



# Insights for parents and whānau:

## How well is NCEA Level 1 working for our schools and students?

In 2024, changes to NCEA Level 1 were rolled out nationwide. ERO looked at how well it is working and how the delivery is going. We found that, despite the changes that have been made to improve the qualification, NCEA Level 1 isn't yet a reliable measure of students' knowledge and skills, and is not preparing all students well for their future.

This guide highlights key findings and insights for parents and whānau.

### ERO looked at how well NCEA Level 1 is working

Leaving school with higher qualifications leads to a range of more positive life outcomes, including better chances of employment, so it is important for Aotearoa New Zealand's young people that our national qualification is as effective as it can be. ERO looked at how well NCEA Level 1 is working for schools and students since the recent change roll-out.

To do this, we looked at the national and international evidence base and talked to Year 11 students, as well as parents and whānau, teachers, leaders, employers, school boards, and tertiary providers, to understand the impact of the NCEA Level 1 changes.

### What are the changes to NCEA Level 1?

Changes to NCEA Level 1 were brought in at the start of 2024. Some key changes include:

- introducing a new 20-credit co-requisite for literacy and numeracy
- fewer, larger standards through redeveloping and reducing the number of NCEA Level 1 subjects. There are now four achievement standards – two internally assessed, two externally assessed, typically worth five credits each and 20 credits in total
- changing the requirements so that 60 credits are required to pass NCEA Level 1, plus the 20-credit literacy and numeracy co-requisite.

### What did ERO find out?

#### **NCEA Level 1 remains difficult to understand, and it can be difficult to make good choices.**

Students don't always understand enough to make informed choices when selecting courses. Nearly two in five students (39 percent) report they didn't know enough about NCEA Level 1 when they made their course choices. Almost half of parents and whānau don't know what is required for the NCEA Level 1 qualification (46 percent) and feel unable to help their child make the right choices (48 percent).

“As a parent of a student who is doing NCEA for the first time, I don’t understand the system at all. We have tried and gone to sessions but at times it seems the people explaining are also confused.”

PARENT AND WHĀNAU



## NCEA Level 1 isn’t always preparing students with the knowledge they need for NCEA Level 2.

Students, and their parents and whānau, value NCEA Level 1 as preparation for NCEA Level 2 because it provides study skills and exam experience. But with the recent changes seven in 10 leaders (71 percent) report NCEA Level 1 doesn’t prepare students for the current NCEA Level 2 – this may be because NCEA Level 1 has changed and NCEA Level 2 hasn’t.

## Employers don’t value NCEA Level 1 as a qualification.

Parents and whānau assume that employers value NCEA Level 1 as a recognised national qualification, but just over two in five employers (43 percent) don’t consider it when making recruitment decisions. Based on their experience of NCEA Level 1 before the changes, almost half of employers (46 percent) report it doesn’t prepare young people for work – for example by giving them good enough maths or reading and writing skills. This may change with the introduction of the literacy and numeracy co-requisite.

## NCEA Level 1 is not motivating all students to achieve as well as they can, and some students disengage early.

Concerningly, almost two-thirds of teachers (64 percent) report NCEA Level 1 doesn’t motivate students to achieve. High-achieving students can reach the required credits needed for NCEA Level 1 before the end of the year and disengage.

NCEA Level 1 is reducing engagement for students who ‘fail’ early in the year. With fewer, larger standards, these students don’t have a way to catch up on the credits they’ve missed out on.

## Want to know more?

To find out more about how well NCEA Level 1 is working for schools and students, check out ERO’s evaluation report and summary. These set out the recommendations we are making for improvement across the NCEA system, and can be downloaded for free from ERO’s Evidence and Insights website: [www.evidence.ero.govt.nz](http://www.evidence.ero.govt.nz).



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