



NCEA – internal and external assessment

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Who is this factsheet for?

Students, parents and whānau.

NCEA provides flexible assessment opportunities

Schools, wharekura and tertiary education organisations can use the flexibility of the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) to engage and motivate all students. Achievement standards are either assessed internally in schools by teachers during the year or the standard is assessed externally, generally through an examination at the end of the year. Unit standards are all assessed internally.

Internal assessment

Internal assessment:

- is a valid way to assess some particular skills and knowledge. For example, where students are required to make a speech, carry out a historical investigation or conduct a science experiment
- provides an authentic way to assess students in realistic situations
- enables students to work in familiar surroundings, with an appropriate amount of time to show what

they can achieve. Teachers are given guidance by NZQA to help them design and conduct the assessment.

- is flexible. Teachers can design assessment tasks that are appropriate for the standard. Assessment can take place closer to the teaching, and schools can consider other activities going on in the school when deciding when to assess.

Checking internal assessment decisions for national consistency

NZQA uses a process of external moderation to monitor accuracy and consistency of schools' internal assessment. The moderators quality assure schools' internal assessment decisions.

Schools are required to have a robust process to ensure that the grades awarded have been checked against the standard. This is called internal moderation. Teachers are required to have a second subject expert verify a sample of marked work to confirm that the teacher's judgements are consistent. Schools must do this before they report the results to NZQA.

NZQA reviews the assessment systems of secondary schools at least once every four years to ensure that assessment is valid, fair, consistent, reliable, to the national standard and in accordance with The Assessment (including Examination) Rules for schools with Consent to Assess (6.3). NZQA can withdraw a school's Consent to Assess if it is not confident in a school's process.

External assessment

Up to three standards in a subject can be externally assessed. Externally assessed standards are either assessed by examinations, or through the submission of portfolios or formal reports (e.g. Technology and Visual Arts).

External assessment:

- is independent, as the assessment is set and marked by NZQA
- has inter-school reliability because all students are assessed using the same resources under the same conditions, at the same time
- is monitored to ensure inter-year consistency
- supports the development of assessment skills in schools by training between 2000 and 2500 teachers as examination developers and markers.

Examinations are held in November/December each year. The process of developing valid examinations takes about 18 months. Examiners and materials developers write examinations and produce draft assessment schedules.

Ensuring valid results from external assessment

Materials critiquers, independent checkers and subject matter checkers critique the examinations. NZQA National Assessment Facilitators and Editors also critique and manage various aspects of the examination.

The marking process includes checks and balances to ensure all examination results are accurate and fair. The panel leader and a senior marker (checkmarker) mark student scripts from the current year and compare them with student scripts from the previous year(s) to benchmark the examination. The assessment schedule is then approved for marking.

Profiles of expected performance are guides to support the panel leader in ensuring results are consistent from year to year by using historical, statistical and professional information. The panel leader trains the markers on the panel how to use the assessment schedule, to ensure that all scripts are marked consistently.

All aspects of marking are verified to ensure that all scripts are marked in the same way and that the scores have been correctly totalled. The panel leader and checkmarker view a percentage of all marked scripts and provide feedback to individual markers during this process. Marking is monitored daily by NZQA National Assessment Facilitators.

NZQA returns marked examination scripts to students. Students can apply to NZQA for a review (check or recount) or a reconsideration (full re-mark) if they believe the results are not correct. There is a fee for reconsiderations.



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' booklet on the **brochures and videos page**. The booklet is available in English and translated into six languages.

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