

NZQA

New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Mana Tohu Matauranga O Aotearoa

Home > Studying in New Zealand > Secondary school and NCEA

Secondary school and NCEA

New Zealand students must attend school until they are 16 years old. Study at secondary school begins when students are 12 or 13 years old and lasts for about five years, from Year 9 to Year 13. Secondary school is also known as high school or college.

Most secondary schools in New Zealand are state-owned, and teach a nationally set curriculum. There are also privately owned secondary schools. Most privately owned schools are based on specific philosophic or religious traditions.

New Zealand's secondary schools offer national qualifications that are recognised by tertiary institutions in New Zealand and internationally. In New Zealand, all national secondary qualifications are monitored and checked by government and sector agencies.

You can read more about New Zealand's secondary school system at:

[Primary and Secondary schools in NZ \(Ministry of Education website\)](#)

[Our school system \(Education New Zealand website\)](#)

National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)

NCEA (the National Certificate of Educational Achievement) is the main secondary school qualification in New Zealand.

NCEA is actually three certificates: it can be awarded at Levels 1, 2 and 3. Students usually begin studying for their NCEA Level 1 in Year 11 and continue through Years 12 and 13 (from ages 15 through to 18).

Many vocational qualifications are also offered in secondary schools. These include, for example, the National Certificate of Tourism, the National Certificate in Computing, and the National Certificate of Motor Engineering.

Read useful advice for [Choosing a course or subjects at school](#).

More about NCEA: links, brochures and videos in different languages

You can find out more about how NCEA works at [How NCEA works](#).

NCEA is well-recognised overseas. For more information, see [International recognition of NCEA](#).

You can also download brochures about NCEA, or watch a short animated video on how NCEA works, on our [brochures and videos page](#).

If you're an international student, you 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. To find our brochures or videos, see [NZQA brochures and videos](#).

Scholarship

A New Zealand Scholarship award recognises high-achieving students. Students attempting this separate assessment are usually in Year 13. For more information, see [New Zealand Scholarship](#).

Secondary school statistics

NZQA also provides open data on how secondary schools perform in NCEA and in other national qualifications.

You can view a variety of reports, going back several years, at [Secondary school statistics](#).

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