



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

HON. ASERI RADRODRO

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

MONDAY 5 AUGUST 2024

110/2024

WRITTEN QUESTION

Hon. Jone Usamate to ask the Minister for Education – Can the Minister provide the following information regarding the grant given to Pacific Polytech, a new private entity for skills development –

- (a) what type of skills development courses are offered by Polytech, and what is the duration of these courses;**
 - (b) against what standards and quality were their courses benchmarked to, to justify receiving a grant of \$7m in the last 18 months; and**
 - (c) what assessment was carried out on the usage of the initial \$2m grant.**
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(a) what type of skills development courses are offered by Polytech, and what is the duration of these courses;

Polytech provides 3 categories of skill development programmes and courses

1. Award Programmes: These are programmes which result in award of qualifications at the end of the assessments. All these programmes are either development by the Fiji Higher Education Commission (called National Qualifications), or developed by the Polytech and approved by the Commission. A list of the programmes and their durations is provided below.

	National Qualifications - Content and standards are developed by the HECF	Duration
1	National Certificate in Carpentry (Level 2)	20 weeks
2	National Certificate in Carpentry (Level 3)	20 weeks
3	National Certificate in Automotive Electrical and Electronics Engineering(Level 3)	20 weeks
4	National Certificate in Automotive Mechanic (Level 3)	20weeks
5	National Certificate in Electrical Fitter Mechanic (Level 3)	20 weeks
6	National Certificate in Plumbing and Sheetmetal (Level 3)	20 weeks
7	National Certificate in Welding and Fabrication (Level 2)	20 weeks
8	National Certificate in Office Technology (Level 1)	20 weeks
9	National Certificate in Office Technology (Level 2)	20 weeks
10	National Certificate in Information Technology (Support)	20 weeks
11	National Certificate in Information Technology (Software Applications) - (Level 3)	20 weeks

12	National Certificate in Business (Administration and Technology) (Level 3)	20 weeks
13	National Certificate in Cookery (Level 2)	20 weeks
14	National Certificate in Baking and Patisserie (Level 2)	20 weeks
Additional national qualifications will be offered by the Polytech during 2024-2025 period		
Provider Qualifications – These have been developed by the Polytech and Approved by the HECF		
1	Certificate I in Horticulture	20 weeks
2	Certificate II in Horticulture (Flori Culture)	30 weeks
3	Certificate II in Horticulture (Nursery)	30 weeks
4	Certificate II in Horticulture (Fruits and Vegetables)	30 weeks
5	Certificate II in Horticulture (Landscaping & Turfs)	30 weeks
6	Certificate II in Horticulture (Golf Course)	30 weeks
7	Certificate II in Horticulture (Parks and Gardens)	30 weeks
8	Certificate II in Horticulture (Crops)	30 weeks
9	Certificate II in Office Administration	30 weeks
10	Certificate III in Office Administration	40 weeks
11	Certificate IV in Office Administration	40 weeks
12	Certificate III in Sales and Marketing	40 weeks
13	Diploma in Business (Supervision and Management)	70 weeks
14	Certificate III in Bookkeeping for SMEs	40 weeks

15	Certificate II in Caregiving	30 weeks
16	Certificate III in Personalised Aged Care	40 weeks
17	Certificate IV in Aged Health Care	40 weeks
18	Diploma in Geriatric Care	2 years
19	Certificate III in Commercial Cookery	40 weeks
20	Certificate III in Baking Patisserie	40 weeks
21	Certificate III in Front Office Operations	40 weeks
22	Certificate III in Food & Beverage	40 weeks
23	Certificate III in Housekeeping Services	40 weeks
24	Trade certificate in Graphic Design	40 weeks
25	Trade certificate in Graphic Arts (to be offered)	40 weeks
26	Trade certificate in Film and Television (to be offered)	40 weeks
27	Trade certificate in web designing (to be offered)	40 weeks
28	Trade certificate in Information Technology	40 weeks

- 2. Short Competency programmes aimed at rapid skill development:** These are managed by Tertiary Scholarship and Loans Services (TSLS), and areas are prescribed by the TSLS. A list of these is provided below. The courses are in:
- a. **Construction Industry:** Tile Laying, Painting, Block laying, Joinery, Cabinet making
 - b. **Tourism & Hospitality:** Housekeeping, Restaurant Services, and Front Office Operations
 - c. **Automotive Trades:** Panel beating, Automotive painting
 - d. **White Goods Repair**
 - e. **Small Business**

These courses are for Fijians from the age of 17 years up, who are not in any form of employment during the period of sponsorship.

3. Short Professional and Skill Development Programmes for industry: These are courses developed to enhance skills and competencies of employees in various organisations. These courses are developed in consultation with the specific employer and industry. Courses are in the following broad areas:

- a. Business and management
- b. ICT
- c. Hospitality
- d. Trades & Technology

This section of the Polytech is a new section, which has started working with some large employers to provide inhouse training to their employees. The courses are fully funded by the organisations.

(b) Against what standards and quality were their courses benchmarked to, to justify receiving a grant of \$7m in the last 18 months;

The Polytech has been benchmarked against the standards established by the Higher Education Commission of Fiji (HECF), and has met these standards. Announcement of grants approved to any higher education institution is one thing, but actual funds are only released as delivered, spent, and properly acquitted by the institutions with documentary evidence. Pacific Polytech has received \$2,260,000 since starting operations in 2021/22.

All the award programmes have either been developed by the HECF or developed by the Pacific Polytech are scrutinized and subsequently approved by the HECF.

The HECF was created under the Higher Education Act 2008. The Higher Education Promulgation was gazetted on 14th October 2008 and came into effect on 1st January 2010 establishing the Fiji Higher Education Commission as an autonomous governance framework that is responsible for standards and qualities in all tertiary institutions. The HECF sets the standards of the National Qualifications, and monitors the quality of delivery and assessment. A summary of the mandate of HECF is attached as Appendix 1. All NQs are benchmarked against the Fiji National Quality Standards.

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No institution in Fiji can operate without the approval of the Commission. The standards by which the Commission operates are stringent and meet those of similar organisations in other countries.

c) what assessment was carried out on the usage of the initial \$2m grant.

Two types of assessments were carried out:

- 1. Financial:** as a standard requirement, as for all other institutions covered by HECF, the Polytech is required to submit spending acquittals to HECF for quarterly grant sums released. Once HECF is satisfied with spending acquittals submitted by PP, only then they authorize to release grant for next quarter. This process is followed before grant for any quarter is released.

In addition, submission of audited financial statements of the institutions are mandatory. The Polytech has submitted its all the years for which it has received Government grants. These audits are clean and provide no cause for any concern.

- 2. Academic:** The HECF monitors the programmes which are funded by government grants. No institution can offer programmes which are not approved by the Commission. All award programmes of the Polytech have received stringent scrutiny, and have been duly approved by the Higher Education Commission of Fiji.

Appendix 1

Higher Education Act- 7

- ☞ c- establish national standards for different qualifications;
- ☞ e- provide assurances that the programs developed by the institutions meet national standards;

1. Higher Education (Qualifications) Regulations 2010-

- ☞ Fiji National Qualifications Framework” means the framework approved by the Commission for the registration of national standards and qualifications;
- ☞ qualification” means the formal recognition of the achievement of the required number and range of credits and such other requirements at specific levels of the Fiji National Qualifications Framework (FNQF) as may be determined by the relevant bodies registered for such purpose by the Fiji Qualifications Council;
- ☞ 6. c. the development of criteria and processes for the registration of standards and qualifications on the FNQF and for the regular review of the standards and qualifications to ensure continued relevance
- ☞ 16. The Commission shall cause to consider an application for accreditation of a qualification made under regulation
- ☞ 15, and any other information, submissions, particulars or documents as it considers relevant and if approved, register the accredited qualification in the Register of Fiji’s National Qualifications.

Standards and qualifications

19. The Commission shall from time to time prescribe the criteria and processes for the development of Fiji’s national standards and qualifications.

As per the Quality Standards (QS) attached, refer to *page 17*, the definition of the National Qualifications (NQs) is as follows:

- ☞ National Qualifications are packages of nationally recognized graduate profile and unit standards, which reflect a meaningful milestone or an end point on a learning pathway. National Qualifications are **developed by Industry Standards Advisory Committees (ISACs)**.

Please note that the HEC facilitates the development of National Standards for different Qualifications. The NQs are developed and owned by the ISACs.