

## #12 How are NCEA results recognised overseas?

### Introduction

New Zealand's education system is world-leading as recognised by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

A number of international agreements ensure NCEA results are understood and accepted overseas.

NZQA is part of the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) network. NARIC is consulted by tertiary providers and deals with academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study in the member states of the European Union, the European Economic Area, and Central and Eastern Europe.

NCEA results are used to calculate the International Tertiary Admission Ranking System (ITARS). This ensures a unified approach when New Zealand school leavers apply for entry to foreign universities.

### Equivalency arrangements

NZQA has equivalency arrangements with many countries. Including:

#### Australia

- NCEA Level 3 is recognised as broadly equivalent to Senior Secondary Certificates of Education.
- NCEA Level 3 results are used in the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank for entrance to all Australian universities.
- When an application is received from a New Zealand school leaver, the Australian Tertiary Admission Centres contact NZQA directly. Results are sent from early January each year.

#### Britain

- NCEA Level 3 is recognised as broadly equivalent to General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-Level.

### Comments from the sector

*“ If you look good here, you can look good in the United States, but you need to be able to make your case. You need to understand that Merit and Excellence results are not A and B grades in American terms – in effect they are both A grades. You need to be able to show how high you come in national rankings and there are ways to do that. NZQA can help and of course Scholarship results are brilliant for this purpose – you can easily prove you are in the top few percent in New Zealand. ”*

Professor Jeff Smith, University of Otago  
 Formerly Associate Dean of Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA

## Equivalency arrangements CONT.

- NCEA is listed in the International Qualifications for Entry to Higher Education published annually by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). This reference guide is used by UK tertiary providers to evaluate school leaving qualifications. It is also used by other countries as an authoritative guide.

### Germany

- Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German states have recommended that German universities accept NCEA results.
- German entry requirements are similar to New Zealand's but require results in at least five subjects.

### Europe

- NARIC recognises that University Entrance and NCEA Level 3 (with Merits/Excellences in subjects to be studied at higher education institutions) is comparable to those with the overall GCE Advanced standard.

### Thailand

- Students completing high school qualifications outside Thailand need a Matthayom 6 equivalence certificate, issued by Thailand's Bureau of Educational Testing (BET).
- NZQA and BET have agreed on equivalence criteria for NCEA (largely based on NCEA Level 2).

### India

- The Association of Indian Universities recognises NCEA Level 3 as equivalent to its university entrance requirement.

New Zealand's international connections have been reinforced in recent years.

- In 2008 NZQA joined the network established by UNESCO and the Council of Europe to improve the international recognition of qualifications.
- NZQA is now New Zealand's National Education Information Centre, providing information and advice on the New Zealand education system, secondary and tertiary qualifications, and recognition of overseas qualifications.

## The learning experience

*“Almost 100% of our students enter tertiary education, many are awarded national scholarships and many are accepted for competitive courses such as law and health sciences. A growing number are travelling overseas to university and have no trouble gaining entry. NCEA is an excellent qualification and offers a seamless transition to tertiary education.”*

Margaret van Meeuwen, Assistant Principal,  
Diocesan School for Girls, Auckland

*“Students from St Cuthbert's College have been accepted at leading international universities such as Yale, Duke, Brown, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Melbourne. Larissa Eruera (Y12) has won a full scholarship to Arizona University. Sarah Henderson to Pennsylvania State University. Abigail Guthrie to the University of Mississippi.*

*“Girls leaving St Cuthbert's College in 2010 were accepted at Aston University, Birmingham; King's College London; University of Melbourne; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence; University of Sydney; Griffith University, Brisbane; Maharishi University of Management, Iowa; New York Film Academy; and Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts.”*

Website of St Cuthbert's College

## The learning experience

“It’s a complete nonsense to say that our national qualifications system does not give school leavers access to overseas universities. The reality is that a combination of Level 3 NCEA and Scholarship is getting students into top universities.

We have a steady stream of boys going straight from year 13 to top universities around the world, and many go overseas after an undergraduate degree in New Zealand.

- Louis Bollard (year 13 in 2004) went direct to Harvard and later delivered the graduation address for his year.
- Tom McCarthy (2004) went direct to Melbourne University.
- Peter Clark (2005) went to Victoria University of Wellington and in 2010 received a Woolf Fisher Scholarship for post-graduate study at Oxford.
- James Dawson (2006) and Thang Tran (2009) went direct to the Australian National University.
- Alex Ross (2007) received the Doug Myer Scholarship and entered Cambridge.
- Sebastian Wilkins (2007) and Jacob Diggle (2008) went direct to Oxford.
- Victor Torghitescu (2008) went direct to Sydney University.
- Hunter Douglas (2008) was a Robertson Scholar and gained entry to Duke University in the United States.”

Roger Moses, Headmaster, Wellington College

“I chose to stay at Dio for a number of reasons, but probably the most relevant is that I felt NCEA actually provided more intellectual stimulation... the NCEA excellence type questions are a lot more interesting and thought-provoking...”

“I have found NCEA to be perfectly adequate preparation for university. I’m reading physics and philosophy at Oxford, so my peers all sat the A Levels, and I certainly haven’t found that I struggle in comparison with them. In fact, I think that if anything the NCEA Excellence questions, and particularly the further extension provided by scholarship, have made me better prepared than some of the others in terms of dealing with more challenging sorts of questions.”

Emily Adlam left Diocesan School for Girls in 2008. Emily made the conscious decision to stay on at Diocesan for year 13 because she felt the NCEA would challenge her. She is studying Physics and Philosophy at Oxford.

“Phway Aye (Head Girl 2010) has accepted a scholarship to Princeton University, New Jersey. She is studying Law and Political Science and travels to USA in August.”

“Sophie Zang spoke to students about making the transition from Palmerston North Girls’ High School to Auckland University; of applying for and being offered a full fee scholarship to both Columbia, New York, and MIT, Boston. Sophie went on to study at Columbia.”

Website of Palmerston North Girls’ High School, June 2011

## The learning experience

*“I’ve been to the University of Auckland in the past semester, but tomorrow I’m flying all the way to America to study at UC Berkeley in California. I’ll be studying Chemistry and Physics... that’s always been my ambition.”*

Joe Tsai, former Pakuranga College student

*“In 2007 Philippa Draper was awarded the Dickinson College (Pennsylvania) scholarship and has been majoring in Political Science and minoring in Chemistry and Chinese. She spent the second half of 2010 furthering her Chinese studies at Peking University in Beijing.”*

Website of Papanui High School, June 2011

*“Two former Columba College pupils have won prestigious high-paying scholarships which have lured them to study at Australia National University in Canberra this year.*

*Miss Atkinson-Barclay has won an Australian National Undergraduate scholarship worth more than \$NZ16,000 each year, for up to five years of study. ... The 2010 Columba College proxime accessit won the scholarship after receiving NCEA Level 3 endorsed with excellence last year. When staff at Australia National University translated her NCEA results into the Australian format, she was placed in the top bracket of applicants with 99.95 points out of a possible 99.95.*

*Miss Ooi’s Australian National Undergraduate scholarship is worth about \$NZ8,500 each year, for up to four years of study at Australia National University in Canberra. She too received NCEA Level 3 endorsed with excellence and her marks translated to 99.7 points out of the possible 99.95. She plans to study a Bachelor of Science majoring in immunology and microbiology, with the possible addition of computer science, statistics or chemistry. Eventually, she hopes to go into post-graduate medicine.”*

Otago Daily Times, 11 February 2011

*“When our son started at university in California, professors would ask ‘Why do you know this so well?’ He found he was way ahead in many things. Much of what he was doing he’d already covered in NCEA Level 2.*

*Our son did exceptionally well in the standardised admission test in the US, despite not doing the concentrated preparation American kids now go through. He is smart but not a genius – he did that well simply on the basis of what he had learned through NCEA at Rangitoto College.*

*NCEA prepared our son very well for assessments in US universities. They don’t have one-off end-of-year exams – the NCEA assessments that happen during the year better reflect what happens there.”*

Jonny Newbre, mother of Alex Hayashi – left Rangitoto College in 2007 and, later accepted at University of California, Berkeley