



Toi Mai Conservation micro-credentials and skill standards survey summary

Ngā mihi nui to those of you who completed our Conservation micro-credentials and skill standards survey in May–June 2024.

We had a good response with 28 survey completions from within industry, providers, community groups and other stakeholders.

All respondents supported the development of micro-credentials and/or standards for the sector. 19 respondents registered interest in being part of an advisory group.

NZQA Levels

We asked what levels new micro-credentials and skill standards are needed for:

- The most popular responses were levels 3, 4 and 5.
- Levels 1 and 2 were also mentioned as well as broad ranges, for example levels 1–7.

Skill standards

We asked if micro-credentials should contain skill standards. 27 respondents answered this question:

- 20 respondents said yes, indicating a strong preference for including skill standards in micro-credentials, emphasising benefits including consistency, practical application, and industry recognition.
- Of those who answered no or were unsure, lack of employer understanding was mentioned as well as lack of flexibility delivering standards.

Skill Groups for Conservation

We asked respondents to rate their agreement with a list of skill groups for potential development of micro-credentials and skill standards:

- Self-management/working alone
- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Outdoor/back country skills (including driving)
- Mātauranga Māori and Te Ao Māori
- Kaitiakitanga

- Ecology and biodiversity
 - Pest control and management (animal and plant)
 - Health and safety/risk management
 - Fire control
 - Chainsaw and construction skills
 - Planting (nursery and outdoors)
 - Conservation technology
- **High Agreement:** Most skill groups had a high level of agreement (either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree") from respondents, indicating their perceived importance.

Top Skill Groups:

- **Communication and Interpersonal Skills** and **Ecology and Biodiversity** had the highest number of "Strongly Agree" responses.
- **Self-management/Working Alone, Outdoor/Back Country Skills, Pest Control and Management, Kaitiakitanga** and **Conservation Technology** were also highly valued.
- **Moderate Agreement:** Skills like **Fire Control**, and **Chainsaw and Construction Skills** had a mix of agreement and neutral responses, with some disagreement in the case of chainsaw and construction skills.

There was a strong emphasis on practical, ecological and people skills.

Missing skill groups

We asked respondents to let us know what skills were missing from the list. Responses were diverse, and we've grouped them into the following key areas:

Field and Practical Skills: There is a strong need for hands-on, practical skills such as track building, plant identification, navigation, and working in remote and rugged environments.

Technical Skills: Advanced technical skills such as GIS, data management, conservation technology, and various monitoring techniques are essential for effective conservation work.

Ecological and Environmental Knowledge: Understanding animal behaviour, game animal management, and specific ecological skills like weed and threat management are crucial.

Legislative and Financial Skills: Financial literacy and understanding relevant legislation, particularly related to animal welfare and environmental impact, are important.

Communication and Public Engagement: Effective public communication, outreach, and stakeholder engagement are key to successful conservation initiatives.

Leadership and Management: There is a need for strong leadership and management skills to handle teams, projects, and administration effectively.

Cultural Competence: Incorporating Te Reo Māori and tikanga Māori into conservation practices are important.

Personal Development and Wellbeing: Attention to personal wellbeing and mental health is essential for a healthy workforce.

Specialised Skills: Specific skills such as animal handling, pesticide application, and interpreting weather forecasts are also highlighted as missing in the current workforce.

Responses demonstrate the need for a broad range of skills to support capability building in the conservation workforce.

General Comments

Finally, we asked respondents for further comments. Here are some summarised highlights:

- **Emphasis on Māori Values:** Advocates for approaches that align with Māori values and principles, and genuine integration of Mātauranga Māori and kaitiakitanga.
- **Micro-credentials and Specialised Training:** There is significant interest in developing and offering micro-credentials and specialised training in conservation skills.
- **Access and Delivery Methods:** Flexible delivery methods, including online and face-to-face options, are important to accommodate diverse learner needs.
- **Integrated and Practical Learning:** Integrating cultural principles and practical skills training is essential for comprehensive learning.
- **Industry Support and Funding:** There is a need for better funding and job opportunities to retain skilled workers within the sector and/or country.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Strong interest in collaboration and sharing resources to enhance conservation training programs.

Next steps

We've used the valuable feedback from this survey and engagements to prepare a proposed framework for developing new products. To check we are on the right track, we will host several online hui which you will be invited to and you can choose the invite that suits you best.

Following online hui, we will bring together an Advisory Group of people with experience, knowledge and skills in the Conservation sector to help develop, finalise and endorse the new products.

We expect to continue our communications with you on a regular basis throughout this process. For all feedback, queries and support please continue to email qualifications@toimai.nz

Tēna koutou katoa mo tō awhina i tēnei kaupapa. Ngā mihi.