



What is NCEA?

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Who is this factsheet for?

Students, parents and whānau, people considering teaching in New Zealand, and employers.

National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA)

National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) were introduced between 2002 and 2004 and they are the main secondary school qualifications in Aotearoa New Zealand. Every year, around 120,000 students gain an NCEA qualification.

NCEA is:

- three separate qualifications - NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3. Students usually begin studying for NCEA Level 1 in Year 11 and continue through Years 12 and 13 (from ages 15 through to 18). NCEA enables students to prepare for the full range of pathways that lead to further study, training and employment. NCEA Level 2 recognised as the key foundation level qualification.
- a flexible qualification designed to recognise student achievement across a wide range of contexts and for a wide range of purposes. NCEA challenges all students, including the most able and highly motivated. NCEA also provides schools and kura the flexibility to develop a range of courses and programmes to suit the needs of their students.

- based on assessment standards that each have a defined credit value. Assessment standards describe what students must know or do to achieve credits. Standards are used to assess different areas of knowledge and skills at the three levels of NCEA.
- a qualification listed on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. As with all listed qualifications, it is regularly reviewed.

It is important that students select their courses and standards carefully, so that their NCEA qualification supports them in their preferred future pathways. The **Vocational Pathways** and the **University Entrance requirements** – available on our website – provide helpful information about the skills and knowledge that employers, universities and other tertiary education organisations are looking for.

The education system and NCEA

The Aotearoa New Zealand education system is an internationally acknowledged high performing system. The **New Zealand Curriculum** and **Te Marautanga o Aotearoa** are together recognised as a broad and enabling framework. NCEA recognises achievement in both curricula, and together they are the key elements of Aotearoa New Zealand's student-centred education system. The curricula equip schools to provide for the diverse needs of learners and enable students to gain qualifications that prepare them for a full range of learning pathways and employment beyond school.

Assessment standards and NCEA

There are two types of assessment standards in NCEA – achievement standards and unit standards. The Ministry of Education develops the achievement standards, which are based on the achievement objectives of the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. Achievement standards can be assessed internally (by the school) or externally (by NZQA).

Industry Training Organisations and NZQA develop the unit standards. Unit standards are competency based – they recognise capability and competencies in real or realistic settings in mainly vocational areas of learning. All unit standards are internally assessed.

Credits and NCEA

The NCEA qualifications are based on credits. Every standard has a defined credit value; one credit represents approximately 10 hours of teaching, learning and assessment. This includes teaching time, homework and assessment time.

Students need a total of 80 credits for each NCEA qualification:

- **NCEA Level 1** – 80 credits at any Level, including 10 credits in literacy and 10 credits in numeracy.
- **NCEA Level 2** – 60 credits at Level 2 or above, plus 20 credits from Level 1 or above (the Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements must also be met).
- **NCEA Level 3** – 60 credits at Level 3 or above, plus 20 credits from Level 2 or above (the Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements must also be met).



More about NCEA

Find out more about how NCEA works on our website at www.nzqa.govt.nz/how-ncea-works, where you can also watch a short animated video on how NCEA works or download our brochure 'Understanding NCEA'. NCEA is well-recognised overseas - see www.nzqa.govt.nz/international-recognition-of-ncea for more information.

International students can also download the 'Study in New Zealand' brochure. The brochure is available in English and translated into six languages.

Contact us:

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