval processes. All undergraduate nursing programmes meet minimum standards as set by the Nursing Council of New Zealand but some struggle to maintain consistent quality. Any process that will support the provision of consistently provided, quality education must be beneficial.

Nursing education is very familiar with the concepts of external evaluation and review given that nursing education programmes are approved and monitored by the Nursing Council of New Zealand. NZNO supports the application of quality assurance status to a TEO based on external evaluation and review and note the importance of ensuring that any external evaluation and review must be undertaken by experts specific to the programme being evaluated. For example expert nurse academics would undertake an external review of a Bachelor of Nursing programme. While acknowledging that external evaluation and review focuses on systems and processes rather than content, it is difficult to separate the two in professional programmes with external demands. For example, the requirements of the Nursing Council of New Zealand and the Health Professional Competency Assurance Act (2003) for Bachelor of Nursing and Diploma of Nursing (Enrolled Nursing) programmes have a significant impact on both process and content.

Ensuring quality clinical placements is a requirement of professional programmes of study. Specific processes and systems to ensure quality of these aspects of professional programmes are not catered for in the proposal. In addition, degree level programmes offered at ITPs must be monitored to ensure they meet the active research requirements of this level of study and there is no indication of how these quality aspects will be met in the proposal.

Whether incentives and sanctions will improve quality standards may be debatable. It is vital that academic staff are consulted and acknowledged for their expertise in the provision of education specific to their respective professions: incentives and sanctions on an institution do not necessarily impact on the individual staff providing the teaching. Systems and pathways must exist to ensure academic and teaching staff are clearly involved in ensuring quality standards.

In conclusion NZNO thanks you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the proposals to use incentives and sanctions in the quality assurance framework to drive quality improvements in tertiary education.

We **recommend** that you:

- **note** our general support for the proposal;
- **agree** that experts specific to the programme of study undertake any external evaluation and/or review;
- **agree** that academic and teaching staff are clearly involved in systems and pathways that ensure quality standards.

NZNO welcomes the opportunity to be involved in any further discussions about using quality assurance incentives and sanctions to improve performance in tertiary education.

Nāku noa, nā

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ABOUT NZNO

NZNO is the leading professional body of nurses and nursing union in Aotearoa New Zealand, representing over 45 000 nurses, midwives, students, kaimahi hauora and health workers on a range of employment-related and professional issues. Te Runanga o Aotearoa is the arm through which our Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership is articulated.

NZNO provides leadership, research and support for professional excellence in nursing, negotiates collective employment agreements on behalf of its members and collaborates with government and other agencies throughout the health sector. Nurses are the largest group of health professionals comprising half the health workforce.

The NZNO vision is “Freed to care, Proud to nurse”. Our members enhance the health and wellbeing of all people of Aotearoa New Zealand and are united in their professional

and industrial aspirations to achieve a safe, sustainable and accessible system of public health care for all New Zealanders.

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