



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY  
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

## Survey results of teachers' and candidates' views of the 2006 NCEA and Scholarship assessments and of Principal's Nominees on the procedures surrounding the NCEA

The following are summaries of the results of surveys that the New Zealand Qualifications Authority undertakes annually following the completion of NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship exams for that year. The full results can be obtained from the Qualifications Authority if required. For that purpose please contact:

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## 2006 SURVEY OF NCEA CANDIDATES – SUMMARY

In 2006, candidates being assessed for Level 1, 2 and 3 standards were given the opportunity to comment on their assessment experience. The survey was posted to the home address of 1,800 randomly selected candidates entered for at least one external standard at Levels 1, 2 or 3 (600 students were selected at each level). A total of 388 surveys were returned from NCEA candidates, representing a response rate of 22%.

The 2006 survey sought information on candidates' profiles, experiences of external assessments, perceptions of internal versus external assessment, and examination supervision.

### NCEA respondents' profile

- 30% of candidates responding to the survey were sitting assessments at multiple levels of the National Qualifications Framework.
- More females responded to the survey than males, this was particularly the case at Level 3 where three-quarters of those returning surveys were female.
- Across Levels 1, 2 and 3, the majority of candidates (87%) entered for 80 credits or more. Candidates at Level 2 were entered for slightly more credits on average (121 credits compared to an average of 110 and 118 credits respectively at Levels 1 and 3).
- Overall, three-quarters of candidates entered a mixture of unit and achievement standards. On average, Level 1 and 2 candidates attempted a higher number of unit standards than Level 3 candidates (12 and 11 respectively, compared with 8).
- While only 8% of Level 1 candidates responding to the survey had withdrawn from standards once they were entered for them, this increased to 26% for Level 2 and 38% for Level 3 candidates. The most common reasons given for withdrawing were that they found the standard too difficult, that they did not have the time to understand the standard, or that they did not think they would perform well so sat the standards they were more likely to achieve.

### External assessment experience

- Overall, one-third of candidates reported that '*there were no surprises*' in their external assessments, and just over half claimed they were '*well*' or '*very well prepared*' for their assessments.
- Candidates commonly formed their expectations of external assessments through help from teachers and practice exams. They frequently prepared for their external assessments by doing practice examinations, using textbooks and study guides and working through their class notes.
- Overall, two-thirds of candidates left an examination early. This varied greatly by the level students were being assessed at, with 79% of Level 1 candidates leaving an examination early compared to 56% of Level 2 and 64% of Level 3 candidates.

### Internal versus external assessments

- Overall, 70% of candidates preferred internal assessment to external assessment. The proportion was slightly higher among Level 3 candidates (75%) and slightly lower among Level 1 candidates (64%). Reasons for preferring internal assessment included that it was less stressful, that they had more time to prepare, that the subject was fresh in their minds when assessments were undertaken, and that they could re-sit the assessment.
- Candidates were fairly evenly split over whether they believed internal or external assessment was a better measure of what they had learnt during the year, with 28% reporting that there was no difference. Further, three-quarters (74%) of candidates did not think it was important whether their credits come from internal or external assessment.

### **External assessment supervision**

- Candidates were positive about examination supervision, reporting that the supervisors gave clear instructions before each exam started, and that the supervision was quiet and non-distracting.

## **2006 SURVEY OF SCHOLARSHIP CANDIDATES – SUMMARY**

In 2006, candidates sitting Scholarship examinations were given the opportunity to comment on their assessment experience. The Scholarship candidates' survey was posted to the home addresses of 500 randomly selected candidates entered for at least one Scholarship subject. A total of 155 surveys were returned from Scholarship candidates, representing a response rate of 31%.

The 2006 survey sought information on candidates' profiles, Scholarship examination experience, and examination supervision.

### **Scholarship respondents' profile**

- Most (88%) Scholarship respondents were Year 13 students; the remainder were in Year 12. More females (58%) responded to the Scholarship survey than males (42%).
- Candidates most commonly sat one Scholarship examination (46%), although 14% sat Scholarship in four or five subjects. Candidates commonly reported that they chose to sit Scholarship for the prestige, challenge and monetary reward that passing the Scholarship examination would provide them.
- Scholarship candidates on average attempted 123 credits, slightly higher than the average for level 3 candidates (118).
- Two-in-ten candidates withdrew from a Scholarship subject after they had entered it. The main reason candidates gave for withdrawing was that they lacked the time to study for the exam(s) and that they found the subject too difficult.

### **Scholarship examination experience**

- Half of Scholarship candidates considered the level of difficulty of Scholarship examinations to be '*about right*', but a large proportion (43%) rated them as '*difficult*' or '*very difficult*'.
- One-quarter (24%) claimed they were '*well*' or '*very well prepared*' for their assessments, a further 46% reported they were '*somewhat prepared*'.
- 42% of candidates reported that '*there were no surprises*' in their Scholarship exams and around two-thirds rated the time allocated for the exams as '*about right*'.
- Candidates commonly formed their expectations of their Scholarship exams through help from their teachers, the NZQA website and practice exams. They frequently prepared for their Scholarship exams by doing practice examinations, using textbooks and study guides, attending special classes for Scholarship held by the school, and by working through class notes.
- Three-in-ten candidates left at least one Scholarship examination early.
- Candidates' suggestions for improvements to Scholarship examinations included extending the length of time to complete an exam, providing a better understanding of what to expect, and having more resources available to study.

### **Scholarship examination supervision**

- Scholarship candidates rated the supervision highly, with 98% agreeing that clear instructions were given before each exam started, and 96% agreeing that supervision was non-distracting.

## **2006 TEACHERS' SURVEY – SUMMARY**

In 2006, teachers were given the opportunity to comment on the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and Scholarship external assessments. Five copies of the Level 1, 2 and 3 teachers' surveys were sent to all 441 secondary schools inviting teachers to comment on their subject's examination papers. Schools with students entered for Scholarship (n=310) were also sent five copies of the Scholarship questionnaire. Comments were requested for all subjects at Level 3 and Scholarship, while selected subjects were chosen at Level 1 and 2.

A total of 1463 surveys were returned from NCEA teachers and 340 surveys were returned from Scholarship teachers. Individual subject reports have been produced at each level and provide specific detail on the responses to each standard.

### **NCEA Teachers' Survey**

Overall feedback from teachers was positive about the 2006 NCEA external assessments. Teachers generally agreed that the tasks provided good coverage of the achievement criteria and that questions were communicated clearly and precisely. Most agreed that the instructions were clear and appropriate, and that the assessment specifications were helpful. Slightly fewer agreed that the assessment circulars relating to the format of the assessments were helpful, largely due to a number of teachers not having seen the circulars.

The answer books were rated highly by teachers in terms of planning space, space for full written answers, and room for drawing diagrams. Similarly, resource material (diagrams, photos, etc and accompanying information) was rated highly.

Averaging across all standards and levels, around three-quarters of teachers believed the suggested time to complete all questions in the assessment was sufficient. The remaining teachers on balance were more likely to report that the suggested time was too short than too long.

The reading level was generally rated as suitable for the year level of students, with slightly fewer rating the overall difficulty level as suitable.

Few teachers reported timetable clashes with their subject. Where clashes did occur, the schools managed them by holding one of the examinations in the morning, and the other in the afternoon, with supervision during the break.

### **Scholarship Teachers' Survey**

Feedback from teachers was positive about the 2006 Scholarship examinations. Around nine-in-ten teachers agreed that there was appropriate coverage of the subject, and that question depth and breadth was appropriate. There was also high agreement that questions were communicated clearly and precisely.

While most agreed that the instructions were clear and appropriate. Fewer agreed that assessment specifications and assessment circulars relating to the format of the assessments were helpful.

The answer books and resource material were rated highly by teachers in terms of planning space, space for full written answers, room for drawing diagrams, and clarity of resources (maps, photos etc.).

Averaging across all subjects, around three-quarters of teachers believed the suggested time to complete all questions in the assessment was sufficient. The remaining teachers commonly reported that the suggested time was too short.

Around three-quarters rated the overall difficulty level as suitable for Scholarship students, with the remaining teachers more likely to report it was 'a little too difficult'.

## 2006 PRINCIPAL'S NOMINEES END OF YEAR SURVEY – SUMMARY

In November 2006, an online survey was sent to 441 Principal's Nominees inviting them to give feedback on the various procedures surrounding the NCEA. A total of 243 surveys was returned, representing a response rate of 55%.

The survey consisted of three parts: School Liaison, Monitoring and Reporting; external moderation; and the process for entries and results.

### School Liaison, Monitoring and Reporting

- 91% of responding schools have participated in at least one visit/meeting with their School Relationship Manager (SRM) in 2006. The most common visit was a meeting with the Principal's Nominee (90%), followed by Managing National Assessment (MNA) visits (47%), and staff/HOD/department meetings (43%).
- Having the SRM as the first point of contact was regarded highly by Principal's Nominees, with the majority rating this as *very useful*. Principal's Nominees were also positive about the various SRM visits (such as the MNA visits and staff meetings) with the vast majority rating them as *useful* or *very useful*.
- Most information sources asked about were rated as *useful* or *very useful* by at least 95% of Principal's Nominees; this includes the SRM information email, the school login page, the NZQA website, and the SecQual and Assessment Matters Circulars. Scholarship circulars were rated lower in terms of usefulness, with some Principal's Nominees commenting that they did not have students entered for Scholarship in 2006.
- Just 5% of schools responding to the survey took up NZQA's offer of a presentation in school on consistency for external standards. Comments from those that attended were generally positive. The main reasons given for not taking up the offer were that they did not know about it, they had no time, or that they already had the expertise and knowledge within their school.

### External Moderation

- In 2006 modifications were made to the subject moderator reports based on the feedback received from Principal's Nominees and teachers. The majority (88%) of Principal's Nominees rated these reports as *useful* or *very useful*. The moderation summary report and the national moderator report were given similarly high ratings.
- Most Principal's Nominees considered external moderation to be useful in providing reassurance for teachers and for informing future assessment practice.
- The majority (89%) reported that individual subject moderator reports were returned in a timely manner *most* or *all of the time*.
- In 2006 schools were able to see their moderation history online. The majority (82%) of those responding to the survey had used this tool and generally found it to be useful.

### Entries and Results

- 84% of schools submitted entries and results electronically via email and 16% submitted via the website. Two-thirds of those submitting entries and results electronically used the MUSAC software.
- Most rated the process for submitting entries and results to NZQA as *good* or *excellent*. The responsiveness of NZQA staff to queries about entries and results was rated highly, with 96% rating responsiveness as *good* or *excellent*.