

Response to the Review of Special Assessment Conditions for NCEA

12 July 2013

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Dear Yvonne,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Review of Special Assessment Conditions for NCEA. For disabled and other marginalised students to learn well and succeed, the emphasis must be on presence, participation and achievement. (MacArthur, J. (2009,). *Learning Better Together: Working towards inclusive education in New Zealand schools*. Wellington: IHC)

“A focus on achievement for all students means that schools are alert to the experiences of all their students, and are responsive when inequality of resources or experience is an issue of concern.....Schools also need to ensure that the assessment tools they use to evaluate their students’ progress are relevant and responsive to the students themselves and acknowledge learning in positive ways.” (MacArthur, 2009, p15)

Responsive schools and appropriate assessment conditions for NCEA will ensure that all students’ knowledge, skills and understanding can be evaluated and student can be given the opportunity to succeed.

The review of special assessment conditions is timely and is a topic that is currently under investigation in tertiary institutions by ACHIEVE – the National Post-Secondary Education Disability Network. The word ‘special’ implies that people can be split into a dichotomy of normal and other. All students have the right to be provided with a fair and equitable assessment so that they can participate and achieve to their full potential. This should not be considered special; rather it is good inclusive practice that takes into account the diverse needs of all learners.

Tertiary institutions are guided by Kia Orite – *Achieving Equity: New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments* (2005, Wellington: ACHIEVE – the National Post-Secondary Education Disability Network). Part 3.9 Examination and Assessment best practice standards state that “assessment and examination policies, procedures and practices (should) provide students with impairments with the same opportunity as their peers to achieve learning outcomes.” They also refer to the provision of reasonable accommodations as “alternative examination and assessment procedures and arrangements.”

The IEAG recommends that NZQA adopt and use the approach and terminology of Kia Orite and ACHIEVE.

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~media/MinEdu/Files/EducationSectors/TertiaryEducation/DisabilityCodeOfPractice.pdf>, retrieved July 10 2013.

Our further recommendations are:

To remove deficit model thinking and language in NZQA’s approach, and to more clearly place meeting the requirements of students needing alternative examination and assessment conditions within a human rights and social model framework.

A social model framework is consistent with the New Zealand Government cross Ministry aims and objectives of *The New Zealand Disability Strategy Whakanui Oranga* (2001). Wellington: Ministry of Health).

That NZQA research, listen to and act upon the voices of students who require alternative examination and assessment arrangements to ensure their rightful access to perform and achieve to the best of their abilities.

IEAG would like to acknowledge the input of ACHIEVE in preparing the material for this submission.

Thank you for considering IEAG’s response.

Yours sincerely

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