

# A GUIDE TO NCEA



NEW ZEALAND **QUALIFICATIONS** AUTHORITY  
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

**QUALIFY FOR THE FUTURE WORLD**  
KIA NOHO TAKATŪ KI TŌ ĀMUA AO!



ENGLISH

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## My National Student Number (NSN):

Your school can tell you your National Student Number.

You use this to register on the NZQA website to see your results and qualifications.

To log in or register, go to [www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz) and click 'Login' in the top-right corner.

# 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 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF).

Learning from both the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (the Māori-medium curriculum) contributes to NCEA and the University Entrance award.

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

**Q**

## The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA):

- manages the New Zealand Qualifications Framework
- administers NCEA
- quality assures non-university education providers
- is responsible for qualifications recognition and standard-setting for some unit standards.



## Planning your study

The courses you choose to take at school can affect what you can do when you leave. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) related courses, as well as English and/or Te Reo Māori, help keep your options open to a wide range of careers.

There are many other courses available to study that will help you achieve NCEA, but these vary across schools.

If you're unsure about what courses you should take, it's best to talk to your subject teachers and deans, who can answer your questions about NCEA and help you plan your study to achieve your individual goals.

# Achieving NCEA

## Levels

NCEA Level 1 will provide you with a solid foundation of 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, along with the University Entrance (UE) award, is what you will need to enter most university and tertiary programmes.

Most Year 11 students start at Level 1 of NCEA, and progress to Level 2 in Year 12 and Level 3 in Year 13. It's not unusual to study at a mix of different levels, depending on your learning programme. For example, Year 12 students may do most of their courses at Level 2, but start a new course at Level 1 or study another course at Level 3 because they are good at it.

You can start working towards NCEA Level 2 before you gain NCEA Level 1.



**Watch a video on how NCEA works at:**

[www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/understanding-ncea/how-ncea-works/video/](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/understanding-ncea/how-ncea-works/video/)



## Credits and standards

You need to gain a total of 80 credits to achieve your NCEA Level 1, 2 or 3. You can gain these credits by being assessed against standards. Standards assess different areas of knowledge and skills within each subject. A standard might require you to analyse a text, give a speech, or develop a business case. Included among the standards available are also specific standards that recognise Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). Schools decide what courses to provide, and which standards to make available in those courses.

You can gain credits by showing that you know something or can do something. For example, the Level 1 standard 'Apply algebraic procedures in solving problems' will give you 4 credits when you are assessed against that standard and can show you have learned that skill.

You can also gain credits from some activities away from the classroom. For example, getting your driver licence, completing work or study programmes, and studying through a trades academy can all help you gain credits.

1

### To achieve NCEA Level 1, you need:

- 60 credits at Level 1 or above, and
- 10 literacy credits, and
- 10 numeracy credits.

2

### To achieve NCEA Level 2, you need:

- 60 credits at Level 2 or above, and
- 20 credits at any level, and
- the Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements must also be met.

3

### To achieve NCEA Level 3, you need:

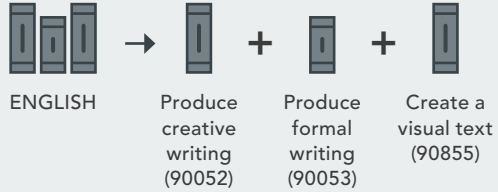
- 60 credits at Level 3 or above, and
- 20 credits at Level 2 or above, and
- the Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements must also be met.

Your **school** offers **courses** to gain NCEA at **Level 1, 2 or 3**



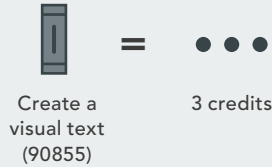
**COURSES**

Each **course** is made up of **standards**



**STANDARDS**

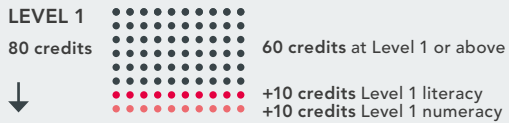
Each **standard** is worth a certain number of **credits**



**CREDITS**

**Credits** count towards NCEA at **Level 1, 2 or 3**

You must also meet the Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements to **achieve Level 2 or 3**



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## Literacy and numeracy credits

You will need a minimum of 10 literacy credits (reading, writing, speaking and listening skills) and 10 numeracy credits (number, measurement, statistics, or other mathematical skills) to achieve each level of NCEA. You only need to gain these credits once. This means that once you have gained the credits, you have already met the literacy and numeracy requirements for NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3.

There are many standards that will allow you to demonstrate your literacy and numeracy skills. These can be completed in a range of different courses and can be achievement standards or a specified group of unit standards (achievement and unit standards are explained here). If you're unsure which standards you can take to gain your literacy and numeracy credits, talk to your school.





# Assessment

All the work you do for NCEA will be assessed by either internal assessment or external assessment.

Internal assessment is when your work is assessed throughout the year by teachers at your school.

External assessment is when your work is assessed by NZQA. This includes your end-of-year examinations, the Mathematics Common Assessment Task (MCAT), and portfolios of work for some courses – for example, Visual Arts and Technology courses.

There are two types of standard you can be assessed on: unit standards and achievement standards.

Unit standards are only assessed internally, and usually assess a skill. Achievement standards can be assessed internally or externally.

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

## There are four possible grades:

- N** Not achieved (N) for not meeting the criteria of the standard
- A** Achieved (A) for meeting the criteria of the standard
- M** Merit (M) for meeting the criteria of the standard to a very good level
- E** Excellence (E) for meeting the criteria of the standard to an outstanding level.

## Examinations

Around November and December each year, NCEA examinations take place. This is where you will be assessed against up to three external achievement standards in a three-hour session for each subject.

Examination results are normally released in mid-January, and you will be able to check your final NCEA results and qualifications on the NZQA website.



## Digital examinations

NZQA is developing digital NCEA examinations with the aim of having all examinations available online by 2020.

Schools have the option of participating in a range of Digital Trial and Pilot examinations for a selection of subjects. If your school is participating, you'll have the opportunity to experience examinations in a digital format, either through trial examinations (meaning it doesn't count towards your NCEA) or as pilot examinations (which do count towards NCEA).



# Endorsements

To reflect higher achievement, you should aim to earn endorsements for your NCEA courses and qualifications. There are two types of endorsement: course endorsement and certificate endorsement.

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## Course endorsement

Course endorsement shows high achievement in a particular course or courses.

When you gain 14 or more credits at Merit (or a mix of Merit and Excellence) in a course **in a single year**, you will be awarded a Merit endorsement for that course. For example, if you gain 14 or more credits at Merit in your Cook Islands Māori course, you will be awarded Merit for Cook Islands Māori.

When you gain 14 or more credits at Excellence in a course in a single year, you will be awarded an Excellence endorsement for that course.

To be awarded an endorsement, in most courses you need three credits from internal assessment and three from external assessment. Exceptions are Physical Education, Religious Education and Level 3 Visual Arts.

Not all subjects will have a course endorsement and each course is set by your school. They decide which standards make up the course.

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## Certificate endorsement

Certificate endorsement shows high achievement in the qualification.

When you gain 50 or more credits at Excellence at the level of the certificate or above, your NCEA certificate will be endorsed with Excellence.

If you gain 50 or more credits at Merit at the level of the certificate or above, or if you gain 50 or more credits at a mix of Merit and Excellence, your NCEA certificate will be endorsed with Merit.

Credits for an endorsed NCEA certificate (Levels 1, 2 and 3) can be gained over more than one year.

# University Entrance

University Entrance (UE) is the minimum requirement to attend a New Zealand university. To qualify for UE, you will need all of the following:

- NCEA Level 3
- 14 credits in each of three approved subjects at Level 3. Check the NZQA website for the list of approved subjects.
- UE Literacy – 10 credits at Level 2 or above, made up of:
  - 5 credits in reading
  - 5 credits in writing.
- UE Numeracy – 10 credits at Level 1 or above (the same as the requirement for NCEA numeracy).

Check the NZQA website for the list of standards that meet these requirements.

Universities have their own requirements for admission to programmes. Check with the university you wish to attend what its requirements are.

The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (the Māori-medium curriculum) both contribute to NCEA and University Entrance.

University Entrance is usually awarded in January.



# New Zealand Scholarship

New Zealand Scholarship offers recognition and monetary reward, and provides a further challenge for particularly able students. If you enter for New Zealand Scholarship, you will be assessed against a standard by either a written and/or spoken examination, or by submitting a portfolio or report of work from throughout the year. Talk to your school if you wish to enter New Zealand Scholarship.

# Vocational Pathways

The Vocational Pathways provide new ways to achieve NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3, and develop pathways that progress to further study, training and employment. They cover six broad sectors:

- Manufacturing and Technology
- Construction and Infrastructure
- Primary Industries
- Social and Community Services

- Service Industries
- Creative Industries.

A Vocational Pathways Award recognises your completion of a particular pathway. The Awards show how your achievement relates to the learning or skills training that employers are seeking, and you can receive an award for each pathway you complete.

## Overview

To get vocational pathways awarded, you need to achieve:



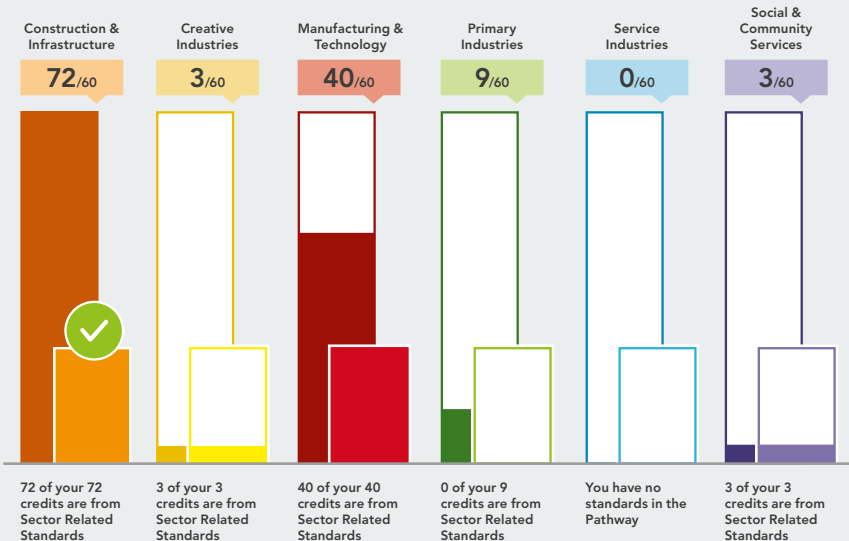
NCEA Literacy



NCEA Numeracy



NCEA Level 2



# Useful resources

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## New Zealand Qualifications Authority

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)  
0800 697 296

Information about NCEA including:

- subject information
- subject resources
- examination timetables.

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## Ministry of Education

[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

Information about education in New Zealand and the National Curriculum.

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## Youth Guarantee

[www.youthguarantee.net.nz](http://www.youthguarantee.net.nz)

Information about possible Vocational Pathways.

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## Careers NZ

[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)  
0800 222 733

- Explore 400+ job profiles
- Get career ideas and write a CV
- Browse study and training options
- Speak to a careers expert

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## NCEA Guide App

You can download the App for free from iTunes or the Google Play Store.

The NCEA Guide App is for parents, whānau and employers. It provides quick and easy access to key information about NCEA.

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## Contact us

Phone: **0800 697 296**

Website: [www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)

Email: [helpdesk@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:helpdesk@nzqa.govt.nz)



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