



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS

AUTHORITY



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

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This guide is for students new to NCEA. Ask your parents/caregivers and/or whānau to read this guide so that they understand how NCEA works. In particular, get them to read the **Tips for parents** section on page 9.

INTRODUCTION

What is NCEA?

NCEA which stands for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement, is the main qualification for secondary school students in New Zealand and can be gained in three levels (1,2,3). NCEA is the most common qualification you will be working towards in years 11 to 13.

Why should I work towards NCEA?

NCEA and other nationally recognised certificates are regarded by employers and used for selection into courses by universities and other tertiary institutions. NCEA is also accepted by employers and universities overseas.

Independent research¹ has shown that if you do well in NCEA, you are likely to do well in your first year at university.

How do I get NCEA?

NCEA is gained by building up credits. Credits are awarded for each standard you achieve in the courses you are studying.

- **Standards** are the skills or knowledge that you are expected to achieve or know in a course. For example, a Mathematics standard is: *Apply numeric reasoning in solving problems.*
- **Assessments** measure how well you meet these standards. Assessments can be internal (a test, activity, brief or assignment) or external (an end-of-year exam or portfolio).
- When you achieve a standard, you also achieve the number of **credits** for that standard.
- When you achieve a certain number of credits, you gain NCEA. There are **three different levels of NCEA** (Levels 1, 2, 3), usually done at years 11, 12 and 13.

¹ The Predictability of Enrolment and First Year University Results from Secondary School Performance (Starpath, University of Auckland, 2008).



“Almost 100% of our students enter tertiary education, many are awarded national scholarships and many are accepted for competitive courses such as law and health sciences. A growing number are travelling overseas to university and have no trouble gaining entry. NCEA is an excellent qualification and offers a seamless transition to tertiary education.”

MARGARET VAN MEEUWEN, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, DIOCESAN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, AUCKLAND



THE DETAILS

How do I enter for NCEA?

Your school will enter you for NCEA and tell you when to pay your fees.

NCEA is administered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). You can use your unique National Student Number (NSN) to look up information NZQA holds about you sent in by your school, including your entries, results and *Record of Achievement*. For more information see www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea or phone NZQA on 0800 697 296.

How should I choose my courses?

In year 11, you will probably take a broad range of courses that can lead on to more specialised subjects. In years 12 and 13, you will start thinking about what areas you need to focus on for your future study or career. If you have a particular career in mind, find out what courses you will need from your school (careers advisors, Deans or teachers) or the place where you intend to study.

How do I achieve a standard?

When you study a course, your work is measured against registered standards using **assessments**.

As you study a new topic your teachers will explain to you what is going to be assessed. Teachers will tell you if you are on the right track and help you to improve your work.

“Right across the academic spectrum we find standards to be more motivating, more rewarding and capable of producing more achievement than School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate or Bursary did.”

JOHN GRANT, PRINCIPAL KAIPARA COLLEGE

An assessment programme for a Mathematics course at level 1 may look like this:

STANDARD	ASSESSMENT	NAME OF STANDARD	CREDITS
91026	Internal	1.1 Apply numeric reasoning in solving problems	4
91027	External	1.2 Apply algebraic procedures in solving problems	4
91028	External	1.3 Investigate relationships between tables, equations and graphs	4
91031	External	1.6 Apply geometric reasoning in solving problems	4
91038	Internal	1.13 Investigate a situation involving elements of chance	3
Total			19

Types of standards

Schools assess two types of standards:

- **Achievement standards** can be assessed by internal assessment in schools, by external assessment through NZQA examinations at the end of the year, or by portfolios submitted for external assessment.
- **Unit standards** are usually assessed internally in school or the workplace.

Levels of standards

The standards assessed in schools are usually at **Levels 1, 2 and 3**. Most year 11 students start at Level 1, and progress to Level 2 in year 12, and Level 3 in year 13. A certificate is awarded according to the level of the standards you achieve. For example, if you achieve 80 Level 1 standards, including 10 credits each in literacy and numeracy, you will gain Level 1 NCEA.

Multi-level study

Schools may allow you to study a mix of standards at different levels, depending on your ability. For example, in year 12 you may do most courses at Level 2, but start a new course at Level 1 or study another course at Level 3 because you are good at it. In addition, students may study multi-level courses with standards assessed at more than one level, e.g. an English course at year 11 may contain both Level 1 and Level 2 standards.

How will my work be assessed?

Assessments measure your performance against the standards in your courses. If your work meets the requirements of the standard, then you achieve that standard and you gain **credits** towards your qualification.

Most **external** assessments are by exam at the end of the year, although for some subjects (e.g. Technology, Visual Arts) you will need to submit a portfolio of your work. Many standards are **internally** assessed by your teachers during the year. NZQA checks that there is consistency in assessment across all schools.

How will I be graded in each standard?

Your grade will depend on the type of standard being assessed.

- For **achievement standards** you can get: Achieved (A) for a satisfactory performance, Merit (M) for very good performance, Excellence (E) for excellent performance, or Not Achieved (N) if you don't meet the requirements of the standard.
- For **unit standards** all grades may be available, but mostly Achieved (A) or Not Achieved (N).

Recognising high achievement

NCEA can be endorsed to reflect high achievement. It is worth trying to gain Merit and Excellence for standards you are good at, which may lead to endorsement. There are two types of endorsement: Certificate Endorsement and Course Endorsement.

Certificate Endorsement: If you gain 50 credits at Excellence at a particular level your NCEA will be endorsed with Excellence. If you gain 50 credits at Merit (or a mix of Merit and Excellence) your NCEA will be endorsed with Merit. Credits must be gained at the Level of certificate, or above.

In 2011, 13.3% of year 11 students gained Level 1 NCEA with Excellence and 33% gained Level 1 NCEA with Merit.



“NCEA is hugely challenging for students. To achieve Excellence is far more demanding than a high mark was in the previous exam system. But the good thing is NCEA is utterly transparent – everyone knows what you have to do to get good grades.”

JULIA DAVIDSON, PRINCIPAL OF WELLINGTON GIRLS' COLLEGE
AND CHAIR OF NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' COUNCIL

Course Endorsement: If in a single year you gain 14 or more credits at Merit and/or Excellence for a course, you will gain endorsement in that course. Of these credits, at least 3 credits must be from externally assessed standards and 3 credits from internally assessed standards in that course. (Note: this condition does not apply to Physical Education, Religious Studies or Level 3 Visual Arts).

What happens if I don't achieve a standard?

For internally assessed standards, your school may allow you (and others in your class) to be assessed one more time. For some standards your school may delay your reassessment until the final term, taking into account most of your year's work.

For externally assessed standards, there is only one opportunity to achieve the standard each year – the exam or other external assessment at the end of the year.

How many credits do I need for an NCEA Certificate?

Each standard is worth a set number of credits. When you achieve standards, these credits count towards NCEA. They may also contribute towards other nationally recognised certificates, such as a National Certificate in Business Administration.

Credits can be gained over more than one year. Credits gained at one level can count towards more than one certificate.



What you need for NCEA certificates:

Level 3	60 credits at Level 3 or above	plus 20 credits at Level 2 or above
Level 2	60 credits at Level 2 or above	plus 20 credits at any level
Level 1	80 credits at Level 1 or above	

Level 3: 80 credits – a minimum of 60 credits at level 3 or above and 20 credits at level 2 or above.

Level 2: 80 credits – a minimum of 60 credits at level 2 or above and 20 credits at any level

Level 1: 80 credits at level 1 or above, including literacy and numeracy requirements. From 2012, the requirement is 10 credits in literacy and 10 credits in numeracy. Your teacher will explain how these work.

Can I study at different levels?

You do not need to gain NCEA Level 1 to achieve NCEA Level 2. It is possible to study at Level 2 before achieving a Level 1 certificate. Any credits you earn at Level 2 will count towards Level 1; at the same time you can begin work towards Level 2. This means the credits you earn may contribute to more than one qualification at the same time. You may study some courses at a higher level than others. Your school can help you decide what courses to study.



What do I need to gain University Entrance?

University Entrance is the minimum requirement for entrance into university in New Zealand. Most universities and other tertiary institutions have additional requirements, particularly for entry into specific courses.

Changes to University Entrance requirements will apply from 2014 and will be used for the first time by students entering university in 2015. To gain University Entrance you will need to achieve NCEA Level 3 and three subjects of 14 credits each from the list of approved subjects. You will also need to meet the literacy and numeracy requirements. For more information about changes to University Entrance visit <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/awards/university-entrance>.

What other qualifications can I aim for at school?

Your school may offer other nationally recognised certificates as well as NCEA. Some of the most popular ones include: Business Administration, Computing, Hospitality (Food and Beverage Service), Mechanical Engineering Technology, Te Waharoa (Māori) and Tourism and Travel. Ask your school what nationally recognised certificates they offer in areas that interest you.

Credits from some work may count towards more than one qualification and all credits count towards NCEA. Some qualifications can be completed at school and others you may start at school and then finish in the workplace or at a tertiary institution.



GETTING YOUR NCEA RESULTS

How will I get my results?

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) administers NCEA and holds a database of all results. To access your results, log in to your learner home page on the NZQA website, www.nzqa.govt.nz/learner-login using your unique National Student Number (NSN).

You will be able to see:

- Results of your internal assessments as they are completed, and reported to NZQA by your school.
- Results of your examinations, or other external assessment in January.
- Scholarship examination results in February.
- University Entrance, if awarded.

Creating a record of my results

Documents recording your results are:

- Certificates for NCEA and University Entrance. NCEA certificates include certificate endorsement (with Merit or Excellence).
- The *School Results Summary* (SRS). Your SRS lists all the standards for which you have been assessed with the results, including Not Achieved results, grouped by year, course and Level. It also contains a detailed summary of your credits by course and Level.
- The *Record of Achievement* (ROA) is an official transcript of standards and qualifications achieved and will grow as you gain new standards through tertiary study and industry training.

Certificates for NCEA and University Entrance will be printed on request (one copy free) and sent to you.

You can print your SRS or ROA (or a selection) directly from the website. An official copy can be requested (one copy free) and sent to you.

Can I appeal my results?

If you have a question about the marking of an internal assessment, you should discuss this with your teacher at the time your work is returned.

Your examination papers will be returned to you by mid February. If you believe there was an error in the way your paper was marked, you can ask NZQA to review or reconsider the results. For more information about how to do this visit www.nzqa.govt.nz.



“Our family absolutely loved the NCEA approach. The workload in regular classes wasn’t unreasonable and our son was challenged appropriately. He likes to show up as being smart so he had to work hard – but his results really do reflect his achievements, not a whole lot of other factors. I’m a big proponent of NCEA – it makes happier adults.”

JONNY NEWBRE, MOTHER OF ALEX HAYASHI – LEFT RANGITOTO COLLEGE IN 2007 AND, LATER ACCEPTED AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

TIPS FOR PARENTS/WHĀNAU

- Ask your son/daughter how NCEA works – most students understand it well.
- Provide support (e.g. time, space, homework support) to help your son/daughter study – remember they will be assessed throughout the year, not just in final examinations.
- When helping your son/daughter choose courses, encourage them to take a broad range at Level 1, but to start thinking about what areas they might focus on for future study or a career at Levels 2 and 3.
- Encourage your son/daughter to aim for higher grades – Merit and Excellence. These will improve their career prospects, or improve their chances of gaining entry into their chosen tertiary course.
- If your son/daughter has a particular career or tertiary course in mind, check out what Level 2 or Level 3 standards they may require to enter the university or other tertiary institution where they intend to study.
- Ask your son/daughter’s school or teachers for guidance on how they are progressing. Most schools also hold very helpful qualification information sessions for parents.
- See the NCEA information on the NZQA website www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea

MORE INFORMATION

NCEA	<p>Talk to your teachers or contact the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA): Phone 0800 697 296 www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea</p> <p>Links for students: www.nzqa.govt.nz/students</p> <p>The exam timetable: www.nzqa.govt.nz/timetable</p> <p>Past exam papers and other subject resources: <a href="http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/<subject>">www.nzqa.govt.nz/<subject> (e.g. English, Science, Mathematics)</p> <p>To view your Record of Achievement and get your results: www.nzqa.govt.nz/learner-login</p>
Careers advice	<p>Talk to your school careers advisor or contact Careers New Zealand: Phone 0800 222 733 www.careers.govt.nz</p>
Qualifications	<p>See what qualifications are available: New Zealand Qualifications Framework www.nzqa.govt.nz/nzqf</p>
Study skills	<p>Find NCEA study tips and skills: www.studyit.org.nz</p>

New Zealand Qualifications Authority

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