

# TNQAB NEWS: it's ours

## Message from the TNQAB CEO



Today is a humbling day for me!

I'm writing to you for the first time as your new CEO in the midst of a global public health crisis unlike any other that we have faced. This global pandemic is affecting everyone and has disrupted the rhythms of our daily lives. We are also conscious of the impact COVID-19 is having on registered providers, industries, communities and other related stakeholders. During this challenging time, we all need to have empathy, solidarity, and understanding of each other.

In these trying times, when the whole world appears to be dampened by COVID-19, we are challenged to rise up to an impossible-to-predict demand, which has also become a key disturbance to the "normal" experience we all were acquainted with. Managing the unpredictable appears to be our "new normal" and we need to reflect and reassess our current responsibilities and strategies while capitalizing on our fundamental principles of trust and relevance if we are to succeed as a Quality Assurance community.

Through the TNQAB 2020 First Quarterly newsletter issue, we are happy to share the developments and updates of the TNQAB services.

One of our key priorities will be fostering a growth mindset across our business. This is about being nimble, pragmatic and aiming for speed over elegance, being robust, and yet responsive. And, it's about being comfortable with ambiguity and continuously adapting to shifting circumstances. This is also based on the understanding that we all have an enormous capacity for growth, whether you are a student, teacher, head of school and/or director of the educational system. But also, that learning is a continuous process—not an episodic event. It's a mindset driven with a proportionate, risk-reflective approach to assuring post-compulsory education and training standards and safeguarding student interests.

TNQAB has joint responsibility with relevant stakeholders to ensure confidence in and continuous improvement of the quality of post-compulsory education and training. I believe that the attainment of TNQAB's vision and mission is best pursued collaboratively and constructively with all our relevant stakeholders including registered providers, industries, and communities. I value a collaborative effort for mutual benefit. TNQAB is committed to working with objectivity, fairness and transparency. This underpins our decision-making and our policies, practices and services. These are evidence-based, informed by regional and international good practice, and conducted in an approach that is openly transparent and

engenders trust. We value achievement and impact - the successful pursuit of objectives which culminate in impacting positively and substantively on our working conditions. TNQAB is committed to learning and innovation to continuously improve our services and to making a difference to all relevant stakeholders.

We, as TNQAB, need to have the trust, credibility and cumulative wisdom to change the fabric of Tongan society through our performance and delivery of our services. And integrity is of the utmost importance. This is especially true in the novel, landscape-scale crises like the one we're facing. As your new CEO, I want to remain transparent and open. I want to listen to both the good and the bad. I will also do my best to continue to listen and to learn from everyone.

The notion of education quality is one which you will hear a lot of over the coming days, months and years. As student numbers increase, so does the number of qualifications and providers. The balance that TNQAB needs to manage is that of supporting a sector that is meeting demands, maintaining quality and, above all, supporting students in their choices, their journeys and their goals.

Finally, I truly believe that each of us must find meaning in our work. The best work happens when you know that it does not just work, but is something that will improve other people's lives. This is the opportunity that drives each of us at TNQAB. For all these reasons, I'm truly honoured and humbled to be your CEO and to lead a storied and innovative QA Agency like TNQAB.

I look forward to listening and learning from all of you.

Malo mo e lotu,

Dr Opeti Pulotu  
Chief Executive, TNQAB



## TONGA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND ACCREDITATION BOARD

January-March 2020

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## Message from the TNQAB Deputy CEO



It was an experience of a lifetime when I served as the Acting CEO at TNQAB for the past six years or so. I am filled with heartfelt gratitude to the Honourable Chairman and Board of Directors, for their excellent governance and oversight during the time I was at the helm, and for this great opportunity to learn from you all and in the process, come out a better person. I would also like to thank the staff of TNQAB, who are fit as a fiddle, for their continuous support and

leaving no stones unturned.

I hereby convey my sincere thanks to our valued providers who we worked with through thick and thin. The successes we enjoyed was a result of our mutual cooperation and collaboration as we resolved to take providers under our wings and guide them towards accreditation. May you endeavour to shoot for the moon, even if you miss, you will be among the stars. As the organisation delivers its core functions and responsibilities, we anticipate changes and we are willing to work whichever way the wind blows, to continue to serve our valued providers.

Now it's time to beat the drum for Dr Opeti Pulotu, as he becomes the new leader of this organization. I give my respect and full support to him during his leadership.

Pauline Moa  
Deputy CEO, TNQAB



## Staffing Changes: New Principal Qualifications Officer for the Qualifications Framework Division

### Message from the new Principal Qualifications Officer:

Kisione Manu, former Senior Analyst for the QA Division, is now the PQO for the QF Division. Kisione was appointed to this position after a competitive job nomination process. The position was previously occupied by Dr. 'Opeti Pulotu, who is now the CEO.

These are his responses to questions about his new role in the organization..

### What are your goals for the QF division?

My goals for the division are to ensure that we make every effort possible to entice and encourage our stakeholders to know, understand and value our Tonga Qualification Framework (TQF).

The existence of this organization weighs heavily on its ability to deliver on these outcomes. In fact, there is limited knowledge about our own existence and our main clientele are constrained to PCET providers only.

We urgently need to turn this trend and expand awareness to all sectors of society such as relevant industries, government ministries, NGOs and various communities.



Mr. Kisione Manu

Our approach to understanding the 'needs' of our stakeholders should start with us getting out more to 'identify' certain 'skill sets' that are relevant and will help get most of our unemployed youth into skills and competency education.

Thus, research is a requirement in all aspects of working in the QF and any other division in TNQAB. We need to collect data, make sense of the data and be able to make new meanings out of those data.

Our ability to be responsive to the changing needs of our stakeholders lies predominantly in our capacity and capability of making these data more meaningful to our work and to allow it to inform and direct our decision making.

Our TQF should be responsive to the changing work environment and dynamics where 'clusters of skill sets' are portable from one setting to another. Most of our young people finish high school with no expectation of pursuing higher education, yet most of these age groups will be able to find alternative educational pathways in TVET and other skills and competency trainings.

TNQAB has a big role to play in ensuring that these alternative learning pathways are quality assured and made available to them.

### How does your postgraduate studies help inform you in the new role that you are taking up?

Studying for Master in Education in Higher education allowed me to understand more about the teaching and learning situations in both TVET and higher education and the challenges they faced and the likely challenges ahead. One key learning from my study was the realization that Assessment plays a key role in quality assurance and accountability of various qualification developers and delivery entities. This purpose of assessment brings into focus the importance of understanding qualification outcomes and learning outcomes and integrating it into the teaching-learning processes.

Assessment should always be the link between teaching and learning and all of them are interconnected by learning outcomes. An emerging trend that is common in most PCET providers is the disconnect between the assessment tools, teaching-learning processes and the learning outcomes. A lot of the emphasis is spent on teaching the subject content which left many students unaware of the importance of the learning outcomes and its relevance in the making of reliable and valid assessment tools.

Assessment practices and tools should facilitate students' learning in both higher education and TVET. Students should know how to learn to succeed given that these are made available to them and yet assessment to many students, is a mystery.

### Who is a leader you admire and how does he/she inspire you to become an exemplary QF leader?

Someone that I really admired as a leader is Nelson Mandela and to invoke one of his famous sayings: "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." I think this resonates with what we are called upon to serve in this organization. We may be small, still at the infancy state but our endless passion to 'dialogue' – to initiate and maintain 'dialogue' will hopefully over-time makes others understand our language and us understanding them. I am seriously hoping that the QF will not always be seen as an authoritative figure but one that is open to dialogue which may eventually make our TQF known, understood and valued by our stakeholders and most importantly, the very students who are in our charge.



# A PERSONAL REFLECTION

*Semisi 4:17:*

*“Ka ‘i ai ha ngaue lelei ke fai pea fai ia...”*

It’s been a wonderful experience being part of a great team dynamic under the leadership of Uinimila, who was the Acting Principal Qualifications Officer from when I was recruited by the organisation from November 2019 to March, 2019. I have served at Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Board (TNQAB) since October, 2014, working in the Qualifications Framework Division (QFD) and I observed exemplary leadership demonstrated through the integrity and commitment that she put into her work. She is alert about the quality assurance processes with the intention that the collaborative work we do in this organisation reflects an open, responsive and integrated qualifications system. A phrase that she would always remind me of was to “Think outside the box” and to never lose sight of the learners, who are the most valued stakeholder in the work that we do.

With the return of Dr. Opeti, following the successful completion of his PhD studies, the leadership was more “cutting edge” especially in the area of Assessment. This was timely as the providers started applying for approval to deliver qualifications in different fields and sub-fields of the Tonga Qualifications Framework while staircasing their programs to more advanced levels, notably in Bachelor programs and Advance Diploma. The Qualifications Framework Division started assessing applications for Approval to deliver new qualifications from different educational fields on the TQF such as Early Childhood Education in the Tongan language,



Culture, Arts and Crafts and Sport, Recreation and Exercises (Multi-sector).

Further, the ‘icing of the cake” to my privileged work experience at the Qualifications Framework Division, was discovering and learning about international education systems because of applications received from our graduates and employees applying for Recognition of Qualifications from foreign and local institutions in view of employment purposes or further education opportunities. We are urged to be familiar via research and to make informative assessment of the value of the qualification in the different educational systems of origin. Hence, I was exposed to the stellar education and qualification system of Japan, China, The European Qualifications Framework, notably, The Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, the Maltese Education System as well as from that of the Republic of Cuba, United States of America and lastly, the inter-agency network with fellow Quality Assurance agencies in the United States, UK and the region such as the NZQA, EQAP and FHEC.

These main core responsibilities of the Qualifications Framework Division, created opportunities for personal growth and rich personal experiences where I was able to learn and understand the different logistic setup of each country’s qualifications system, coupled with the exemplary leadership and camaraderie of Uinimila and then Dr.’Opeti, has made my professional experience at the Tonga National Qualifications Framework Board most rewarding.

*By Tupou Pasikala-Fiu,  
Qualification Analyst for the Qualifications  
Framework Division.*



## The Successful Completion of Phase 1 of Tonga Ministry of Tourism - Tonga Skills National Qualifications Project

In its meeting for March 2020, the TNQAB Board of Directors approved two new national qualifications to be registered on to the Tonga Qualifications Framework (TQF). They are:

- ★ National Certificate in Cookery Level 3 and
- ★ National Certificate in Commercial Cookery Level 4.

The successful TQF-registration of the cookery qualifications is the outcome of a week-long series of quality assurance activities conducted between Monday January 13<sup>th</sup> to Thursday January 16<sup>th</sup>, facilitated by the National Qualifications Unit of TNQAB in collaboration with the Tonga Ministry of Tourism, and consultant Dr. Semisi Taumoepeau of the Auckland Institute of Studies (AIS).

This marks the completion of Phase 1 of the Tonga Ministry of Tourism-Tonga Skills National Qualifications Project in which seven national qualifications in Tourism and Hospitality were developed. This project began in 2018, and the first five qualifications, listed below, have already been approved for TQF registration:

- ★ National Certificate in Customer Service Level 3;
- ★ National Certificate in Tour Guide Level 3;
- ★ National Certificate in Front Office Management Level 4;
- ★ National Certificate in Food and Beverage Level 3; and
- ★ National Certificate in Whale Guide Level 4;

These activities included three days of evaluative discussions and deliberations on the draft qualification documents between the Ministry of Tourism consultant Dr. Semisi Taumoepeau as the qualification developer, the TNQAB PQQ-National Qualifications, and the Tourism Industry Training Advisory Committee (ITAC). There was also a day of consultation with representatives from the wider Tourism industry.

This success is also attributable to the fine contributions made by the above-mentioned Tourism ITAC which consisted of individuals with relevant experiences from both the private sector and government institutions, and they include:

- ★ Mrs. 'Ofa Tu'ikolovatu (ITAC Chair, Managing Director of 'Uiha and Sons)
- ★ Mr. Tuituiohu Mafi (Chef, and Catering Instructor at Tonga Maritime Polytecnic Institute)
- ★ Mr. Robert Filo (Chef and Trainer, Tonga Skills)
- ★ Mr. William Tovehi (Chef and Private business owner)
- ★ Mrs Seilose Fifita (former Principal and Coordinator of Tourism studies at Tonga Institute of Higher Education)
- ★ Mr. Sione Moala-Mafi (CEO, Tonga Ministry of Tourism)
- ★ Mrs Teisa Fifita-Tupou (Principal Tourism Officer, industry Empowerment, Tonga Ministry of Tourism)

This project is already beginning to make impact. At the end of 2019, two local training providers awarded three of the TQF-registered national certificates. Saint Joseph's Business College awarded the National Certificate in Front Office Management Level 4 to fourteen (14) successful students, while TIHE awarded three different national certificates: National Certificate in Customer Service Level 3 to twenty-two (22) successful students, the National Certificate in Tour Guide Level 3 to eight (8) successful students, and the National Certificate in Front Office Management Level 4 to twenty (20) successful students.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the leading role of the consultant, Dr. Semisi Taumoepeau, in the qualification development and his team from AIS as well as the valuable financial assistance provided by Tonga Skills. We look forward to similar future collaborations.



Front row L-R: Sione Moala Mafi (CEO Tourism), 'Ofa Tu'ikolovatu ('Uiha and Sons), Dr. Semisi Taumoepeau (Ministry of Tourism consultant), Hon. 'Akosita Lavulavu (Minister of Tourism), Dr 'Ungatea Kata (TTI), Julie Mcilwraith (TTI), Vilimaka Foliaki (TNQAB). The participants in the second and third row were part of this week-long consultation that subsequently led to the successful approval of two National Cookery qualifications. Photo credit: Tonga Ministry of Tourism.



# QUALITY AUDIT FINDINGS

The organization administers quality audits on Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) providers which is conducted by the Quality Assurance Division (QAD). Since 2016, the QAD has audited more than half of the PCET providers in Tonga and what has emerged are common trends that are dominant throughout the providers. The following is a summary of those trends:

## 1. Assessment

### 1.1 Assessment tools

Assessment items that are not aligned to the learning outcomes and often assess at a level lower than the required TQF level. The decision-making on the appropriateness of assessing tools are not often reflected on the nature and types of the learning outcomes. There should be a variety of assessing tools to capture the different types of learning. A majority of the PCET providers uses written type-responses (ie mainly exams and tests) yet there are other sustainable ways of assessing students which can be 'timely' and 'relevant'.

This is an area TNQAB has identified that warrant on-going discussions and min-workshops on.



### 1.2 Learning outcomes

Teachers at times are unable to confirm the level of specific learning outcomes hence are assessing a level lower or than required. Further to that, the scope and coverage of the of the exact number of learning outcomes assessed are often not considered resulting in 'underassessment' and 'overassessment' of some learning outcomes

- Underassessment: learning outcomes are assessing twice or less than that.
- Overassessment: learning outcomes are assessing more than three times.

### 1.3 Moderation

Pre-moderation (internal moderation) is often neglected to be carried on assessment tools before they are given to students.

Pre-moderation template should include items to identify if the assessment tool is assessing which learning outcome, at what level, how many times a learning outcome has been assessed, the appropriateness of the assessment tool to assess the learning outcome.

Post-moderation equally important to follow though as this is one was students are confirmed of their final grade in a particular assessment.

### 1.4 Assessment reports and records (and filing)

Grading on assessment reports are not consistent in some cases. In some instances, a mark is used then an associated letter is assigned to it, yet at times the use of 'Competent' or 'Not Yet Competent' are used with weighting and letter assigned to it.

There were instances that raw marks of some students were missing and only the moderated marks were retained in the main office (i.e usually in the records of the Deputy Principal or Principal).

Some assessments were marked and never returned for students for final checking and correction.

Some assessments marks were different from the ones recorded in the final transcript.

## 2. Workplace experience

### 2.1 Students' Workbook & supervision

It should clearly show what the students had completed in the workplace and learning outcomes (and performance criteria) that they achieved while they were attached for work (and learning) experience.

- Lack of supervision: the supervisor at the workplace should check students' performance against the criteria in the workbook and for the teachers to check this in incremental stages before they return to school.
- Lack of training for supervisor in workplace: It is the responsibility of the school to train or to coach supervisors on the criteria used to check students' performance in the workplace.
- Lack of understanding of the criteria (or rubrics) by the students and conflicting interpretations of supervisors from schools, is a concern.

### 2.2 Concerns from workplace supervisors (and employers)

- Limited resources for students' use: Government may assist them in some form to ensure that they provide sufficient support and training for students' experience.
- Limited training for supervisors on the criteria used for assessing students at the workplace: Government may assist in getting some of them carry out a formal training on assessing students in the workplace.

## 3. Quality Management System (QMS) Implementation

### 3.1 Implementation

The current teaching and learning practices are not always aligned to the written and documented QMS. One example is the processes on carrying out moderation.

### 3.2 Indicators of achieving objectives

There is less information collected and recorded to prove that the institution objectives have been accomplished.

## 4. Staff

### 4.1 Teaching qualifications

There are some staff who are teaching at a level but have not acquired a teaching qualification one level higher. There should be clarifications on the suitability of teachers to teach a course based on 'experience' and 'particular courses' they took.

### 4.2 Training support

Staff members still need upskills on specific contents they are teaching in.



Featuring one of the Senior Analyst from the QA Division, Ms Fositina Kama, interviewing one of the student from the Tonga Police, at longolongo.



## STAFF DEVELOPMENT & IMPORTANT NOTICE

### APPOINTMENT OF NEW CEO

On the 21st of February 2020, His Majesty Cabinet's Decision endorse Dr. Opeti Pulotu to fill the position of the Chief Executive Officer of Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Board for 3 years. Dr. Pulotu began his journey at TNQAB as a Principal Qualifications Officer in 2009 for the Qualifications Framework Division. He successfully completed a Master in Assessment degree at the University of Western Australia and resumed duty in 2012. He pursued further studies at the University of Durham in the UK and completed a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Assessment in 2019. He returned to TNQAB last year and is now the CEO. We wish Dr. Pulotu a successful term leading the TNQAB ship.

### RETURNING SCHOLAR

Ms Siniva Samani successfully completed a Master of Education degree (Educational Management and Leadership) from the University of Sydney in December, 2019. Mrs. Lesilei Tupola a Qualification Analyst was the acting Senior Risk Analyst while Ms. Samani away. The organization congratulates Ms. Samani on this monumental achievement while also recognizing the hard work that Mrs. Tupola conducted on her behalf. The organization benefitted immensely from Mrs. Tupola's relentless service.

### CURRENT SCHOLARS

Ms. Fane Hoeft, the TNQAB Accountant, was awarded an Australian award scholarship to study for a Master degree in Professional Accounting at the University of Sydney. She leaves to Australia for two years and we wish her the very best in her academic pursuit!

Mr. 'Inoke Tonga Taulanga, the TNQAB IT officer was also awarded a Tonga Study Award to study for a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science at the University of the South Pacific. Tonga, who is accompanied by his family, will be away for three years. We wish him the best in his academic pursuit!

Fositina Pecipaki, a Senior Analyst for the Quality Assurance Division is studying for a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education with the University of Melbourne, funded by an

Arthington-Davy scholarship. Fositina is conducting her studies online while working for the organisation at the same time. The organisation commends her determination and stamina for carrying out both tasks simultaneously.

Fololina 'Ikani, a Senior Analyst for the Quality Assurance Division, is currently on a New Zealand Government funded scholarship, studying for a Master of Education (Tertiary Education) at Massey University. She is due to complete her studies this semester and the organisation wishes her the best as she finishes the last lap of her studies.

### RESUMING DUTY

Mrs. Ikatonga Hingano, a Senior Analyst at TNQAB, accompanied her husband to Fiji last year while he carried out his undergraduate studies at the University of the South Pacific. She resumes duty at the organisation on March this year.

### IMPORTANT NOTICES

The TNQAB Board of Directors and the organization wishes to inform all stakeholders of the following notice:

The Board approved to remove the registration of MATAPA Training Center as a provider and to cancel all registered qualifications on the Tonga Qualifications Framework under MATAPA Training Center, including Certificate in Building and Construction Level 3, Certificate in Building and Construction Level 4 and Diploma in Building and Construction Level 5.

### VACANCY

The organization is currently advertising for a Contracted Legal Adviser (short-term) to initiate Phase 1 of reviewing the TNQAB Act 2004 and TNQAB Regulations for Accreditation 2016. The contract package is valued at TOP \$24,000. Applications for this opportunity ends on the 18th of May, 2020.

Furthermore, the organization is advertising the vacant position of Senior Qualification Analyst for the Quality Assurance Division. The salary range is between TOP\$ \$28,224 to \$42,336 and applications close on the 22nd of May, 2020.



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