

New Zealand Full Review

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Aim and purpose

- What is the stated aim and purpose of this stage of education, e.g. linked to entry to higher education, the world of work; a broad aim of personal and societal enrichment etc.?
- Are these aims and purposes influenced by an overarching national plan for education or do they reflect the influence of international organisations such as the OECD?

The education system in New Zealand aims to create better life choices and outcomes for New Zealanders; to equip them to thrive in the rapidly developing global environment; to help young people, especially

those in hardship, find a better future; to enable everyone to succeed; and to create the foundation for a flourishing society and a strong economy. The four-year education plan Ambitious for New Zealand (MoE, 2016a) sets

out what the Government intends to do during the period 2016-2020 to achieve these aims. Of particular note in terms of senior secondary schooling (for 15/16- to 18-year-olds) are the ambitions to:

- improve student-centred pathways
- provide better 'tailoring' so that educational services are responsive to the diverse needs of every student in the context of the future economy
- raise the aspirations of all children and students
- offer better and more relevant pathways through the education system and beyond into the workplace and society
- strengthen inclusion.

The plan links to the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 (MBIE and MoE, 2014) which includes a focus on delivering skills for industry; ensuring at-risk young people can access a career; boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika young people (the Indigenous population); improving adult literacy

and numeracy; and strengthening linkages between education and the labour market by, for example, seeking to provide students 'with high-quality, user-friendly information about possible careers and training pathways to support their decision-making' (MoE, 2016a, page v.)

The long-term aim is to provide an education system that is relevant and reaches all children and students; that ensures that every child and student achieves educational success; and that gives New Zealanders the skills and knowledge for work and life. In this way, the education system will be a major

contributor to social and cultural participation and wellbeing and to economic prosperity and growth.

In addition, the Delivering Better Public Services (BPS) programme for New Zealand includes a target (BPS 5) to 'increase the proportion of 18-year-olds with NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification'. NCEA is the National Certificate of Educational Achievement – the senior secondary qualification. The Government believes that success in education is essential to its goal of building a productive and

competitive economy and to helping New Zealanders to develop the skills needed to reach their full potential and contribute to the economy and society. It regards a Level 2 qualification¹ as being key to leading towards this success, offering opportunities in terms of further education, employment, health outcomes and a better quality of life. The specific target is for 85 per cent of 18-year-olds to have achieved NCEA Level 2 (or equivalent) in 2017.

The **OECD's Policy Outlook**

Report for New Zealand (OECD, 2013) and *Education at a Glance 2016* (Crossan and Scott, 2016) report that the Government has responded to a lower than the OECD average enrolment rate in senior secondary education; large performance and completion gaps for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds; increasing diversity in the student population; and lower outcomes for Indigenous students who are also less likely to complete secondary education by:

- implementing plans to support Māori and Pasifika students' performance (e.g. the Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017 (MoE, 2015a), and the Māori Education Strategy (MoE, 2015b))
- introducing the Tertiary Education Strategy (MBIE and MoE, 2014) and the Delivering Better Public Services programme
- introducing reforms to help prevent early school leaving and ensure upper secondary completion, such as more varied pathways / course options, and the introduction of the Youth Guarantee and Trade Academies (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes').

¹On the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, [click here](#).

Structure of the education system

- How is upper secondary provision for students structured, e.g two-year / three-year / varied approach; around subjects or broad areas of learning; broad/comprehensive or specialised / narrow in focus?
- When does compulsory education end?
- What is the age profile of students in this stage of education?
- How well does the structure of the system reflect the stated aim as outlined above

Secondary education in New Zealand is from Year 9 to Year 13, ages 13-18, but is compulsory until Year 11, age 16 only. Upper secondary provision is the final three years of education, Years 11-13, ages 15-18.

Although compulsory education begins at six, most children start school when they turn five.

Year	Age range	School Level
Year 1 / new entrants	Age 5-6	Primary school
Year 2	Age 6-7	Primary school
Year 3	Age 7-8	Primary school
Year 4	Age 8-9	Primary school
Year 5	Age 9-10	Primary school
Year 6	Age 10-11	Primary school
Year 7	Age 11-12	Primary school or intermediate school
Year 8	Age 12-13	Primary school or intermediate school
Year 9	Age 13-14	Secondary school
Year 10	Age 14-15	Secondary school
Year 11	Age 15-16	Secondary school; senior secondary phase
Year 12	Age 16-17	Secondary school; senior secondary phase
Year 13	Age 17-18	Secondary school; senior secondary phase

The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), which is the main qualification available to young people on completion of secondary education, is a credit-based qualification, available at three levels – Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Most NCEA courses begin in Year 11 – the final year of compulsory education for 15- to 16-year-olds - and most Year 11 students follow NCEA courses Level 1, progressing to Level 2 in Year 12, and Level 3 in Year 13.

The NCEA is intended for all students, whether they are hoping to go on to university, are planning to do an apprenticeship, or want to learn practical skills and get a job after leaving school. It aims to offer young people the flexibility to study a range of courses and subjects at one of the three levels, and so meet their varied needs.

Available pathways / programmes

- What pathways / programmes are available to students - academic / vocational / professional / flexible?
- At what stage are decisions about the student choice of pathway finalised and who has an input into these decisions?
- Where do these pathways lead - entry to higher education; accreditation for professional life; further training?
- What percentage of the overall cohort of students progress through each pathway?
- How many students progress to higher education / further education / workforce / apprenticeships?

Learning pathways in senior secondary education are generally intended to lead to the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), introduced between 2002 and 2004 to replace the previous examinations - the School Certificate Examinations, the Sixth Form Certificate and the University Bursary.

The **NCEA is a credit-based qualification** which recognises learning in academic and vocational /

practical subjects and aims to suit students whatever their intended future career path. Students can follow NCEA courses in school and with tertiary providers and some courses can include structured workplace learning.

Under the [Youth Guarantee initiative](#), the NCEA 'Vocational Pathways' were introduced in 2013. These align learning to the skills needed for industry and cover six industry areas:

- primary industries
- service industries
- social and community services
- manufacturing and technology
- construction and infrastructure
- creative industries.

The Vocational Pathways aim to enable students to:

- understand the career options available in a given sector and follow a relevant, coherent study programme that will enable them to achieve NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3
- ensure that their study programme supports their future career pathway and enables them to demonstrate a vocational profile to tertiary providers and employers
- develop the skills and competencies that employers in particular sectors need.

Students are advised to consider the courses they may want to follow for their NCEA qualification as early as possible during secondary education. When helping students choose courses, parents are advised to encourage them to take a **broad range of subjects at Level 1 (Year 11), but to start thinking about what areas they might focus on for future study or a future career at Levels 2 and 3 (Years 12 and 13 respectively in many cases).**

NCEA Level 2 results are often used as part of the selection process for entry to tertiary courses, as well as as entry-level requirements by employers. A Vocational Pathways Award, for example, is an NCEA Level 2 qualification, which provides formal recognition of a student's completion of a particular vocational pathway. The Government's aim (under the Better Public Services programme summarised above, see the subheading 'Aim and purpose') is to increase the proportion of 18-year-olds with NCEA Level 2 or equivalent. Other Youth Guarantee initiatives to help achieve the specific goal of 85 per cent of 18-year-olds having this level of qualification by 2017, include:

- The Achievement Retention Transitions initiative (ART 2013-2017), which supports secondary schools to identify young people at risk of not achieving NCEA Level 2 and put in place interventions to support them. The initiative has a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika students.
- Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (STP), which are a partnership between schools, tertiary providers, local communities and employers. They are aligned with the Vocational Pathways and aim to offer senior secondary students trade and technology programmes which will encourage them to remain in education and acquire the knowledge and skills local communities need. The programmes are offered in Trade Academies.
- The fees-free initiative which offers 16- to 19-year-olds the opportunity to study full-time with a tertiary provider and follow a funded (free) course leading to an NCEA Level 2 qualification aligned with the Vocational Pathways or equivalent. Courses are usually vocationally focused. In 2017, around 9200 fees-free places were offered by a range of tertiary institutions including polytechnics and private training establishments.

University Entrance (UE) is the minimum requirement to go to a New Zealand university and requires an NCEA Level 3 qualification, achieved in three 'approved subjects' at NCEA Level 3, along with minimum literacy and numeracy requirements (see the subheading 'Assessment and reporting' for further information).

Students who leave school on completion of compulsory education at age 16 may follow a New Zealand Apprenticeship programme, which leads to a Level 4 qualification on the [New Zealand Qualifications Framework](#). Courses last two to four years and entry requirements vary dependent on the industry, but all apprentices must be employed in the occupation for which they are training.

In 2015, 83.3 per cent of all 18-year-olds in New Zealand had achieved NCEA Level 2 or equivalent. For Māori students, the figure was 71.1 per cent and for Pasifika 18-year-olds it was 77.6 per cent (Stats NZ, 2017). Of the students leaving school in 2015, 79.1 per cent had achieved at least NCEA Level 2 or equivalent (MoE, 2016d).

Of the 61,086 students leaving school in 2015, 32,229 (or 52.8 per cent) achieved the NCEA Level 3 award or above and 40.6 per cent achieved the University Entrance (UE) award. Since 2009, there has been an increase of 10.9 percentage points in the proportion of school leavers who achieve Level 3 or above (MoE, 2016e)

29.4 per cent of all school leavers in 2015 (17,987 students) attained NCEA Level 2 with one or more Vocational Pathway Awards. Female school leavers were more likely to attain a Vocational Pathway Award than their male counterparts. By award type, the majority of school leavers with a Vocational Pathway Award had achieved a creative industries award (70.8 per cent of school leavers who achieved a Vocational Pathway Award). This

compares to 18.3 per cent for service industries; 7.0 per cent for construction and infrastructure, 6.2 per cent for primary industries; 5.7 per cent for manufacturing and technology; and 3.2 per cent for social and community services (MoE, 2016f).

Of the 59,541 students who left school in 2014, 61.0 per cent were enrolled in a tertiary level course at some point in 2015. The tertiary education sector is diverse and encompasses formal qualifications to New Zealand apprenticeships. Of students progressing directly to tertiary education the year following leaving school, there has been a decrease in the proportion enrolling in formal qualifications from 52.6 per cent of school leavers in 2009 to 50.6 per cent in 2014. Targeted training, such as programmes under the Youth Guarantee

initiative (see above), has seen an increase in popularity (MoE, 2016g). 420,000 students were enrolled in formal tertiary education of more than one week's duration in 2015. Of these, 14,000 were in Youth Guarantee fees-free places and 1790 were in Māori and Pasifika trades training. The number of senior secondary students studying via Trade Academies was 5900 (MoE, 2016h).

In 2015, 83.9 per cent of students stayed at school to the age of 17 (MoE, 2016i). On 1 July 2015, there were 60,943 Year 11 students in schools in New Zealand; 54,941 Year 12 students; and 48,644 Year 13 students. On the same date, there were 59,667 15-year-olds in schools; 54,866 16-year-olds; 46,947 17-year-olds; and 11,265 18-year-olds (MoE, 2017f).

Specified curriculum within pathways

- How is the curriculum within these pathways organised? Is it broad / comprehensive / specialised / narrow?
- Are there core subjects that are central to the curriculum?
- What degree of choice is afforded to students within each pathway?
- Is the curriculum presented in subject specifications / syllabi / learning outcomes?
- Is there differentiation of learning outcomes in terms of stage and / or ability?
- What degree of autonomy do teachers / schools have in shaping and implementing the curriculum?
- What is the place of wellbeing / social, personal and health education (SPHE) / citizenship education within the curriculum?
- What competences / key skills are promoted in the curriculum?
- To what extent are skills and competences central to the curriculum structure? How do they feature i.e. are they embedded in learning outcomes?

The curriculum in senior secondary education in New Zealand is determined by a student's choice of subjects / pathway for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). A range of academic and vocational subjects and courses can contribute towards the award of the NCEA at one of the three available levels. At all levels:

- in each subject, a student's skills and knowledge are assessed against a number of standards
- internal and external assessments measure how well students achieve these standards
- achievement of a standard entitles a student to a number of credits and each standard has a defined credit value
- students require 80 credits, including credits in literacy and numeracy, to achieve the NCEA qualification
- in general, one credit represents ten hours of learning and assessment; this includes teaching time, homework and assessment time
- a typical course generates between 18 and 24 credits, but courses can assess standards totalling as few as 12 credits or as many as 30 or more.

Standards in academic subjects are aligned to the New Zealand Curriculum (see below) and are known as **'achievement standards'**. Standards in vocational subjects are **competency based and known as 'unit standards'**.

Unit standards include specific 'sector-related' standards for the successful achievement of Vocational Pathways Awards.

Schools are able to use the considerable flexibility afforded by the NCEA to work with each student to create tailored NCEA courses that reflect their individual needs and strengths, and keep them engaged and motivated. Courses may, for example, combine achievement standards and / or unit standards and so cover a range of academic curriculum subjects and / or vocational areas; include courses which will lead to a Vocational Pathways Award; or combine courses which will lead to the achievement of University Entrance (UE).

Achievement standards and unit standards define the learning outcomes for each subject / course, i.e. what the learner will be able to do, explain, demonstrate, understand etc., along with the assessment criteria to be used to determine

achievement of the standard. Standards – by subject area and NCEA level - are available [online](#).

NCEA Level 3 achievement standards for maths, for example, include:

- 'apply trigonometric methods in solving problems', which is worth four credits; is internally assessed; and is available at one of three grades 'achievement', 'achievement with merit', and 'achievement with excellence'
- 'apply differentiation methods in solving problems', which is worth six credits; is externally assessed; and is available at one of three grades 'achievement', 'achievement with merit', and 'achievement with excellence'.

NCEA Level 2 achievement standards for English include:

- 'construct and deliver a crafted and controlled oral text', which is worth three credits; internally assessed; and is available at one of three grades 'achievement', 'achievement with merit', and 'achievement with excellence'.

Unit standards for English at the same level include:

- 'write a short report', which is worth three credits; internally assessed; expressed as one outcome with five evidence requirements; and available at one grade 'achieved'.

Level 3 unit standards for computing / digital technologies, which are internally assessed, include:

- 'describe the concepts of information systems deployment' which is worth three credits; is expressed as four outcomes, with evidence requirements for each outcome; and is available at one grade - 'achieved'
- 'create a computer programme to provide a solution', which is worth six credits, and is expressed in terms of four outcomes and the evidence requirements for each outcome. It is available at one grade 'achieved'.

For successful completion of the NCEA, all students must also achieve minimum literacy and numeracy requirements, identified as at least 10 credits in each of literacy and numeracy. The credits

can be achieved through unit or achievement standards which enable students to demonstrate reading, writing, speaking and listening skills (literacy) and number, measurement and statistical skills (numeracy).

Students' NCEA courses can be further tailored to their individual needs by the fact that they are available at different NCEA levels. Many schools allow students, for example, to study a mix of NCEA standards at different levels, depending on their ability. For example, **in Year 12, a student may study most courses at Level 2, but**

start a new course at Level 1 or study another course in a subject in which they excel at Level 3. Students can also study courses with standards that are assessed at more than one level. For example, a Year 11 English course may contain both Level 1 and Level 2 standards and these standards can contribute to both an NCEA Level 1 and NCEA Level 2 qualification.

In addition to being guided by the NCEA, students' learning programmes in Years 11-13 are also influenced by the [New Zealand Curriculum](#). This framework document sets the direction for teaching

and learning in English-medium schools in New Zealand. (There is a similar document for Māori-medium schools.) Although there are no New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) subject requirements for students in Years 11-13, in developing the curriculum in the upper secondary phase, all schools are expected to align their curriculum with the intent of the NZC framework and ensure that it is underpinned by the principles, values and key competencies of the NZC.

The NZC principles embody what is important and desirable in the school curriculum and include:

- high expectations – the curriculum supports all students to achieve personal excellence regardless of individual circumstances
- the Treaty of Waitangi – the curriculum recognises the bicultural foundations of New Zealand and the place of the Indigenous people
- cultural diversity – the curriculum reflects New Zealand's cultural diversity
- inclusion – the curriculum is non-sexist, non-racist, non-discriminatory and ensures students' identities, languages, abilities and talents are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed
- learning to learn – the curriculum encourages all students to learn how to learn
- community engagement – the curriculum connects with students' wider lives and engages the support of families and communities
- coherence – the curriculum provides for coherent transitions and opens up pathways to future learning
- future focus – the curriculum encourages students to look to the future e.g. by exploring sustainability, citizenship, enterprise and globalisation.

The NZC values, which are neither exhaustive nor exclusive, aim for a curriculum which encourages students to value excellence; innovation, enquiry and curiosity; diversity; equity; community and participation; ecological sustainability; integrity; respecting themselves and others; and human rights, while the key competencies on which the school curriculum is expected to be based are:

- thinking
- using language, symbols and texts
- managing self
- relating to others
- participating and contributing.

The Ministry of Education produces teaching and learning guides for senior secondary subjects which are designed to help teachers to create teaching and learning programmes for the senior secondary years which align the NCEA standards to the New Zealand Curriculum.

The health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum highlights the importance of student wellbeing and, in April 2012, the Government launched the Youth Mental Health Project, with initiatives across a number of education, social and health agencies. The

Project aimed to improve outcomes for young people aged 12 to 19 years with, or at risk of developing, mild to moderate mental health issues. Linked to this initiative, the Education Review Office (ERO) has published Wellbeing for Success (ERO, 2016), which is a resource to assist schools in evaluating and improving student wellbeing. It highlights the importance of schools promoting the wellbeing of all students, as well as the need for systems, people and initiatives to respond to wellbeing concerns for students who need additional support.

Inclusion

- How is inclusion addressed?
- How are the learning needs of all students catered for, including students who have completed a reduced curriculum at lower secondary school, students with challenging behaviour patterns who find it difficult to function in larger classes, international learners for whom the language of instruction is not their first language, students with special educational needs?

One of the eight principles of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) framework (see the subheading 'Specified curriculum within pathways' above), is that of inclusion, which is defined in a broad sense, i.e. the principle states that the school curriculum should be non-sexist, non-racist, non-discriminatory and ensure that students' identities, languages, abilities and talents are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed. The principle of inclusion applies to all students, including those with special educational needs and those belonging to the Indigenous Māori and Pasifika peoples. The aim is to ensure that, by knowing all their students as individuals and creating an inclusive learning environment, teachers will meet all students' learning needs and minimise barriers to learning.

There is a close link between the principle of **cultural**

diversity and inclusion.

The Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, established the rights of the Indigenous Māori population. It is reflected in an education system which seeks to support and sustain the Māori language and culture (e.g. through Māori-medium schools, the Māori curriculum framework, and the teaching of the Māori language and culture in English-medium schools); contribute to cultural participation, understanding and wellbeing; and ensure that Māori students achieve educational success. The Treaty of Waitangi is also included as one of the eight principles of the NZC alongside inclusion and cultural diversity. It aims to ensure that New Zealand's bicultural nature is reflected in the curriculum taught in schools.

Legislation (the Education Act 1989) (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 1989) determines that those who

have special educational needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol in and receive education at state schools as those who do not. School boards are required to identify students and groups of students who are not achieving or who are at risk of not achieving; who have special needs (including gifted and talented students); and aspects of the curriculum which require particular attention, and to develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum identified.

Ambitious for New Zealand, the four-year education plan 2016-2020 (MoE, 2016a), has as one of its aims to 'strengthen inclusion' and to develop a fully inclusive education system that recognises and values the diversity of children and young people and their needs. This includes continuing to make sure that the education system

provides clear learning pathways for Māori learners to which they can relate and connect and so continue to improve their educational achievement. Māori achievement levels remain the lowest across the school population in New Zealand. It also includes ensuring that New Zealand's increasingly diverse student population – with its wide range of educational needs – receives the broad continuum of additional learning support and special education services required to ensure that learners with short-term needs, or longer term learning or behavioural difficulties, or physical and intellectual disabilities, receive the support they need to make progress and be 'present, participating, learning and achieving' (p.18). *Ambitious for New Zealand* is underpinned by the Ministry of Education's policy statement on inclusion – *Success for All* (MoE, n.d.) which establishes the principle that all schools in New Zealand should demonstrate inclusive practices, supporting those with special needs through class-wide and school-wide strategies. Depending on their level of need, some students in inclusive mainstream schools will have Individual Education

Plans to guide their learning; those with high needs may be supported in special schools.

The non-prescriptive but inclusive nature of the New Zealand Curriculum and Māori curriculum frameworks aims to enable schools to develop their curriculum to meet and respond to the needs of all their learners. The NCEA also is designed to be as flexible as possible for students - recognising achievement across a wide range of ability levels and offering students choice in 'component' subjects / courses so that they can tailor their NCEA to their future needs and their abilities. NCEA standards also support students with special educational needs by, for example, allowing students to demonstrate their abilities through the use of New Zealand Sign Language, and some standards are specifically designed to enable students for whom English is an additional language to demonstrate their abilities.

In addition to their Individual Education Plan, from the age of around 14, young people with 'high need' special educational needs are encouraged to develop, with their parents and school, an Individual

Transition Plan (or Career Plan). This documents their future plans / aspirations and the support, skills, knowledge, courses etc. which will enable them to achieve their goals. They are also encouraged to develop a portfolio recording the skills they have developed, samples of their work and references from others.

Assessment and reporting

- How is the curriculum assessed?
- What variety of assessment modes and methods are in evidence? For example, external assessment / internal assessment / online assessment / portfolios / formative / summative / synoptic etc.?
- How does the system recognise varied learning / skills / competences?
- How does assessment link to certification / qualifications / a qualifications framework / selection for further and higher education?
- How is vocational / technical education assessed and accredited?
- How is achievement reported? What is reported?

Assessment in senior secondary education in New Zealand is through achievement in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

Students study a range of academic or vocational NCEA subjects at one of three levels and, in each subject, are assessed through internal and external assessment against a number of standards. All NCEA subjects are divided into standards, which assess students' knowledge and skills within that subject. Each standard is worth credits that contribute towards gaining the NCEA at Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3, depending on the difficulty of the standards achieved, and most standards are

worth between three and six credits.

There are two main types of standards – achievement standards and unit standards. Achievement standards are based on the [New Zealand Curriculum](#) and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (the Māori curriculum); unit standards are competency-based and usually assess a vocational skill. (For students following the Vocational Pathways programme (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes' above), and seeking to achieve a Level 2 NCEA with a Vocational Pathways Award, a certain number of their unit standards must be 'sector-related standards'. These are standards that are closely

related to the Vocational Pathway and require development of skills from, or direct experience in, an industry setting.) To achieve each level of the NCEA (Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3), students must gain 80 credits and meet minimum literacy and numeracy requirements. The literacy and numeracy criteria require students to achieve a minimum of 10 credits in literacy and 10 credits in numeracy from specified standards. Once these requirements have been met at Level 1 they can count towards each NCEA level (i.e. they only need to be achieved once). The literacy and numeracy credits can be achieved through specified standards across a range of curriculum subjects that

provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate reading, writing, speaking and listening skills or number, measurement and statistical skills. They can also be achieved through literacy and numeracy unit standards.

At NCEA Levels 2 and 3, 20 of the 80 credits can be from another level. For example, students can achieve NCEA Level 2 by gaining 60 credits at Level 2 and 20 credits at Level 1. Credits can be gained over more than one year.

The type of assessment varies across courses and NCEA levels, and the mix of assessment varies for every student depending on the courses their provider offers and the courses they have chosen to study. The NCEA involves internal assessment carried out throughout the year by a student's teachers, and external assessment. Achievement standards can be internally or externally assessed; unit standards are assessed internally.

Internal tests and assessments are graded by teachers and quality assured by the New

Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). In some instances, unit standards are checked / moderated by a sector organisation in the industry responsible for the particular standards. In addition to written work, internal assessments can include practical experiments, producing something, presentations or performances, or delivering a speech. The NZQA quality assures internal assessment through a network of full-time and part-time moderators who check a sample of around ten per cent of each school's internally assessed work to ensure that teacher judgements are consistent across the country.

External assessment is carried out through national examinations at the end of each year, or through the submission of a portfolio of work (e.g. for subjects such as technology and visual arts). The NZQA runs the national examinations and independent subject experts assess / mark students. The national NCEA examinations take place towards the end of the school year (usually in November or December;

the school year in New Zealand begins in late January / early February). They assess students against the achievement standards in three-hour examinations for each subject. There are usually around 120 different examinations. Marks are available online in mid-January at which point students can view their final NCEA results for the year. For this, they use the NZQA Learner Login website (see below), their unique National Student Number (NSN) and a password. Examination answer booklets are returned to students, usually in late January each year.

Marks for each achievement standard are usually graded on a four-point scale, showing how well a student did in achieving the standard – 'Not Achieved', 'Achieved', 'Merit' and 'Excellence'. Most unit standards are only available at the 'Achieved' grade. Earning NCEA qualifications that are endorsed with Merit or Excellence grades reflects high achievement. There are two types of endorsement:

- **Course Endorsement:** when students gain 14 or more credits at Excellence in a course in a single year, they are awarded an 'Excellence Endorsement' in that course. Students who gain 14 or more credits at a mix of Merit and Excellence levels in a single year are awarded a 'Merit Endorsement'. At least three of the credits that contribute to Course Endorsement must be from externally assessed standards, and three from internally assessed standards. (Physical education, religious studies and Level 3 visual arts courses are exempt from this condition.)
- **Certificate Endorsement:** when a student gains 50 or more credits at Excellence level over all the courses they are studying, their NCEA certificate will be endorsed with 'Excellence'. If a student gains 50 or more credits at a mix of Merit and Excellence levels, their NCEA certificate will be endorsed with 'Merit'.

Students are encouraged to focus on the quality rather than the quantity of their credits (providing they achieve the minimum 80 credits required), particularly as universities and other tertiary education providers use endorsements when they are selecting students for programmes with restricted numbers.

University Entrance (UE) is the minimum requirement needed for making an application to study at a New Zealand university. To gain UE, students need to achieve NCEA Level 3 in at least three subjects, and this must include achieving standards in subjects that are on the list of approved subjects for UE. They must also meet specific literacy and numeracy requirements. In sum, they need:

- NCEA Level 3, including
 - three subjects at Level 3, made up of 14 credits each in three [approved subjects](#)
 - ten Level 2 literacy credits, made up of five credits in reading and five in writing
 - ten Level 1 or above numeracy credits (which can include achievement standards or unit standards).

In addition to UE, universities have additional requirements for entry to many degree programmes. They will, for example, specify courses that students should complete and, for some degrees, NCEA results are used to generate entry scores. For some degree programmes, students may need NCEA results that are well in advance of UE. Entry to the Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) course at the University of Auckland in

2011, for example, required a minimum of 18 credits in each of mathematics with calculus, and physics, and selected students on the basis of their rank score generated from the NCEA. The entry requirements also recommended that prospective students had studied chemistry, biology and language-rich subjects (such as classics, English, geography, history).

Students following the Vocational Pathways programme (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes' above), and seeking to achieve a Level 2 NCEA with a Vocational Pathways Award, must achieve at least 20 of their 80 credits from unit standards which are 'sector-related standards'. These are standards that are closely related to the Vocational Pathway and require development of skills from, or direct experience in, an industry setting.

To access their NCEA results, students use the NZQA Learner Login website. Through this site, using their National Student Number (NSN), against which all standards and national qualifications which students gain throughout their life are recorded, students can see:

- results of internal NCEA assessments as they are completed and sent to NZQA by schools
- results of external NCEA assessment (examinations) (in January)
- University Entrance, if achieved (in January)
- New Zealand Scholarship examination results (in February)*.

A range of documents records students' results:

- NCEA certificates (which include Certificates of Endorsement, where relevant)
- the School Results Summary (SRS) – this lists all standards for which students have been assessed; groups the results by year, course and level; and shows any national qualifications and endorsements, University Entrance and New Zealand Scholarship results achieved
- the Record of Achievement (ROA) – this is an official transcript of standards and qualifications achieved and includes awards such as the Vocational Pathways Award and University Entrance. The ROA is added to as students gain new standards and qualifications through further tertiary study and industry training. An [example](#) ROA is available online.

*The New Zealand Scholarship is awarded to the top students in their last year of schooling and is based on assessments against challenging standards, which are demanding for the most able candidates in each subject. Assessment is by either a written / spoken examination or by the submission of a portfolio or report of work produced throughout the year. Scholarship candidates are expected to demonstrate high-level critical thinking, abstraction and generalisation, and to integrate, synthesise and apply knowledge, skills, understanding and ideas to complex situations. Around three per cent of Year 13 students studying each subject at NCEA Level 3 are awarded Scholarship each year.

Flexibility and transfer options

- What flexibility is inherent in the system for movement between or within pathways?
- What are the student transfer options?
- Can students combine study across schools / institutions?
- Can credits / certification be transferred?

Although most Year 11 students start at NCEA Level 1, and progress to Level 2 in Year 12, and Level 3 in Year 13, the levels and age ranges of the NCEA are a guide. It is intended that students can gain NCEA credits at different levels during the same year and that they should be able to aim at NCEA levels that suit their abilities. A Year 12 student may, for example, study most courses at Level 2, but start a new course at Level 1 or study another course in a subject in which they excel at Level 3. Students can also study courses with standards that are assessed at more than one level. For example, a Year 11 English course may contain both Level 1 and Level 2 standards and these standards can contribute to both an NCEA Level 1 and NCEA Level 2 qualification.

Students from Year 11 onwards can acquire credits towards their NCEA by study in school, complemented by

structured workplace learning. This is particularly relevant for those students following NCEA Level 2 courses on the Vocational Pathways programme. Through what is known as 'Gateway' funding, the Government provides funds to support schools to arrange this workplace learning, which must include a formalised learning arrangement set in the workplace; specified knowledge and skills that a student will attain; and specified assessment methods.

The Government also provides operational grant funding to schools through the Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) programme. This is intended to support them in providing students with a coherent Vocational Pathways programme, and enable them to form partnerships with tertiary education providers and employers to provide vocational education and

work experience which will lead towards NCEA and / or tertiary qualifications.

Students on fees-free programmes, which are designed to provide 16- to 19-year-olds with the opportunity to study towards NCEA Level 2 via the Vocational Pathways, follow vocationally-focused programmes offered in a number of polytechnics and private training organisations. In 2017, around 9200 fees-free places were offered. In addition, partnerships have been formed between schools, tertiary institutions, industry training organisations and employers to form Trade Academies which offer trades and technology programmes aligned with the Vocational Pathways to secondary students.

Students do not have to complete NCEA qualifications within a single school year; they can accumulate credits

towards qualifications over any number of years. They can also keep earning credits after they have left school through tertiary study or workplace learning. In attempting new qualifications while undertaking tertiary study,

for example, many students will also be accumulating credit towards the NCEA at Level 2. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) encourages students who didn't achieve NCEA Level 1, 2 or 3 at school, but who have

since gained more credits while undertaking other study, to contact NZQA to confirm whether or not they have gained additional credits and so successfully achieved an NCEA qualification.

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

n/a	Achievement standards	All NCEA subjects are divided into standards, which assess students' knowledge and skills within that subject, and are worth credits towards gaining the NCEA. Achievement standards are based on the New Zealand Curriculum and <i>Te Marautanga o Aotearoa</i> (the Māori curriculum). They are assessed through internal and external assessment.
ART (2013-2017)	Achievement Retention Transitions initiative	Supports secondary schools to identify young people at risk of not achieving NCEA Level 2 and to put in place interventions to support them. The initiative has a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika students.
BPS	Better Public Services programme	Public sector reforms programme which includes the target of 85 per cent of 18-year-olds achieving NCEA Level 2 by 2017.
ERO	Education Review Office	The New Zealand government department that evaluates and reports on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services. The Chief Review Officer designates individual review officers to carry out reviews in schools and early childhood centres, and has the power to initiate reviews, investigate, report and publish findings on the provision of education in these institutions.
ITO	Industry training organisation	Sector training organisations which advise on tertiary courses and Vocational Pathways, and moderate internal assessment for unit standards.
NCEA	New Zealand Certificate of Educational Achievement	The senior secondary qualification for young people. A credit-based qualification, available at Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, and intended for all students regardless of their future route. Recognises a range of courses, qualifications and pathways – academic and vocational.
NSN	National Student Number	The unique number for each student against which all results (e.g. standards and national qualifications) achieved throughout a student's life are recorded. A student's record of achievement accessed through their NSN is available online via the Learner Login website.
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum	n/a
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority	Administers the NCEA; moderates NCEA internal assessment; and is responsible for NCEA external examinations. Is also responsible for the quality assurance of non-university tertiary training providers.

NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework	The 10-level framework for all recognised New Zealand qualifications – from secondary education to doctoral degrees. It is outcomes-based and described in terms of knowledge, skills and attributes, and their application at each level.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	n/a
ROA	Record of Achievement	The official transcript of all standards and qualifications achieved. The ROA grows as students gain new standards and qualifications throughout their life and is available to students online.
STAR	Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource programme	A programme to support schools in providing students with a coherent Vocational Pathways programme by enabling them to form partnerships with tertiary education providers and employers.
STP	Secondary-Tertiary Programmes	A partnership between schools, tertiary providers, local communities and employers to offer senior secondary students Vocational Pathways trade and technology programmes in Trade Academies.
n/a	Trade Academies	Local institutions, established by partnerships of schools, tertiary providers, local communities and employers to offer Vocational Pathways trade and technology programmes.
UE	University Entrance	The minimum requirement to go to a New Zealand university, which requires an NCEA Level 3 qualification, achieved in three 'approved subjects' at NCEA Level 3, along with minimum literacy and numeracy requirements.
n/a	Unit standards	All NCEA subjects are divided into standards, which assess students' knowledge and skills within that subject, and are worth credits towards gaining the NCEA. Unit standards are competency-based and usually assess vocational skills. Unit standards are assessed through internal assessment.
n/a	Vocational Pathways	Pathways that align learning to the skills needed for industry; cover six industry areas; enable students to demonstrate a vocational profile; and lead to the NCEA.