Flexible learning: Micro-credentials in Aotearoa New Zealand

Pacific flavour

NIAD-QE University Quality Assurance
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About NZQA

- New Zealand government Crown entity established by the Education Act 1989

- Manages the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) for learners/ākonga and providers

- Provides independent quality assurance of tertiary providers

- Administers code of practice for the pastoral care of students. From 2022 it will be called *The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021*

- Provides an international qualifications recognition service

- Leads Aotearoa New Zealand's international qualifications liaison work

- Administers the secondary school exam system

New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework

The NZQCF:
- Covers all learning including senior secondary schooling, vocational and higher education
- Has a classification system
- Has ten levels of increasing complexity
- Uses credits to show how much learning, practice and assessment is involved
- Sets out quality assurance arrangements

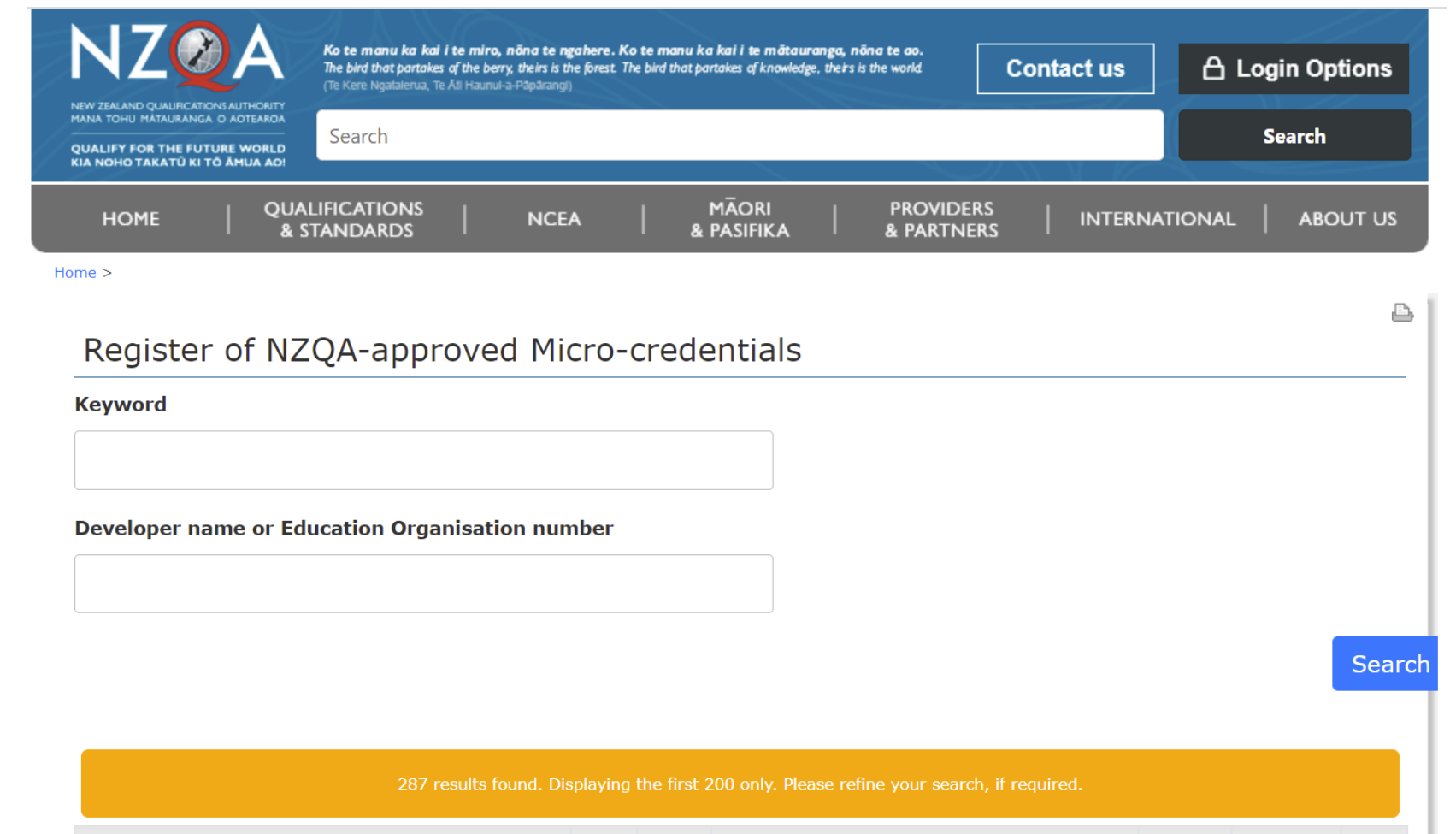| LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES
10	Doctoral Degree
9	Master's Degree
8	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelor Honours Degree
7	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Diplomas and Certificates
6 5	Diplomas
4 3 2 1	Certificates

What is flexible learning?

- Increased choice for learners

  - What

  - Where

  - When

- Micro-credentials increase choice of

  - 'what' by offering learners smaller chunks of learning

  - 'when' by offering learning more relevant to lifelong learners

What are micro-credentials?

- Education products that certify the achievement of a set of skills and knowledge

- Meet an industry or community need

- Include an assessment component

- Can be at all ten levels of the NZQCF

- Ideally between 5 to 40 credits

- Quality assured by NZQA or a university
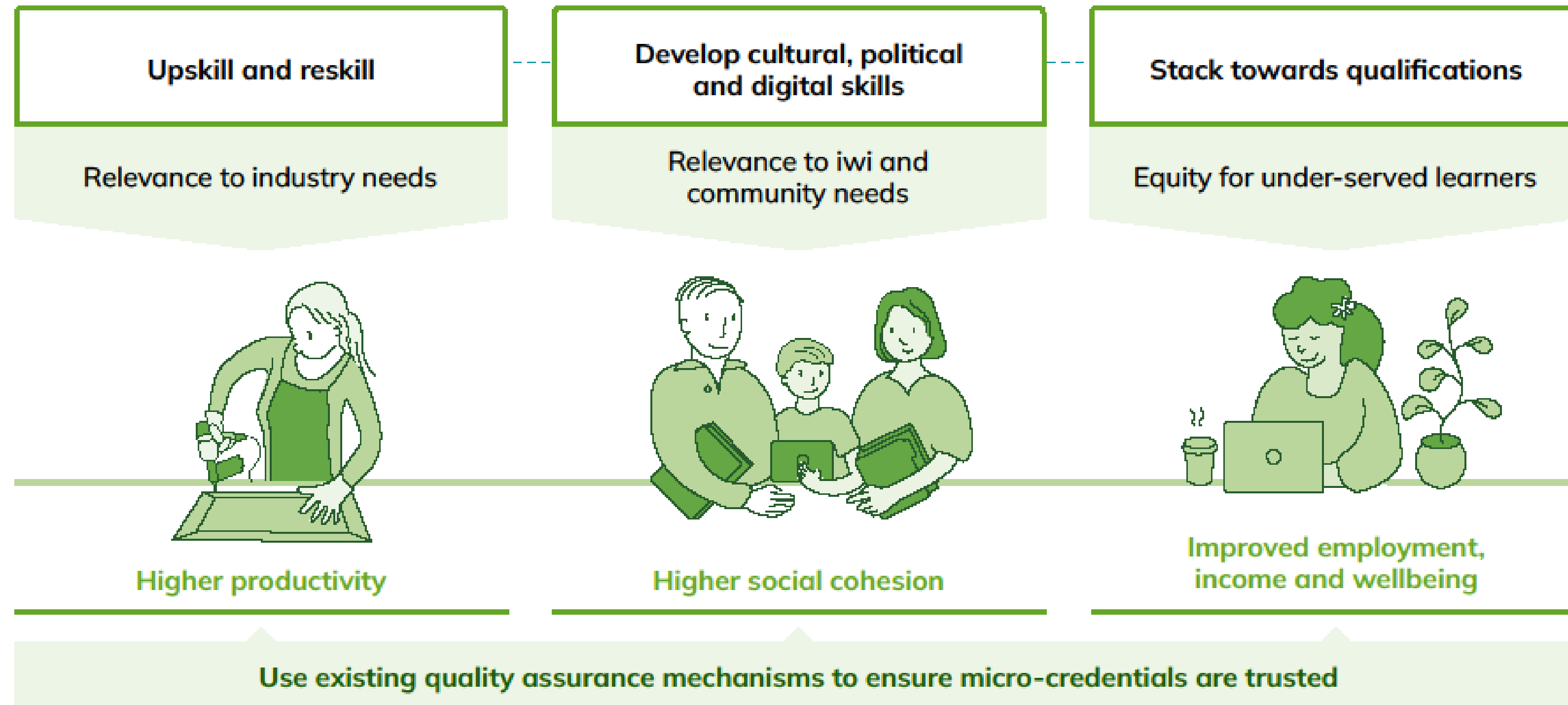
- Listed on NZQCF register

Theory of change

Micro-credentials

Upskill and reskill	Develop cultural, political and digital skills	Stack towards qualifications
Relevance to industry needs	Relevance to iwi and community needs	Equity for under-served learners

Higher productivity

Higher social cohesion

Improved employment, income and wellbeing

Use existing quality assurance mechanisms to ensure micro-credentials are trusted

Micro-credential use data - June 2022

Provider type	Level of micro-credential offered										
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten	Total
Te Pūkenga (ITPs)	0	3	14	16	17	9	3	4	0	0	66
ITOs and Te Pūkenga (WBL)	0	12	49	19	3	0	0	0	0	0	83
PTE	0	4	19	21	30	11	5	7	0	0	97
Wānanga	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	0	21	82	56	51	20	8	11	0	0	249

Micro-credential use data – June 2022

NZSCED Subject Area	5-10 credits	11-20 credits	21-30 credits	31-40 credits	Total
Agriculture and Environment	12	16	8	3	39
Architecture and Building	3	1	3	5	12
Creative Arts	8	0	0	0	8
Education	1	4	0	0	5
Engineering and Technologies	25	17	13	3	58
Food, Hospitality and Personal	16	2	2	4	24
Health	11	9	3	1	24
Information Technology	10	2	6	2	20
Management and Commerce	12	8	3	0	23
Mixed Field Programmes	8	5	1	2	16
Natural and Physical Sciences	0	0	0	1	1
Society and Culture	10	5	4	0	19
Total	116	69	43	21	249

University micro-credential use

- NZ universities approve their own micro-credentials

- Relatively low uptake by universities

- October 2021

  - 17 university micro-credentials

  - Four out of eight universities

  - Nine developed by one - Victoria University of Wellington

- Different to other countries where universities lead the way

- Move to mandate listing on Register of micro-credentials on NZQCF

Micro-credential equivalency

- Micro-credentials offered by organisations outside regulated training and education system, for example corporate training
- Equivalency service – NZQCF level and credit value
- 51 micro-credentials from 21 different organisations
- Eg computer programming, nutrition, and health and safety[8]

Level on NZQCF	Number	Level on NZQCF	Number
Level 1	0	Level 6	5
Level 2	5	Level 7	2
Level 3	11	Level 8	1
Level 4	7	Level 9	1
Level 5	19	Level 10	0

Micro-credential use types

- A **taster** to provide a pathway into work and enrolment in qualifications

  e.g. Level 3 starter for school leavers into the motor industry

- To **upskill** existing employees and career changers or non-working learners

  e.g. Level 7 digital skills for the workplace

- A **fast to market** response to new or emerging skill needs

  e.g. Level 3 vaccinators for COVID-19

Original approach	Lesson learned	Revised approach
Quick to market to meet emerging need, annual review	Other value beyond rapid upskilling	Removed annual review requirement
Easier to approve, shorter turnaround time	Rapid approval has benefits Stacking towards programmes requires comparable process to full programme development	Quality assurance steps
'not typically duplicate current quality assured learning'	First developer advantage Still want to avoid duplication and proliferation	Strengthening requirements for evidence of industry need Three step process – list, approve content, and accreditation Workforce development councils to develop national micro-credentials

Building the use of micro-credentials

- Scale-up by working with all stakeholders

- Workforce development councils to develop skills standards and national micro-credentials

- Changing the culture across all players in the system to recognise and apply the value of fit-for-purpose credentials

- Monitor against values framework (relevance, equity, quality, sustainability) to understand impact

Insights papers

https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/publications/insights/aotearoa-new-zealands-early-micro-credentials-journey/

https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/publications/insights/aotearoa-new-zealands-rationale-for-micro-credentials/