

Additional FAQs re the Education Fees consultation and the Prescription and Monitoring Framework

The following were queries raised at Q&A hui with members of SWRB, educators and interested parties across August and September 2025.

What is the timeframe for implementation of the new Education Standards?

The Education Standards, their monitoring and prescription framework and the new education fees will be live from January 2026. TEOs will be able to begin aligning their programmes to the Education Standards from now on but won't be called on to demonstrate the alignment in 2026 unless a prescription confirmation or monitoring visit is scheduled.

What is the new schedule for monitoring visits?

The SWRB is waiting for final applications from TEOs who are applying to move from a four-year to a three-year degree. Up to four new prescription assessments will happen in the first six months of 2026, aligned against the new Education Standards, and up to four prescription confirmation visits will be scheduled for the second half of 2026.

If a TEO offers both a Master's and a Bachelor's programme, can any visit which needs to be done for prescription confirmation or monitoring, be done at the same time?

Yes, the intent is that if two programmes are being confirmed or monitored at the same time, then the SWRB intend to only make one visit.

Is it possible that a confirmation visit i.e. a prescription review (not a new degree application) may be virtual rather than an actual visit?

The SWRB will consider each prescription confirmation on an individual basis and assess all aspects of the programme and any related factors. For the first round it will be a visit and as we bed the framework in, there may be future opportunities to do prescription confirmation virtually in some instances.

What is the required length of an undergraduate social work degree. Does the requirement that undergraduate degrees are four years in length still apply or is it changing to three years?

An undergraduate degree needs to be a Level 7 qualification to meet the SWRB Education Standards, which can be either three years or four years against both NZQA regulations and SWRB standards. There is also the possibility of reduced length for post-grad quals e.g. Masters from 2 years to 1 year or 18 months so long as the Education Standards are met.

What do you mean by entry and exit points?

It would be helpful for ākonga if there were more flexible entry and exit points e.g. leaving after Year One with a Certificate, after Year Two with a Diploma, and likewise to be able to return seamlessly into e.g. a Year Two or Three, when further study is possible.

What is the role of NZQA in determining the shift from a four-year to a three-year degree, and are they being consulted?

SWRB has maintained close contact with NZQA with the Degrees Approvals and Accreditation department. NZQA has followed the Education Standards development and had opportunities to comment at each stage of the consultation. NZQA recognises either a three- or four-year Bachelor's degree, or a Master's at one year or 18 months rather than two years. NZQA's role is approving what is presented to them against their standards rather than determining what should be presented.

Will this create a 2-tier system with a three-year degree seen as second rate or will it lead to the demise of four-year degrees?

It is anticipated that by having a range of degree options across social work education more choices will be created for students, there will be an increase in student programme retention rates, an overall reduction in student costs, and potentially a reduction in student hardship. The length of the degree programme does not determine its quality, it is the outcomes that it achieves for students and its adherence to the SWRB education standards, that matter, regardless of programme length.

Has the SWRB considered that an unintended consequence of having a three-year degree may be a diminution of research outputs?

SWRB accept that there may be an impact, but our primary focus is on entry into the broader practising workforce, which we believe this will encourage. Another aspect is that, if additional students are attracted to enrol in social work programmes, interest in research or rangahau could potentially increase in time.

Are employers being consulted?

The SWRB has not directly or formally consulted with employers on the length of the qualifications although anecdotally it has been positively received. TEOs themselves always consult widely with employers as part of their approach to any new qualification offering to ensure it meets market needs and this information is provided as part of their application. Some TEOs are already conducting market research and socialising the idea with their stakeholder groups, and employers are generally seeing the change as a positive move as long as the degree is recognised by NZQA and SWRB.

Can SWRB help set up paid placements?

The SWRB does not arrange paid placements TEOs are responsible for organising suitable options for ākonga, and paid placements would be welcomed if available.

Will TEC fund a four-year degree if there is a three-year degree available?

Yes, TEC will fund NZQA-approved programmes whether they are a three- or four-year degree.

Will SWRB charge separately to NZQA?

Yes. Where there are joint panels, SWRB and NZQA will charge separately.

Do travel and accommodation etc costs for panellists remain as separate costs for each TEO?

Yes, travel and accommodation etc for panellists remain separate costs for the TEO.

What is the breakdown of how the fees were arrived at?

A query was raised regarding the scenarios shown on the PowerPoint on the SWRB website

<https://swrb.govt.nz/download/education-fees-scenarios-2025/?tmstv=1760487719>

Participants wanted to know how the confirmation visit costs were arrived at and what the underpinning calculations were for each. A breakdown is provided below for each of the four hypothetical scenarios shown in the PowerPoint.

Scenarios – Workings are on pages 3 & 4

Scenario A: TEO applies for new qualification prescription		Hours	\$ ph	Total \$
Application - Review and reporting		160	124	19,840
External Panelist prep	2	10	124	1,240
- Days	3			-
- Panelists	4	90	124	11,160
- Coordinator	1	22.5	65	1,463
Total				33,703
Onsite Custom Monitoring				
Panelists	2			
- Hours	4	8	124	992
Scenario B: Prescription confirmation visit - single site		Hours	\$ ph	Total \$
Application - Review and reporting		160	124	19,840
External Panelist prep	1	5	124	620
- Days	2			-
- Panelists	3	45	124	5,580
- Coordinator	1	15	65	975
Total				27,015
Onsite Custom Monitoring				
Panelists - Year 2	1			
- Hours	5	5	\$ 124	620
Travel				
Panelists - Year 3	1			
- Hours	3	3	\$ 124	372
Scenario C: TEO delivering Bachelors and Masters		Hours	\$ ph	Total \$
Application - Review and reporting		160	124	19,840
External Panelist prep	1	5	124	620
- Days	3			-
- Panelists	3	67.5	124	8,370
- Coordinator	1	22.5	65	1,463
Total				30,293
Onsite Custom Monitoring				
Panelists	NONE			
- Hours			124	

Scenario D: TEO delivering single qualification across 2 sites		Hours	\$ph	Total \$
Application - Review		160	124	19,840
External Panelist prep	1	5	124	620
- Days	1			-
- Panelists	3	22.5	124	2,790
- Coordinator	1	7.5	65	488
Total				23,738
Onsite Custom Monitoring	NONE			
Panelists				
- Hours			124	