

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH

NCEA



A parent's
guide to
understanding
NCEA



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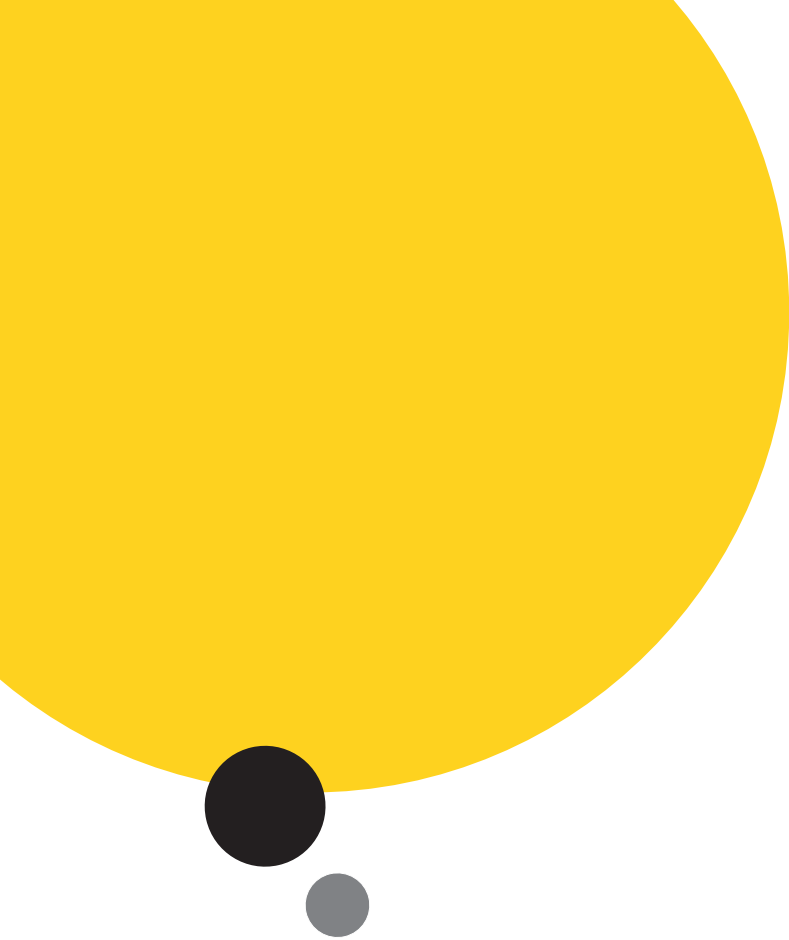
NCEA can be like a foreign language to parents who are more familiar with School Certificate, Sixth Form, and University Entrance. We want to make it easy for parents to understand so they can be sure their child is achieving the best results possible.

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GRANT LANDER
Headmaster
St Paul's Collegiate School

IN THIS GUIDE, WE EXPLAIN:

- 1 NCEA IN A NUTSHELL
- 2 EDUCATION JARGON EXPLAINED
- 3 HOW STUDENTS ARE ASSESSED
- 4 WHAT'S REQUIRED TO PASS
- 5 THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDORSEMENTS



NCEA IN A NUTSHELL

The official secondary school qualification in New Zealand is NCEA. It was phased in between 2002 and 2004, replacing School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and University Entrance Bursaries and Scholarships.

The NCEA qualification system has been set up to equip your child with the skills and knowledge he or she needs to pursue further tertiary study and embark on a successful career. It caters to each student's strengths and allows them to take charge of their own learning.



NCEA

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

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The NCEA grading system is completely different to the School C system. NCEA measures different types of knowledge and understanding, rather than just whether the answer is correct or not.

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PETER HAMPTION
Deputy Headmaster
St Paul's Collegiate School

There are three different NCEA levels.

| LEVEL | TYPICALLY STUDIED AT | PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS |
|--------|----------------------|---------------------|
| NCEA 1 | Year 11 | Fifth form |
| NCEA 2 | Year 12 | Sixth form |
| NCEA 3 | Year 13 | Seventh form |

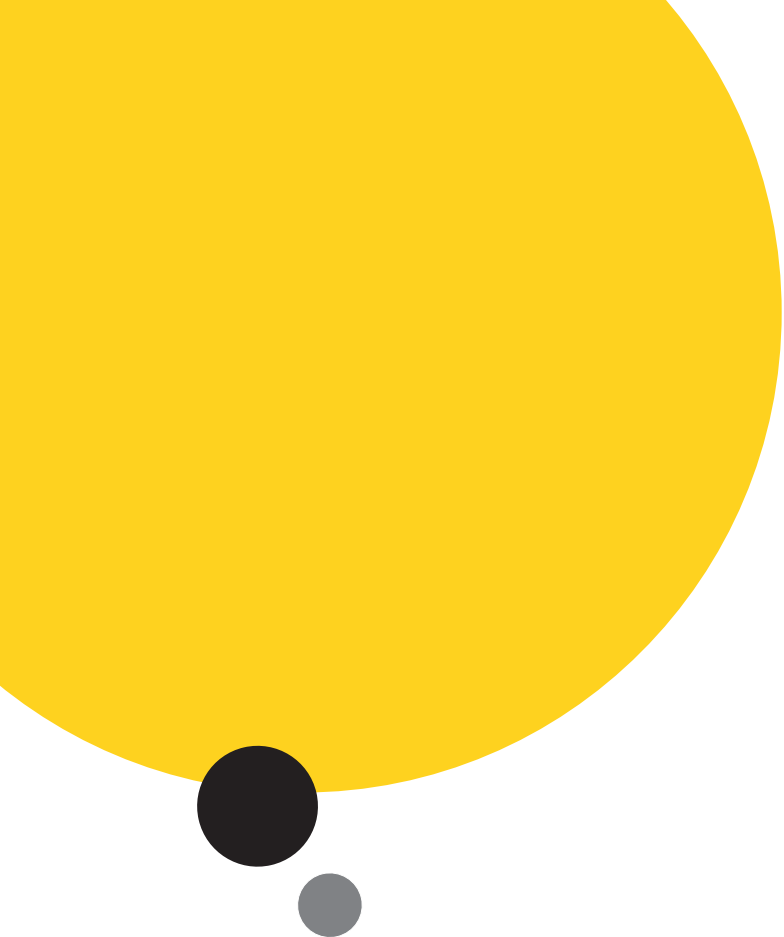
In each level, students usually study **five to six subjects**. These subjects are broken down into standards, which test students on a range of skills and knowledge pertaining to the individual subject. Through a combination of **internal and external** assessments, students receive **credits** for each of these standards. Students must achieve a specific number of credits to pass each level.





Although the secondary school system has changed over the last decade there are a number of similarities between NCEA and School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and University Bursary qualifications.

- Students are assessed through a combination of internal assessment and exams.
- Students can study at a level higher than their school year.
- NCEA is recognised by employers and used for selection by universities and polytechnics, both in New Zealand and overseas.
- NCEA allows students to be graded on a specific skill within a subject, rather than receiving a final overall result.
- Students may have the opportunity to resit internal aspects of standards they have not achieved.
- Students have greater control over their independent learning.



EDUCATION **JARGON** EXPLAINED



SUBJECTS

Students are required to study at least five subjects each year. Subjects are areas of study like English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Drama and so forth.



ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

Achievement standards are an assessment of a student's competency, skills and knowledge within academic-based subjects and reflect the requirements of the NCEA curriculum. There are a set number of standards per subject. Standards test a student's understanding of a topic within a subject. Each standard has a set number of credits that are awarded once a student demonstrates this knowledge. A standard may be in the form of an internal or external assessment (more about this on page 11).



UNIT STANDARDS

Unit standards test a student's competency, skills and knowledge in a vocational subject areas like Construction or Electronics.



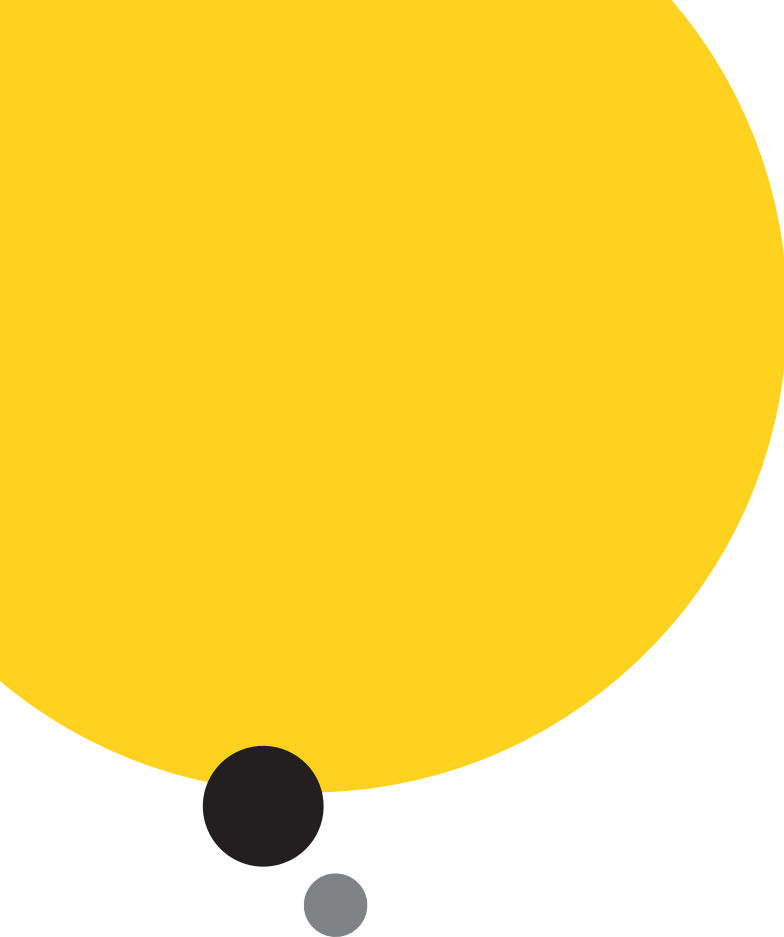
CREDITS

Credits are the unit value given to each standard. Most standards are worth three to five credits and subjects generally offer between 18 and 26 credits. Students accumulate credits throughout the year with the aim of gaining their NCEA level certificate. Each NCEA level has different credit requirements for students to pass (more about this on page 14).



LITERACY AND NUMERACY CREDITS

Students must also achieve literacy and numeracy credits. Literacy credits reflect a student's writing, speaking and listening skills while numeracy credits reflect their number, measurement and statistical aptitude. These credits can be attained from a range of different subjects. Students must acquire a minimum of 10 literacy and 10 numeracy credits to pass their Level 1 certificate. To gain University Entrance, they must then pass an additional 10 literacy credits at Level 2 or higher - 5 reading and 5 writing.



HOW STUDENTS ARE **ASSESSED**



NCEA's assessments are different to the old School Certificate system which was completely exam-based. Now, students sit both internal and external assessments. At the beginning of each new standard, students are informed of the criteria they need to meet and the level of work they need to produce in order to achieve that standard. They will be required to sit a set number of internal and/or external assessments per standard course, which will award credits towards their NCEA. Students are required to accumulate a set number of credits to pass each level of their NCEA (turn to page 14 for more on credit requirements).

IMPORTANT FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Having both forms of assessment plays to the strength of the student. If a student struggles with exams, they can rely heavily on internal assessments in order to confidently pass their NCEA.
- If a student is aiming for a subject endorsement they must complete both internal and external assessments. However, there are some exceptions where courses are completely internally assessed like Physical Education.
- Some university degrees require a certain percentage of external assessments to be completed. It's best for students to consult with their dean and careers advisor when choosing subjects and assessment types to ensure they meet the criteria of their dream university.



INTERNAL ASSESSMENTS

Internal assessments are completed throughout the year and are designed by a student's school. Students usually have a set time frame (months or weeks) to complete an assessment rather than a few hours like an external assessment/exam. Internal assessments are very similar to university assessments, preparing students for life beyond secondary school. They may be asked to complete an art portfolio, research report or carry out a scientific investigation.



EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS

External assessments (or exams) are held during a set time frame at a set time across New Zealand. Typically there is one external assessment per achievement standard. External assessments require students to recall information and apply knowledge in context and link ideas.



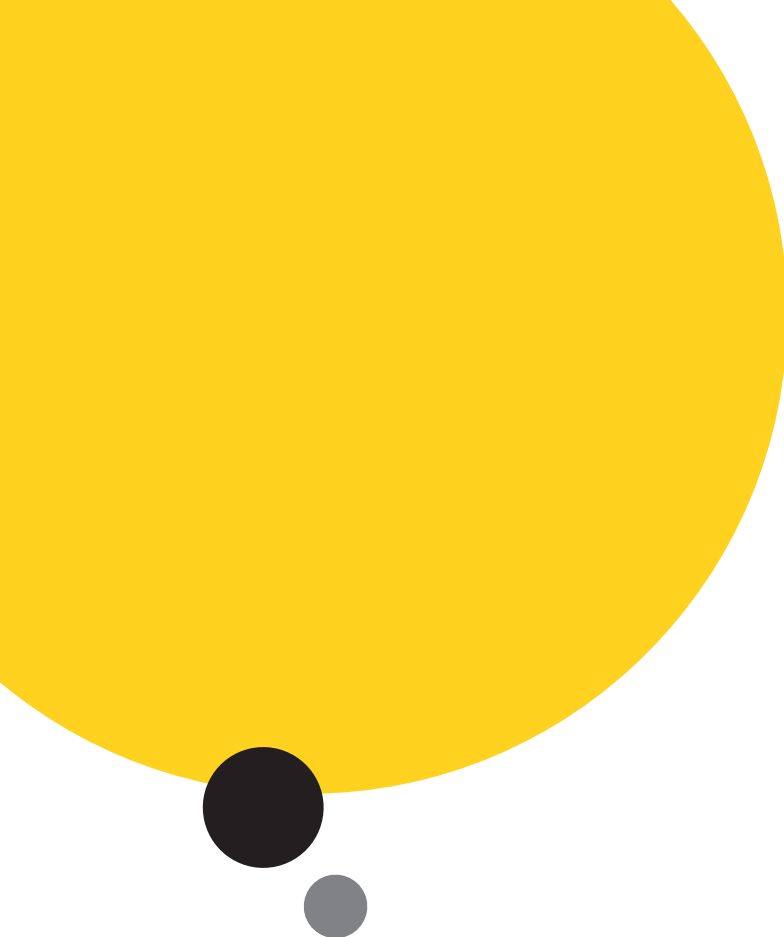
Students can be awarded four different grades in NCEA that demonstrate their ability. This is very different to the old School Certificate courses which awarded students with grades from A through to E. When a student was awarded an E under the School C system this meant failure but with NCEA this is the highest grade that a student can attain.

| | | |
|----------|---------------------|---|
| N | NOT ACHIEVED | Not demonstrating understanding or knowledge of the subject at the depth required |
| A | ACHIEVED | Demonstrates understanding or knowledge of the subject through describing |
| M | MERIT | Demonstrates in-depth understanding or knowledge of the subject through explaining |
| E | EXCELLENCE | Demonstrates comprehensive understanding and knowledge of the subject through being able to apply, compare, contrast and justify. This is a higher order of thinking. |



WHAT THESE GRADES MEAN FOR YOUR TEEN

- Achieved results are good, it means your teen is meeting the criteria to pass but when applying for university or a job the more Merit or Excellence credits a student has the better. This will show universities and employers they can work at a level above average. It's important to note that if your teen is completing unit standards then the grades issued are generally only Achieved or Not Achieved so don't be disheartened with Achieved results in this case.
- If your teen has a particular tertiary degree in-mind, they must look into the minimum grade criteria for this degree. Some degrees require a certain number of Excellence or Merit credits in particular subjects in addition to meeting the University Entrance requirements.
- Thousands of university scholarships are on offer each year and there is a high chance that if your teen meets the right requirements (including credit requirements) they will be awarded one. Have them look up the requirements of a number of scholarships to see their potential.



WHAT'S **REQUIRED**
TO PASS

To obtain NCEA, students must gain 80 credits across a range of subjects, but these don't all have to come from the current level of study. Students can study across each level at any one time and credits will be counted towards an NCEA certificate.

NCEA LEVEL 1

To pass Level 1 your teen must acquire at least 80 credits total across Levels 1, 2 and 3. A minimum of 10 literacy credits and 10 numeracy credits must be included in the total 80 credits required.

NCEA LEVEL 2

If your teen has completed Level 1 then they are required to complete 60 credits at Level 2 or higher. 20 of the credits they achieved in Level 1 will be rolled over to their Level 2 certificate to help them reach their '80 credit' requirement.

If your teen hasn't completed Level 1 then they must complete 80 credits. 60 credits can be from Level 2 or higher while an additional 20 can be from any of the three levels. They must also pass the Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements.

NCEA LEVEL 3

If your teen has completed Level 2 then they are only required to complete 60 credits at Level 3 or higher. 20 of the credits they achieved in Level 2 will be rolled over to their Level 3 certificate to help them reach their '80 credit' requirement.

If your teen hasn't completed Level 2 then they must complete 80 credits. 60 credits can be from Level 3 or higher while an additional 20 can be from Level 2 or higher.



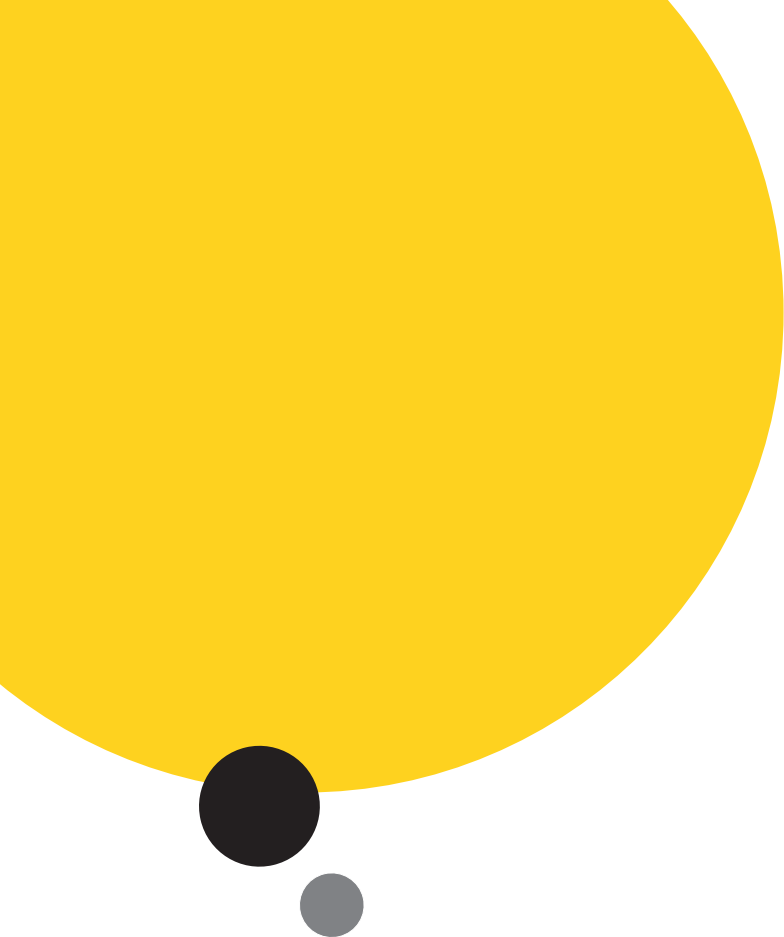
UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE

Passing NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 doesn't guarantee University Entrance (UE). It's important that if your teen wants to go to university they understand the requirements to meet UE and they track their progress throughout the year to make sure they meet the criteria. Even if your teen doesn't want to go to university, gaining UE should be encouraged so they can keep their options open.

To gain UE students must:

- Pass NCEA Level 3
- Attain 14 credits each from three Level 3 'University Entrance approved' subjects
- Acquire 10 literacy credits - 5 reading, 5 writing - at Level 2 or above in addition to the 10 literacy credits acquired at Level 1
- Have met their Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements.

The national average for students gaining University Entrance (UE) in 2014 was only about 40%. It's important you and your teen understand the requirements.



THE IMPORTANCE OF **ENDORSEMENTS**



A student must attain a minimum of 80 credits to pass each NCEA level, but there is a way for top students to distinguish themselves. This can be done through Certificates of Endorsement and Subject Endorsement which can be attained through achievement standard courses.

CERTIFICATE ENDORSEMENT

A student who achieves Level 1 with 50 or more credits at Excellence level will be awarded a Level 1 Certificate with an Excellence endorsement. A student who achieves Level 1 with 50 or more credits at Merit or higher will be awarded a Level 1 Certificate with a Merit endorsement. The same applies for Levels 2 and 3. Certificate Endorsements work favorably when applying for university. Generally students who achieve 80 Excellence credits at Level 2 or higher will have their pick of university and degree.

SUBJECT ENDORSEMENT

Endorsements are also available at subject level. A student who achieves 14 or more credits at Merit or higher within a given year will receive a Merit endorsement in that course. A student who achieves 14 or more credits at Excellence level within a given year will receive an Excellence endorsement for that course. At least three of these credits must be from externally assessed standards and three must be from internally assessed standards. (Physical Education, Religious Studies and Level 3 Visual Arts are exempt from this condition).



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