

NZQA

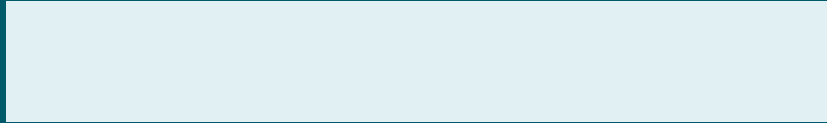
Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority



Guide to NCEA

English

National Student Number (NSN):



Every student has a National Student Number. It is important to know yours, and to keep a record of it in a safe place.

Your school can tell you your NSN. You use this to create an account on the NZQA website. You will need your account to sit digital assessments and see all your results.



To create an account or log in, go to www.nzqa.govt.nz and click 'Login' in the top-right corner.

Contents

Your Journey	4
NCEA The basics	7
How NCEA works	11
Assessment	16
Endorsements	20
University Entrance	23
New Zealand Scholarship	26
Useful resources	29



Your Journey



What are your goals and dreams? What is your ideal career? Do you want to live and work in Aotearoa New Zealand or overseas?

To reach your goals, what do you need to learn? What subjects do you need to study while you are at school, like Science, Technology, Maths or Te Reo Māori?

You can find information about different jobs, and what you might need to study, at www.tahatu.govt.nz



NCEA is for everyone, whether you want to do an apprenticeship, go on to further study, or be ready to get a job when you leave school.

Getting NCEA makes a difference to how much you will earn in the future.

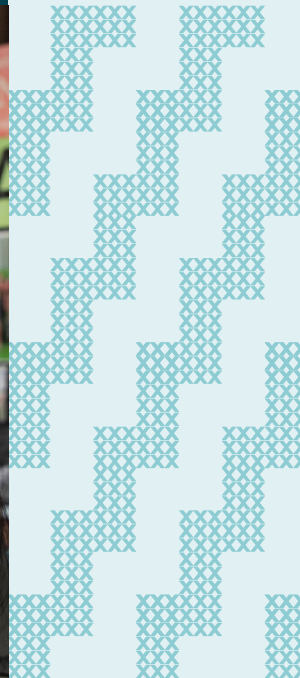
Within nine years of leaving school, people with NCEA Level 2 earn twice as much, on average, as people with no qualification.

Staying at school and getting University Entrance (UE) means you will earn 25 percent more, on average, than if you leave school with NCEA Level 2.



NCEA

The basics



NCEA stands for the **National Certificate of Educational Achievement**. It's the main qualification for senior secondary school students, and it's available at Levels 1, 2 and 3. NCEA is internationally recognised.

Levels



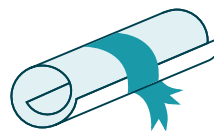
NCEA Level 1

shows you have skills and knowledge that you can build on.



NCEA Level 2

is the minimum qualification you will need for some jobs and tertiary programmes.



NCEA Level 3

is needed for entry to university, along with University Entrance.



NCEA is very flexible. In Year 11, students usually work towards Level 1, and progress to Level 2 in Year 12 and Level 3 in Year 13. Some schools focus on Level 2 across years 11 and 12.

It's not unusual to be working at a mix of different levels, depending on your learning programme.

For example, you might be doing mostly Level 2 courses, but start something new at Level 1 or study a course at Level 3 because you are good at it.

You don't have to finish one level of the NCEA qualification before starting to work towards the next one.

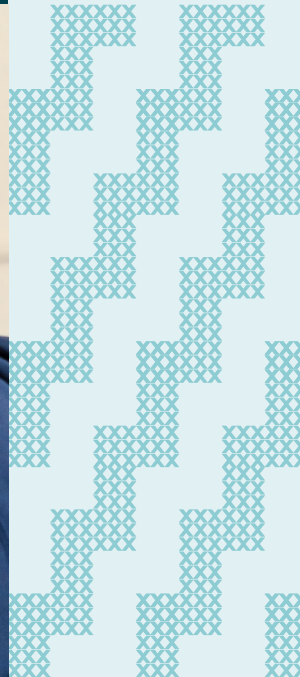
Choosing your subjects

If you're unsure about what subjects you should take, talk to your subject teachers and deans, who can answer your questions about NCEA and help you plan your subject choices to achieve your goals.

As you move on to NCEA levels 2 and 3, the subjects you choose to take can affect what you can do when you leave school. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) related subjects, as well as English and/or Te Reo Māori, help keep your options open to a wide range of careers.

Even if you don't think you want to go to university, you might want to take at least three of the subjects that can be used for University Entrance. This means university could still be an option if you change your mind.

How NCEA works



Standards and credits

Every subject you take is assessed by standards.

Standards describe different areas of knowledge and skills. There are specific standards that recognise mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). Schools decide what subject to provide, and which standards to assess in those subjects.

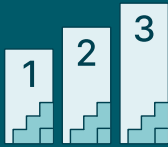
You can also achieve standards through some activities away from the classroom. For example, you may be able to achieve standards by:

getting your driver licence

performing at a regional or national kapa haka competition or Polyfest

completing approved work or study programmes

Each standard is worth credits. When you achieve a standard, you earn the total number of credits that standard is worth, and it's these credits that build towards NCEA.



Your school may offer courses to gain NCEA at Level 1, 2 or 3.



Standards

Your learning in each course is assessed against standards.



Credits

Each standard is worth a certain number of credits.

NCEA Level 1 English standards

Demonstrate understanding of how context shapes verbal language use	Demonstrate understanding of specific aspects of studied text	Develop ideas in writing using stylistic and written conventions	Demonstrate understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar texts
91924	91925	91926	91927
5 credits	5 credits	5 credits	5 credits
Internally assessed	Externally assessed	Internally assessed	Externally assessed

What you need for NCEA

From 2024, you will need:

NCEA Level 1

60 credits at Level 1

Numeracy or
Te Pāngarau

10 credits from the new Numeracy or Te Pāngarau standards,
or from a list of other approved standards

Literacy or
Te Reo Matatini

10 credits from the new Literacy or Te Reo Matatini standards,
or from a list of other approved standards

NCEA Level 2

60 credits at Level 2

NCEA Level 3

60 credits at Level 3

Literacy, Te Reo Matatini, Numeracy and Te Pāngarau

To be awarded NCEA, you need to achieve 10 credits in Literacy or Te Reo Matatini and 10 credits in Numeracy or Te Pāngarau to show you can use and understand language, as well as mathematics and statistics.

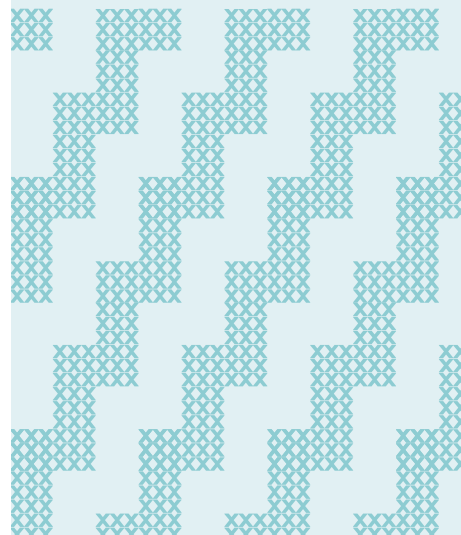
Until the end of 2027 you can earn these credits through the new Literacy, Te Reo Matatini, Numeracy and Te Pāngarau standards, or from a list of other approved standards.

These credits are known as 'co-requisites' because you require them alongside your other credits for NCEA.

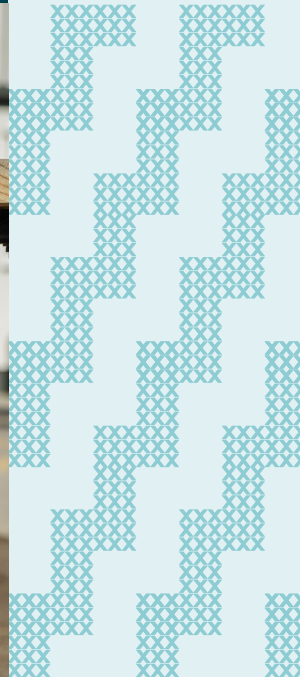
There will be many opportunities to earn these credits while you are at secondary school, and once you have gained them, you have met the Literacy, Te Reo Matatini, Numeracy and Te Pāngarau requirements for all three levels of NCEA.

If you met these requirements in 2023 or earlier, you do not need to attempt them again.

Watch a video on how NCEA works at:
www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea-video



Assessment



Assessment shows what you have learned. You might show this in different ways, such as by analysing a text, writing an essay or giving a speech. Your work may be assessed internally or externally.



Internal assessment

Internal assessment is when your work is marked by teachers at your school.

External assessment

External assessment is when your work is marked by teachers outside your school, organised by NZQA. This includes end-of-year exams (digital or on paper), Common Assessment Activities, and portfolios of work or Kete Manarua done at school. External assessment might happen during the year or in the end-of-year exam period.

Grades

There are three types of standards that contribute to achieving NCEA: achievement standards, unit standards and skill standards.

Achievement standards can be assessed internally or externally. Unit standards and skill standards are usually assessed internally.

Your grade will show how well you did in completing the standard.

There are four possible grades for achievement standards:

Not achieved (N) for not meeting the criteria of the standard

Achieved (A) for meeting the criteria of the standard

Merit (M) for meeting the criteria of the standard to a very good level

Excellence (E) for meeting the criteria of the standard to an extremely high level.

Some unit standards and skill standards may offer N, A, M and E grades, while for others, you may either achieve them (A) or not achieve (N).

Exams

NCEA end-of-year exams start in November. Exam sessions are designed to give you enough time to show what you have learned. Results are normally released in mid-January, and you can check your results and see your marked exam papers on the NZQA website, using your learner login.

Many standards are assessed using digital exams. Digital exams are still held at school, under supervision. If you are doing a digital exam, your school will work with you to make sure you have a device that is compatible, and you can do activities to familiarise yourself with the setup.

Special Assessment Conditions

Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) are available to meet a range of physical, emotional, sensory, medical, and learning needs.

SAC support can be available for internal and external assessments. If you have any questions about SAC, talk to your teachers.

More information, can be found at www.nzqa.govt.nz/sac and ncea.education.govt.nz/special-assessment-conditions.



Endorsements



There are two types of endorsement: certificate endorsement and course endorsement.

Certificate Endorsement

Certificate endorsement shows high achievement across the courses you have studied.

When you gain 50 or more credits at Excellence at Level 1, your NCEA Level 1 certificate will be endorsed with Excellence.

When you gain 50 or more credits at Merit (or higher) at Level 1, your NCEA Level 1 certificate will be endorsed with Merit.

The same applies if you are working towards Level 2 or Level 3.

Credits from Level 2 can be used to endorse a certificate at Level 1, or credits from Level 3 can be used for Levels 1 or 2.

Credits for an endorsed NCEA certificate can be gained over more than one year.



Course Endorsement

Course endorsements recognise achievement in a particular course.

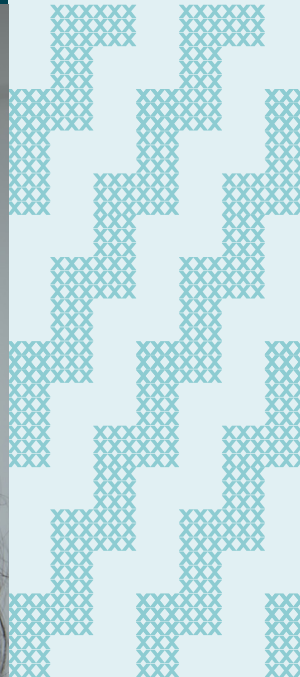
To be awarded an endorsement in most courses, you need 14 credits at Achieved, Merit or Excellence in a course in a single year, with at least three credits to come from internal assessment and at least three from external assessment.

For example, to get an Excellence endorsement in your Cook Islands Māori course, you will need at least 14 Excellence credits, with at least 3 gained from internal assessment and 3 from the end-of-year exam.

Credits at either Excellence or Merit can count towards Merit endorsements, while credits at Excellence, Merit or Achieved can count towards Achieved endorsements.

Not all courses may have endorsements available – check with your school.

University Entrance



You will need University Entrance (UE) to go directly from school to university. Being awarded University Entrance also opens doors to tertiary study in other countries.

To be awarded UE from 2024, you will need all of the following:

NCEA Level 3.

14 credits in each of three approved subjects at Level 3.

UE Literacy – 10 credits at Level 2 or above (5 in reading, 5 in writing) in specified standards.

UE Numeracy – 10 credits at Level 1 or above in specified standards.



Check with your school that you have at least three UE approved subjects and you can meet the UE literacy and numeracy requirements. Details about UE requirements can be found at www.nzqa.govt.nz/university-entrance

University Entrance is usually awarded in January.

Universities have their own requirements for admission to programmes. Check with the university you wish to attend what its requirements are. Universities often consider your Level 2 results when they make decisions, before Level 3 results are released.

Using NCEA overseas

NCEA opens doors to tertiary study overseas, but there are some important things you need to know.

Make sure you check the requirements in the country you're interested in. Some countries require a certain number of credits at Level 3, and you might need to show you have studied particular subjects.

If you're applying to study in Australia aim to get as many Level 3 excellence and merit results as possible in externally and internally assessed achievement standards in University Entrance approved subjects. You must achieve New Zealand University Entrance and a high ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) score. NZQA calculates ATAR scores for students in January each year.

New Zealand Scholarship



If you are passionate about your favourite subject, or a high achiever looking to challenge yourself, talk to your school about entering New Zealand Scholarship.

New Zealand Scholarship recognises the top achievers in each subject. Students who achieve Scholarship in one or more subjects will receive a monetary award.

Students who receive Top Subject Scholar or Premier Scholar Awards will also be recognised through NZQA's Top Scholar Awards ceremony.

NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship have different entry processes and are assessed separately. New Zealand Scholarship is different from the scholarships

that community groups, businesses, iwi or tertiary providers might offer.

Te Ao Haka was recently added as a New Zealand Scholarship subject, and from 2025, New Zealand Scholarship will be available in Psychology and Digital Technologies.



Information about the subjects where New Zealand Scholarship is available and how it works can be found on NZQA's website: www.nzqa.govt.nz/nzs

Vocational Pathways

Vocational Pathways show how your study is valued in the real world; and can help you move into training and employment.



There are Vocational Pathways in six broad sectors:

Construction and Infrastructure

Creative Industries

Manufacturing and Technology

Primary Industries

Service Industries

Social and Community Services.

A Vocational Pathways Award recognises your completion of a particular pathway. These Awards are calculated automatically, alongside NCEA.

The Awards show how your learning relates to the skills that employers are seeking, and you can receive an award for each pathway you complete.



More information about Vocational Pathways can be found on NZQA's website: www.nzqa.govt.nz/pathways

Useful resources



New Zealand Qualifications Authority

www.nzqa.govt.nz

0800 697 296

Information about NCEA including:

subject information

subject resources

examination timetables

field Māori information
and resources.

Information about
University Entrance.

Ministry of Education

ncea.education.govt.nz

www.education.govt.nz

04 463 8000

Information about education in New Zealand, the national curricula, changes to NCEA, new standards, literacy and numeracy, and supporting materials for teachers and schools.

Vocational Pathways

www.youthguarantee.net.nz

vocational.pathways@education.govt.nz

04 463 8000

Information about possible
Vocational Pathways.

Tahatū Career Navigator

www.tahatu.govt.nz

Explore more than 800 career ideas

Get career ideas and write a CV

Browse study and training options

Contact us

Phone: 0800 697 296

Website:

www.nzqa.govt.nz

Email:

helpdesk@nzqa.govt.nz

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/nzqaofficial

Instagram:

www.instagram.com/nzqa.official

X:

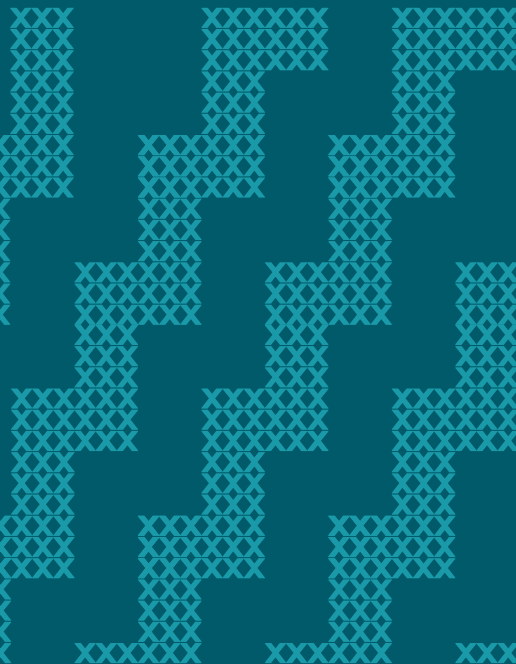
www.x.com/nzqaofficial

English version

Published September 2025



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority



www.nzqa.govt.nz