

## Qualifications and their levels

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) is made up of 10 levels. Qualifications are placed at different levels on the framework depending on how difficult they are to earn.

Level 1 qualifications are the easiest to gain, Level 10 qualifications (Doctorates) are the hardest.

### NCEA – Levels 1 to 3

The National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) is the main national qualification for New Zealand's secondary students. NCEA is recognised by employers and is also used by universities and polytechnics to help decide who will be admitted into courses.

To earn NCEA, students must earn a set number of credits at each level, which they gain through achieving standards in the subjects they are studying.



#### Level 1

To earn NCEA Level 1, you must achieve:

- 80 credits at Level 1 or above.
- Of these, eight credits must be in literacy standards and eight credits in numeracy standards. (From 2012, this will rise to 10 credits in each area.)

NCEA Level 1 is usually studied in the third year of secondary school (Year 11).

#### Level 2

To earn NCEA Level 2 you must achieve:

- 60 credits at Level 2 or above; plus
- 20 credits at any level, even if gained for another national qualification.

There are no literacy or numeracy requirements for this qualification.

NCEA Level 2 is usually studied in the fourth year of secondary school (Year 12).

## Level 3

To earn NCEA Level 3 you must achieve:

- 60 credits at Level 3 or above; plus
- 20 credits at Level 2 or above, even if gained for another national qualification.

NCEA Level 3 is usually studied in the final year of secondary school (Year 13).

## University Entrance

University is not a qualification, but does qualify you for entrance into a New Zealand university. To be awarded University Entrance, you will need:

- 42 credits at Level 3 or above in NZQA-approved subjects
- Eight credits in English or te reo Māori at Level 2 or higher
- 14 credits in numeracy at Level 1 or higher.

[NZQA website – list of approved subjects for University Entrance](#)

## Certificates – Levels 1 to 7

Certificates can be used to help you prepare for either employment or further study and training, and usually take a year to complete.

**National certificates:** are certificates that meet national standards approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Only organisations that have been quality assured by NZQA can offer national certificates.

**Available from:** polytechnics/institutes of technology, private training providers, schools and wānanga. National certificates can be completed through workplace training and apprenticeships or in the defence forces.

## Diplomas – Levels 5 to 7

A diploma normally requires two years of full-time study, though you can sometimes complete the qualification through part-time study. It can follow on from a certificate, or can be a stand-alone qualification.

**National diplomas:** These are diplomas that meet national standards approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Only organisations that have been quality assured by NZQA can offer national diplomas. These usually take one or two years full-time study to complete.

**Also available from:** polytechnics/institutes of technology and private training organisations. National diplomas can also be completed through workplace training and apprenticeships, or in the defence forces.

## Bachelor's degree – Level 7

A Bachelor's degree is an undergraduate degree that normally requires at least three years of full-time study. You can often study part time over a number of years.

**Available from:** universities, polytechnics/institutes of technology, wānanga and private training providers.

## Graduate certificates and diplomas – Level 7

Graduate certificates or diplomas are open to people with a Bachelor's degree (and sometimes people with equivalent study or work experience) to do further study at an undergraduate level. Certificates usually take one semester of full-time study to complete, while diplomas take a full year.

**Available from:** universities, polytechnics, private training providers and wānanga.

## Bachelor's degrees with Honours – Level 8

A Bachelor's degree with Honours is either a one-year programme after a three-year Bachelor's degree, or a longer four-year Bachelor's degree that requires a particular level of achievement.

**Available from:** universities and polytechnics/institutes of technology.

## Postgraduate diplomas and certificates – Level 8

Postgraduate diplomas or certificates are open to graduates (those who have a Bachelor's degree), and usually take one year. For example, a secondary school teacher may complete a Postgraduate Diploma of Teaching, after completing a degree in their teaching subject.

**Available from:** universities, polytechnics/institutes of technology, wānanga and private training providers.

## Masters degrees – Level 9

A Masters degree is an advanced degree taken by someone who already holds a Bachelor's degree or, in some cases, has extensive experience in the relevant field. It usually involves writing a piece based on focused research, called a thesis. Most Masters degrees take two years of full-time study to complete, or four years part-time.

**Available from:** universities, wānanga, polytechnics/institutes of technology and private training providers.

## Doctorates – Level 10

A Doctorate is also called a PhD, and is the highest university degree. It usually involves extensive research resulting in a thesis, and will earn you the title of Doctor. Most PhDs take three years of full-time study.

**Available from:** universities, polytechnics/institutes of technology and wānanga.