

3 June 2020

Dear Principal

Students and schools have experienced real disruption to teaching, learning and assessment because of COVID-19, with some affected much more than others.

NZQA and the Ministry of Education have worked closely with the Minister's NCEA Professional Advisory Group (PAG) to develop a set of changes to NCEA in 2020 which address these impacts. These changes have been endorsed by the PAG. Our rigorous discussions have acknowledged the need to ensure both the integrity of the qualification and equity for students.

NZQA has also worked with universities and Universities New Zealand on changes to the University Entrance award for 2020, which the NZQA Board has endorsed.

The changes will mean students continue to be well prepared for tertiary study, vocational education, or employment.

As a consequence of these priorities, NZQA will implement three key changes for 2020:

- Students working towards an NCEA can gain additional credits, based on the number of credits they achieve during the 2020 school year. For every 5 credits a student achieves towards their NCEA through internal or external assessment, they can be awarded an additional 1 credit. Students at NCEA Level 1 are eligible for up to a maximum of 10 additional credits while those at Levels 2 and 3 are eligible for up to a maximum of 8 additional credits. These will be known as Learning Recognition (LR) credits.
- Students will be awarded a certificate endorsement if they achieve 46 credits at Merit or Excellence level, rather than the usual 50. Students achieving 12 credits at Merit or Excellence level in a course – rather than 14 – will be awarded a course endorsement.
- Current UE requirements have been reduced to 12 credits in three UE-approved subjects, from 14 credits in three approved subjects. Students still need to attain NCEA Level 3 and meet the literacy and numeracy requirement to be awarded University Entrance.

These changes are underpinned by the following principles:

- Students have a fair and equitable opportunity to achieve the qualifications and awards they would have been able to achieve in any other year;
- Students are engaged and progressing in their assessed learning;
- Changes are consistent with the integrity and credibility of the qualification; and
- Changes impose minimal workload on schools.

Learning Recognition (LR) credits

Students will be entitled to 1 additional LR credit for each 5 credits achieved towards their NCEA through internal or external assessment. This will apply up to a maximum of 10 additional credits for students undertaking NCEA Level 1, or up to a maximum of 8 additional credits for students at NCEA Levels 2 or 3.

The learning recognition credits are tied to a student's assessed learning.

The maximum number of LR credits available to students reflects our assessment that the extent of disruption broadly approximates two assessment standards, with some additional recognition of the credit level requirements of an NCEA at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

A student undertaking multi-level study will be entitled to the LR credits for the NCEA level they are predominantly undertaking in 2020. Where a student continues to work towards that qualification beyond 2020, the entitlement to access their LR credits will remain.

The entitlement to LR credits will be calculated by NZQA once students' results from internal and external assessments are known. NZQA will publish a table to help students and teachers calculate entitlement as the year progresses.

University Entrance (UE)

University Entrance will be awarded to students who achieve 12 credits – rather than 14 – in each of three University Entrance Approved Subjects. Students will still need to attain NCEA Level 3 and meet the UE literacy and numeracy requirement.

NZQA has worked with universities and Universities New Zealand to ensure UE requirements for 2020 will be achievable, given the disruption to teaching and learning, while also ensuring the award continues to be a fair reflection of what is necessary to succeed at university.

Universities expect that schools will continue to ensure students are entered into the standards they need for their chosen pathway and for the course they intend to undertake at university.

Certificate and course endorsements

NZQA will award certificate endorsements from 46 credits and course endorsements from 12 credits, recognising that students have had reduced opportunities to reach the required thresholds.

The changes continue to maintain high standards but recognise that some adjustments are necessary, given the circumstances that students have faced.

As usual, the calculations for endorsements will be processed by NZQA after internal and external assessment results are known.

Results release

To provide the additional processing time to apply and quality check these 2020 changes, results release will be delayed by approximately one week.

Summary

We expect these changes will address the additional barriers that students are facing this year, along with the changes to examination and portfolio dates announced on 13 May, and the advice and support provided to schools and students by the Ministry and NZQA.

We are also considering ways to support schools to identify and collect evidence that could be used towards credentialing the learning and skills gained by students during lockdown.

Thank you again for the work you have done to support teaching, learning and assessment. We are also grateful for the NCEA Professional Advisory Group for their advice on these changes; as well as to universities and Universities New Zealand for their assistance with the changes to UE.

I have asked your NZQA School Relationship Manager to contact your Principal's Nominee to answer any further questions.

Nāku nā



Dr Grant Klinkum
Chief Executive