

NCEA | Taumata Mātauranga ā-Motu Kua Taea

NCEA Review 2018

Levels of NCEA

1. A brief history of NCEA
2. Themes in NCEA literature
3. Purpose and outcome statements for NCEA
4. Trends in NCEA
- ▶ **5. Levels of NCEA**
6. Connections with pathways into further education and/or employment
7. Course coherence in NCEA
8. Non-standards based learning and NCEA
9. Māori medium and NCEA
10. Literacy and numeracy requirements for NCEA
11. Accessing NCEA
12. Over-assessment and its impact on students and teachers
13. NCEA online
14. How NCEA is recognised overseas
15. Quality assurance in NCEA



NZQA requires each qualification registered on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework to be regularly reviewed so that the qualification remains useful and relevant and continues to meet the needs of the learners, industry and stakeholders for which it was developed. NCEA is scheduled to be reviewed by December 2018.

This paper describes the role of the three levels of NCEA and the usefulness of offering NCEA | Taumata Mātauranga ā-Motu Kua Taea¹ at level 1.

Focusing question

What is the value of the three levels of NCEA?

What is the role of each level of NCEA?

NCEA has three qualification levels and each qualification recognises different levels of capability. NCEA level 1 qualifies a graduate with basic knowledge and skills. NCEA level 2 qualifies a graduate for employment or further study and NCEA level 3 qualifies a graduate for a range of employment and study paths, including degree-level study.

The three levels of NCEA are also benchmarked against levels 1, 2 and 3 of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. This signifies the scale of difficulty from one level of NCEA to the next.

Use of the three levels of NCEA

There is no requirement for learners to attain one level of NCEA before progressing to the next; a young person could attain NCEA level 3 without first attaining levels 1 or 2. However, most schools/kura require students to progress through each level of the NCEA, beginning with level 1, if they remain in schooling. In tertiary environments, this is less common.

Young people can attain an NCEA at any age and in any year level. For many schools and kura, the three levels of NCEA roughly correspond to the three years of senior secondary education; level 1 to year 11, level 2 to year 12 and level 3 to year 13. Some schools and kura offer flexibility, by enabling students to experience NCEA level 1 early (for example, year 10 students attempting NCEA level 1), or by providing additional time for a learner to progress (for example, year 13 students working towards NCEA level 2).

¹ Taumata Mātauranga ā-Motu Kua Taea is the Māori name for NCEA. "NCEA" is inclusive of both Māori and English medium.



Offering level 1

Most secondary schools and kura offer NCEA at all three levels. A small number of schools have decided not to offer NCEA level 1, although some give students the chance to gain credits from level 1 assessment standards. This may provide an opportunity for teachers to effectively enable rich, integrated learning experiences aligned to the national curriculum at year 11. Not offering NCEA level 1 is an approach that schools have only taken recently, and there is a lack of evidence as to the impact this has on the well-being and achievement of young people.

For some young people, NCEA level 1 may be of real value. It was the highest school qualification for 5,535 school leavers in 2016. This group of students would likely miss out on gaining a school leaving qualification if they were not offered NCEA level 1. Having a recognised qualification also helps many students, who are attempting further study but are unsure if they will succeed. The skills, knowledge and attitudes obtained while attaining NCEA level 1 does support some young people in their secondary education, further education and the world of work.

However, for many students, NCEA level 1 may have limited value as a qualification if they go on to attain level 2 and/or 3 before leaving school. NCEA level 1 can increase their workload, and that of their teachers, without significant benefit.

If schools and kura decided not to offer NCEA level 1, or to offer a reduced NCEA level 1 programme, this might:

- reduce assessment workload as well as the pressure of consistent assessment and having to obtain 80 credits over a year; however, because assessment would still be recommended as a tool to inform learning, the scale of reduction in assessment is unclear, and would likely vary from school to school
- be replaced by alternative qualifications, including international qualifications, micro-credentials or other qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework at an appropriate level; this could occur because of parent and learner expectations and the need to undertake formative assessment for learning; if this did happen, there may not be a significant decrease in assessment workload
- result in NCEA level 2 being increasingly offered to year 11 students; this could reduce overall workload, unless it resulted in a commensurate increase in the number of credits attempted by young people.