

Introduction

Waihangara Ara Rau would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of and consultation on the Backflow Device Testing Micro-credential.

The focus of this project is to develop a micro-credential which will allow operators to show competence in testing by acquiring the relevant skills and knowledge with a formalised credential.

We've prepared this document to share the feedback that Waihangara Ara Rau received during the wider consultation period held in March 2025. It also shows how we're recommending we respond to your feedback with guidance from our Tactical Reference Group (TRG) and Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

The process so far

Initial concept

During the review of the apprenticeship qualifications in 2024, the Waihangara Ara Rau Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying TRG and TAG recognised the importance of industry being able to access recognised training for the testing of backflow devices and agreed an appropriate mechanism for this would be through a micro-credential.

Waihangara Ara Rau, the TRG and the TAG members consulted with tangata whai mana (interested parties) from across Aotearoa New Zealand to socialise the micro-credential concept before beginning development.

Micro-credential development and wider consultation

The development of the micro-credential was completed by the Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying TAG and was overseen by the Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying Tactical Reference Group (TRG).

The TAGs met online between September 2024 and February 2025, and subsequently via phonecalls and email communications to pursue the development of the micro-credential detail.

The micro-credential summary document was distributed for wider industry consultation with an online survey and distributed to key stakeholders, including industry representatives, several territorial authorities, the provider network and regulatory bodies during March 2025.

The purpose of this consultation was to gauge the wider industry support for the micro-credential, and to analyse any perceived issues or challenges that may be experienced by introducing this micro-credential to industry and identify opportunities for improvement.

The results of the survey confirmed respondents were largely supportive of the micro-credential (over 80% in support across 50 respondents), with a higher-than-normal survey completion rate. Waihangara Ara Rau also received several letters including feedback for consideration during this consultation period. The survey and letters received identified several concerns and potential risks, as well as queries requiring clarity which we aim to address in this feedback report.

All feedback will now be considered and actioned where appropriate by the TAG, considering the recommendations provided by Waihangara Ara Rau, before being submitted to NZQA for approval.

Consultation feedback key themes and recommendations

The feedback we received during consultation on the backflow device testing micro-credential focused on the following:

How does the micro-credential align with IQP and broader territorial authority requirements?

From what you've told us, it's important that we provide further clarity on how this micro-credential relates to independent qualified person (IQP) registration with local territorial authorities.

An IQP is a person or firm approved by the council as qualified to inspect certain compliance schedule items and ensure that the necessary maintenance occurs.

We understand the importance of ensuring individuals are recognised for carrying out backflow device testing skills due to the link with building compliance schedules and inspection requirements, aligned to each territorial authority.

The aim of this micro-credential is to provide a credential nationally for those completing backflow device testing, and support evidence requirements towards becoming an IQP for SS7 under each territorial authorities' individual requirements. Any questions regarding IQP registration should be directed to the relevant local authority.

This micro-credential does not replace or circumvent territorial authorities who will continue to be responsible for management of the IQP process.

Recommendation:

- Add further detail to the micro-credential to clarify relationship with IQP registration (including mentioning providers may wish to include specific entry requirements to meet particular territorial authority requirements for IQP registration)

Who is the micro-credential for, and how does the micro-credential align with existing training available?

Feedback received questioned the existing training that is occurring, with many assuming this training was a part of existing apprenticeship training.

The installation, commissioning and initial testing of backflow devices and complimentary skills, such as knowledge of hydraulics, are covered in the recently reviewed plumbing qualification programmes (being rolled out during 2025). The recent review of the plumbing apprenticeship has seen the periodic testing of backflow devices removed at the request of industry.

This micro-credential is then complimentary to existing training mechanisms occurring such as the apprenticeship models. The micro-credentials also provide an opportunity for accredited training providers who may already be delivering training in this space to become accredited to deliver the micro-credential which is recognised nationally and provides a consistent set of outcomes for graduates. Details for accreditation can be found [here](#).

This micro-credential has been proposed for plumbers, those involved in the water supply industry, and fire systems engineers for example.

Recommendation:

- Add detail to Programme Guidance document to show relevance of backflow micro-credential to other training pathways.

How will the micro-credential be delivered and assessed?

Feedback emphasised the need to clarify the delivery and assessment process for the micro-credential to ensure consistency and public health safety.

The micro-credential can be delivered and assessed within a workplace or via a provider simulated environment offering a range of test rigs.

There was an interest in a range of testing rigs to ensure learners obtain the skills and knowledge on a range of devices within a controlled safe environment. This is particularly

important for those who may only regularly deal with certain types of devices, such as fire sprinkler systems, to ensure they can achieve the standards. Whilst test rigs cannot recreate some of the conditions that could occur naturally, many say test rigs are a more pragmatic approach to assessment testing allowing exposure to a greater range of devices and situations, and hence a need for both off-site and on-site delivery and assessment. Good practice assessment design can also enable learners to demonstrate their competence of the requirements within contextualised environments (unless directly related to achieving standard requirements).

Where a learner has access, practical assessment may be completed in the workplace, in an on-site environment.

An assessor will make the final assessment decision based on a collection of evidence, including a signed verification. The assessor may also perform the role of the verifier. All assessors for this micro-credential must meet the requirements of the CMR.

In addition to the micro-credential, we are creating a Programme Guidance document with additional commentary for each standard, and further guidance for providers on the delivery and assessment to support industries requests. We're also using your feedback to inform additional support activities.

Recommendations:

- Add a *level of performance* statement to programme guidance to further define assessment requirements to ensure consistent performance regardless of whether it is assessed at a block course or in the workplace
- Include relevant teaching and learning expectations for unit standards within the micro-credential components and/or Programme Guidance documentation
- Include reference to CMR details in the Programme Guidance document to support assessment expectations and assessor requirements
- Consider findings from the *Short Course Training* project to inform delivery and assessment requirements.

The above recommendations will provide the opportunity for all learners to acquire the required skills and knowledge in a safe manner and will ensure consistency of assessment to the expected level of performance to meet the unit standard outcomes.

Can I provide feedback on the standards?

The standards included in the proposed micro-credential were reviewed with the TAG and via wider industry consultation in May 2024.

Questions and themes from feedback that came through were:

- Should site survey and hydraulic principles be added to content, with potential title changes?
- Does the credit value accurately reflect the level and complexity of backflow device testing?
- Include use of compliance schedule handbook to align with IQP / TA requirements
- Include additional backflow devices to the range of backflow devices
- Clarify regulatory requirements, around authorised plumbing work.

Recommendations:

- Consider adding additional information to the micro-credential component and/or programme guidance document to reflect additional content requests
- Log feedback received during this consultation specific to the standards for the next review

Waihangara Rau welcome feedback on any of our qualifications, standards and/or micro-credentials at any time. Please send through to qualifications@waihangaararau.nz.

Conclusion

This report aims to respond to the key feedback raised during the consultation period for the development of a backflow device testing micro-credential and provides several recommendations for the TAG to explore before proceeding to NZQA.

Subject to discussion and feedback from TAG, recommendations in the consultation feedback report will be actioned, and the Programme Guidance document developed and approved simultaneously to the submission to NZQA.