

What is NCEA?

NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS

AUTHORITY



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MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

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NCEA is the main qualification for secondary school students in New Zealand.

NCEA stands for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement. And it comes in three levels: 1, 2 and 3 which students work through from years 11 to 13.

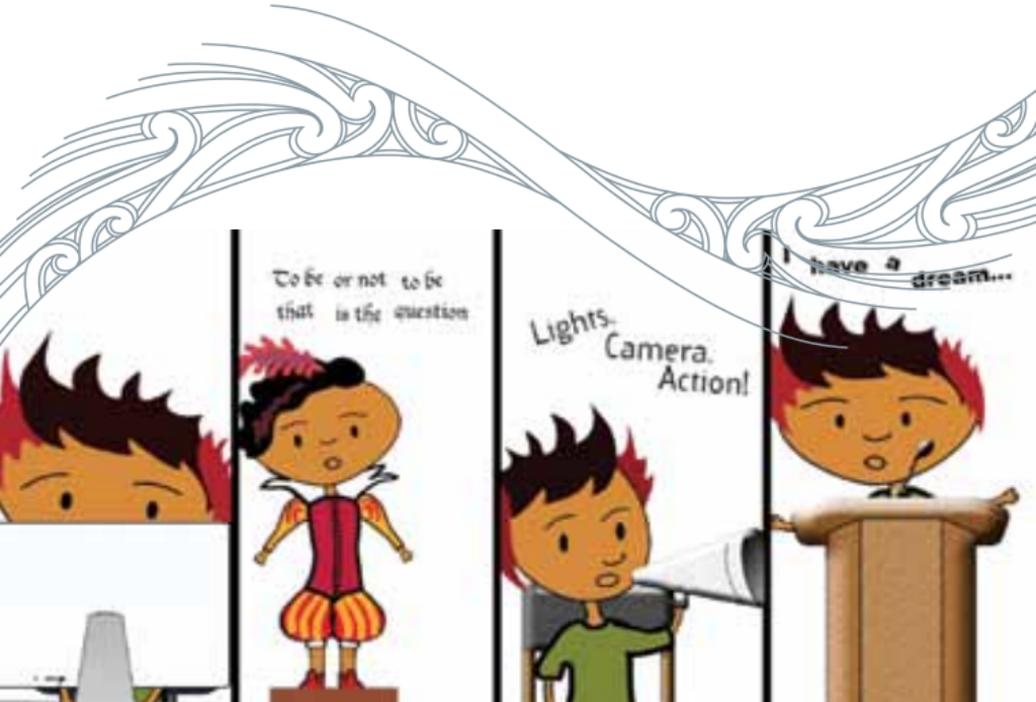
NCEA is for all students – some may be heading for university, others may be planning to do an apprenticeship, still others may want to learn mostly practical skills and get a job straight away after leaving school. Your subject choices will be influenced by the path you're thinking of taking.

Earning credits

In the old days students sat a single three-hour exam at the end of the year to find out what they'd learned in a subject.



With NCEA, there are still important national exams (called external assessment) at the end of the year but you can also be tested, or assessed, throughout the year – that's called internal assessment because it happens "in" school.



Internal assessment may sound like a lot more work, but there are some things you can't test in a sit-down exam – Why just write about a science experiment when you could do the experiment in the lab and see the real results; Why write about delivering your mihi in te reo Māori when you could stand up and say it?

With NCEA, subjects are divided up into all the things you need to know and be able to do – they're called standards because they set the standard.

Each standard is worth credits – and credits count towards the final qualification. A subject such as level 1 English may be made up of between four and ten standards, worth 20 or more credits.

Instead of doing one three-hour exam on the whole subject of English, a course could include a standard in formal writing such as a job application and another in creating and delivering a speech. Some of these standards will be tested in an exam at the end of the year and some will be assessed during the year.

To get a level 1 NCEA qualification, you need to achieve 80 credits. These also need to include some standards in reading, writing and maths (literacy and numeracy).

You can build up credits during the year – or even over more than one year – and once you've got credits, they last forever. And you can keep track of how many credits you're stacking up as you go along.

Aim high

When you get your results, you'll know how many credits you've got – but your results tell you a lot more than just – “NCEA level 1, passed.”

Your results show the result for each standard – with a letter next to each one – N, A, M, E.

They stand for Not Achieved, Achieved, Merit, and Excellence. They tell you how well you did in reaching the standard.

The thing to remember is that these days E is for Excellence! In the old days an E was bad news.

You won't get more credits for getting Merit and Excellence but there are good reasons for aiming high.

If you get enough credits with Merit or Excellence – at least 50 – you'll get Merit or Excellence included on your NCEA qualification – it's called Certificate Endorsement.

It's a good reason to keep aiming high, even after you've reached 80 credits.

Merit and Excellence can also be useful if you're doing well in a particular subject, or 'course'.



If you get 14 credits with Merit (or Excellence) in a particular course e.g. maths, or music you will get Course Endorsement.

That will help when you're showing results to people after you've left school – with getting a job or getting into the tertiary course of your choice.

Journey in the right direction

Your time at secondary school is bit like a journey. It might start off feeling like you're in a foreign land but you'll soon start becoming more familiar with the territory, exploring new places and ideas.





Just like any journey it helps to have an idea where you want to go, and a map so you can plan how to get there. You want to know that the subjects you're studying are taking you in the right direction. It's important to think about what subjects you're getting credits in and to try to aim high.

If you're aiming for a job or tertiary course, you need to get credits in the standards that will be useful to employers or that the university or other tertiary institution will expect to see in your results. A particular combination of subjects, mostly at level 3, make up University Entrance.



But just because you've got University Entrance doesn't mean you can just turn up for any university course you like. These days universities want to see lots of Merits or Excellences in your results – another good reason for aiming high.

Summary

Make sure the standards you are studying are going to give you the results you need to do what you want to do when you leave school. Because NCEA is recognised internationally, it means you can even study at an overseas university.

And make sure you're getting your best possible results – as many Excellences or Merits as possible.

If you've got questions, discuss them with your parents or whanau. Or talk to the experts: Ask your teachers, go to the NZQA website – www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea – or phone NZQA on 0800 697 296





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