

The education system of

New Zealand

described and compared with
the Dutch system

This document contains information on the education system of New Zealand. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from New Zealand for the purpose of admission to Dutch higher education.

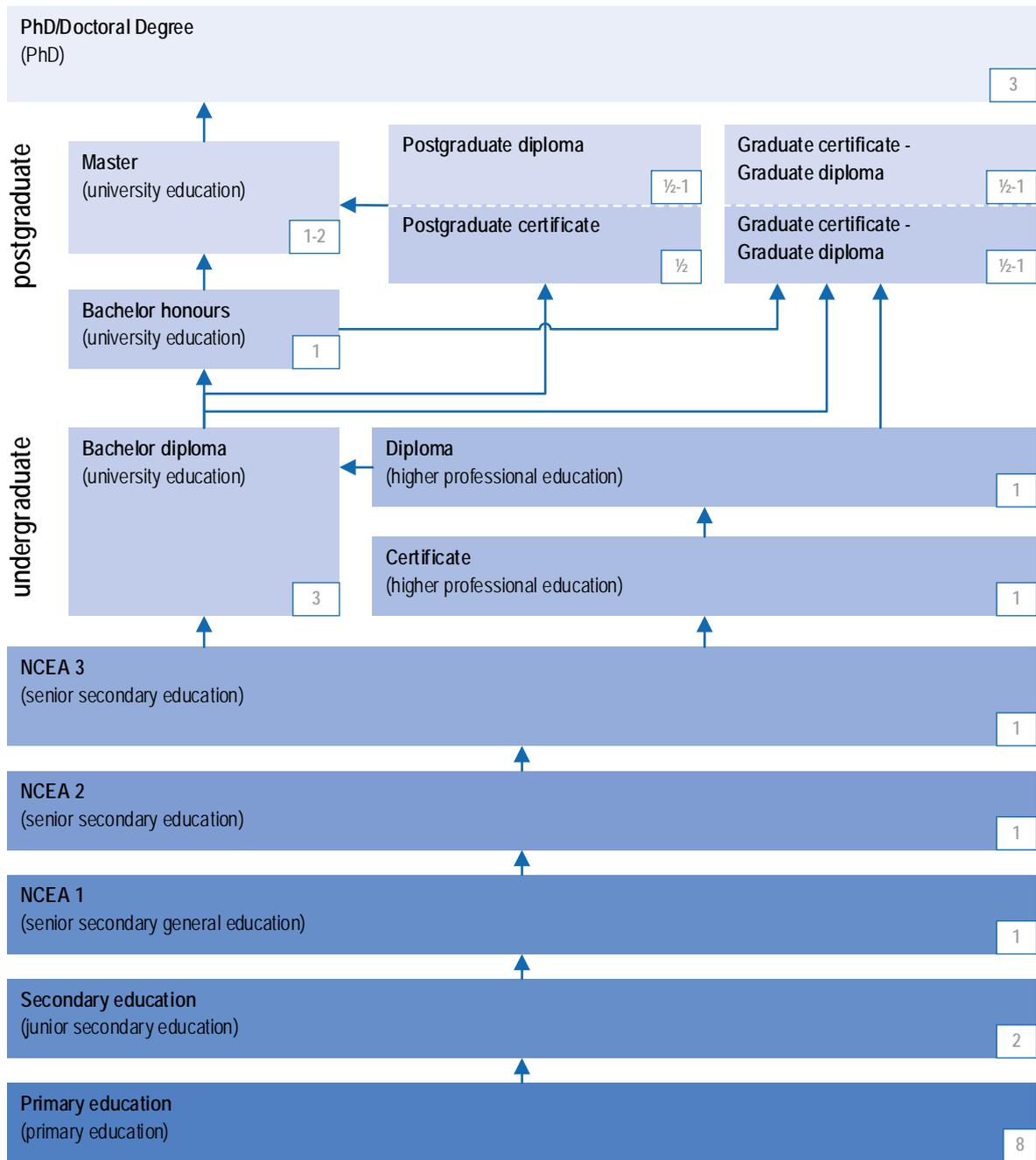
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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Education system New Zealand



 Duration of education

Evaluation chart

The left-hand column in the table below lists the most common foreign qualifications applicable to admission to higher education. The other columns show the Dutch equivalent along with the comparable levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Degree or qualification and NZQF level		Dutch equivalent and NLQF level		EQF level
NCEA Level 2	2	HAVO diploma or MBO diploma (qualification level 2-4)	4 or 2-4	4 or 2-4
NCEA Level 3 (with sufficient credits from general level 3 subjects)	3	VWO diploma	4+	4
Bachelor's degree	7	HBO or WO bachelor's degree	6	6
Bachelor Honours Degree	8	WO or HBO bachelor's degree	6	6
Master's degree	9	HBO or WO master's degree	7	7

NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived
- NZQF = New Zealand Qualifications Framework. NLQF = Netherlands Qualifications Framework. EQF = European Qualifications Framework.
- The EQF/[NLQF level](#) is not so much a reflection of study load or content; rather, it is an indication of a person's knowledge and skills after having completed a certain programme of study.
- Information about Dutch equivalent qualifications can be found on our website: [the Dutch education system](#).
- [The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market \(SBB\)](#), evaluates statements on foreign qualifications and training at VMBO and MBO level. The evaluation may vary if SBB evaluates the diploma for admission to VET schools or the labour market in the Netherlands.

■ Introduction

The country of New Zealand (Aotearoa) is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy with a population of around 4.4 million.

New Zealand is a member of the Commonwealth and has three official languages: English, Māori (the language of the *tangata whenua*, the indigenous people of the land), and New Zealand Sign Language.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for education policy, designating funding to the individual education institutions, collecting and processing education data and information and monitoring the effectiveness of the education system.

Education is compulsory for children aged 6 to 16, although the vast majority of students begin school at age 5. The official language of education is mostly English, although the Māori language (*Te Reo Māori*) is also used. Education is free for pupils aged 5 to 19.

The academic year for primary, intermediate and secondary schools in New Zealand runs from early February to mid-December, and is divided into four terms. The academic year for higher education starts in February and ends in November, and is divided into 2 semesters. However, a summer semester is becoming increasingly popular.

■ Primary and secondary education

Primary education in New Zealand is available to children aged 5 and over; however education is compulsory from age 6 to 16. The national curriculum runs from Year 1 to Year 10, of which primary education covers Years 1-8 and secondary education Years 9 and 10 (junior secondary education). Years 11-13 cover senior secondary education. Years 7 and 8 can also be attended at an Intermediate School.

Years 11, 12 and 13 do not form part of the compulsory curriculum; however they are important for admission to higher education. Between 2002 and 2004, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) was introduced as the national senior secondary school qualification. The certificate is divided into three different levels: level 1 for Year 11, level 2 for Year 12 and level 3 for Year 13.

The NCEA replaced all the different secondary school diplomas that used to grant admission to higher education in various stages. In 2002, NCEA level 1 replaced the School Certificate; NCEA level 2 was implemented in 2003 and replaced the Sixth Form Certificate, which was still issued during a transition phase up until 2004. NCEA level 3 and the New Zealand Scholarship replaced the University Entrance, Bursaries and Scholarships.

To earn their NCEA, students must obtain a minimum number of credits per level. These credits are linked to 'standards', which represent the knowledge and skills of one of the student's subjects. These standards are in turn linked to degrees of difficulty. There are two types of standards: unit standards and achievement standards. Achievement standards are expressed in the following terms: 'achieved' (A), 'achieved with merit' (M), 'achieved with excellence' (E) or 'not achieved' (N). Unit standards are expressed as either 'achieved' (A) or 'not achieved' (N).

The standards are examined at levels 1, 2 and 3 during or at the end of each semester, both at school and externally. Most students start level 1 in Year 11; however it is also possible to take subjects at level 1, 2, 3 or higher. This depends on the school, which determines itself which subjects it wishes to offer at which level.

The NCEA level 1 certificate requires 80 credits at level 1 or higher, 8 of which must be in the arts and 8 in mathematics.

The NCEA level 2 certificate requires 60 credits at level 2 or higher, and 20 credits from any level.

The NCEA level 3 certificate requires 80 credits; 60 at level 3 or higher, and 20 at level 2 or higher.

The NCEA is used as a benchmark for admission to higher education in New Zealand.

In terms of level, the *NCEA Level 2* (NZQF level 2/EQF level 4) is comparable to a HAVO diploma or to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2- 4, depending on the duration and the specialization of its vocational component.

Full description of NZQF level 2: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Studying-in-NZ/New-Zealand-Qualification-Framework/requirements-nzqf.pdf>

In terms of level, the *NCEA Level 3* (NZQF level 3/EQF level 5), provided that sufficient credits from general level 3 subjects have been obtained, is comparable to a VWO diploma. Full description of NZQF level 3:

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Studying-in-NZ/New-Zealand-Qualification-Framework/requirements-nzqf.pdf>

■ Admission to higher education

There are various ways to meet the admission requirements for university education: via the common entrance standard (also known as University Entrance or UE), the discretionary entrance, via special admission or via *Ad Eundem Statum* ('with equivalent status', AES).

For the common entrance standard, students must be in possession of a recognised secondary school certificate: in addition to the New Zealand NCEA (with the requirement of 42 credits from at least level 3 and certain subject/level prerequisites) and the older New Zealand Bursary A or B (until 2003), the Cambridge International Examination (CIE with certain prerequisite subjects) and the International Baccalaureate also qualify.

Discretionary entrance concerns candidates from New Zealand who are aged under 20, doing Year 12, and have obtained very good results thus far, including for NCEA 2.

Special admission concerns students aged over 20 who cannot produce any academic qualifications.

Ad Eundem Statum students can obtain admission based on a foreign certificate considered to be equivalent to the NCEA. This also applies to the CIE and IB.

The following is required for admission to university education:

- Approved subjects - 42 credits from at least **level 3 or higher**, consisting of:
 - 14 credits in an [approved subject](#)
 - 14 credits in another [approved subject](#)
 - 14 credits from one or two other domains **or** approved subjects
- Literacy requirements - 8 credits in [English or Te Reo Māori](#) from at least **level 2**, consisting of:
 - 4 credits in reading
 - 4 credits in writing
- Numeracy requirements - 14 credits in Numeracy from at least **level 1**, consisting of:
 - 14 credits in Mathematics or Statistics and Probability

If students fulfil these requirements, a statement is included on their Record of Achievement. A list of approved subjects can be found on the NCEA website. See under [Useful links](#).

Most universities offer a Foundation Year to students who do not meet the normal admission requirements for bachelor's programmes. Eleven completed years of education is usually required for admission, including a certain IELTS or TOEFL score. Programmes last for 20 to 52 weeks (depending on the student's deficiencies) and consist of English (compulsory) usually in combination with three other subjects, which include the natural sciences, accountancy, economics and music. For admission to a bachelor's programme, students must fulfil the requirements set for the GPA, the subjects taken and the English language requirements. Students must also be at least 17 years of age.

The admission requirements for non-university education institutions are very diverse and vary from programme to programme. Degree programmes usually apply the same requirements as for university admission.

■ Higher education

In New Zealand, higher education is provided by various types of tertiary education organisations (TEOs):

- public tertiary education institutions (TEIs), which include universities, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs), Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), and since 1990 the three *Wānanga* (Māori centres of learning)
- Private Training Establishments (PTEs)
- Government Training Establishments (GTEs)

Universities

There are eight universities in New Zealand offering a wide range of tertiary education:

- Auckland University of Technology
- Lincoln University
- Massey University
- The University of Auckland
- The University of Waikato
- University of Canterbury
- University of Otago
- Victoria University of Wellington

The interests of the universities are represented by Universities New Zealand (the former New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC)). It is responsible for the quality of university programmes, administers a range of scholarships, and represents the universities in the public interest, both nationally and internationally.

Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics

The twenty ITPs offer applied technical professional education. The programmes that they offer vary from foundation programmes to degree and postgraduate programmes; however the focus is on certificate and diploma programmes. The practical programmes are available as part-time, evening or distance education. The degree programmes at ITPs are equivalent to university degrees.

The New Zealand Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (NZ ITP) represents the collective interests of the ITPs.

An overview of all ITPs is available from the website of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). See under [List of higher education institutions](#).

Wānanga

Just over 100 registered providers identify themselves as Māori providers, including the three Māori centres of learning (*wānanga*): *Te Wānanga o Aotearoa*, *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* and *Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī*. These institutions offer programmes that focus on education in Māori culture and traditions, including programmes at various levels of higher education. The interests of the *Wānanga* are represented by *Aotearoa Māori Providers of Training Education and Employment*.

Private Training Establishments

There are nearly 1,000 PTEs in New Zealand. These are private organisations providing education/training. Many companies and government training establishments register their staff training operations as training establishments. Examples include the Airways Training Centre, Ashton Warner Nanny Academy,

and the New Zealand Red Cross. PTEs also include English language schools that are not subsidised by the government and are aimed at international students.

A PTE must register with the NZQA and apply for approval and accreditation for the programmes it plans to offer in order to qualify for government funding (usually but not exclusively from the Tertiary Education Commission) and for its students to be eligible for student grants and loans.

The Independent Tertiary Institutions (ITI) represent the interests of 16 independent PTEs, while the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers (NZAPEP) does so for more than 200 PTEs. The Association of Private Providers of English Language (APPEL) is the voice of over 50 institutions that offer English language training programmes.

An overview of all PTEs and the programmes they offer is available from the website of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). See under [List of higher education institutions](#).

Government Training Establishments

GTEs are state-owned organisations providing education or training for their own staff. The eight GTEs usually fall under one of the government ministries. They include Army Qual, Child Youth and Family, New Zealand Police Training Services, Naval Training - HMNZS Philomel, the New Zealand Fire Service, National Training, the RNZAF Training Group and Prison Services GTE.

An overview of all GTEs is available from the website of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). See under [List of higher education institutions](#).

Industry Training Organisations (ITOs)

The approximately 40 ITOs offer practical training courses for trainee employees in companies, and cover various sectors in the industry such as agriculture, electrical engineering, horticulture, the textile industry, funeral services and pharmacy.

An overview of all ITOs is available from the website of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). See under [List of higher education institutions](#).

■ University education

In addition to academic, research-based education, the universities also offer programmes with a professional focus at certificate, diploma, bachelor's, master's and PhD level, as well as at graduate/postgraduate certificate/diploma level.

Bachelor's degree

The nominal length of a bachelor's degree is usually 3 years, requiring a total of 360 credits from levels 5 to 7, with at least 72 credits at level 7. The names of the bachelor's degrees awarded usually refer to the programme taken, such as Bachelor of Accountancy, Bachelor of Business Studies or Bachelor of Social Work.

It is also possible to take a 'conjoint' programme, during which two bachelor's programmes with subjects in common are completed over 4 years, and the student is awarded two degrees, e.g. a conjoint Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Business Studies.

Bachelor Honours Degree

A Bachelor Honours Degree may be either a 480-credit degree with a nominal duration of 4 years, or a discrete 120-credit degree of 1 year following a 3-year bachelor's degree. It has a minimum of 120 credits at level 8, with a research component that represents 30 credits at that level. An honours programme includes more detailed study of the student's major.

The honours year is primarily intended to teach additional knowledge of the research techniques necessary for admission to a master's programme. The honours descriptions for a bachelor's degree are divided into the following gradations: first class honours; second class honours: first or second division; and third class honours. The honours programme falls under postgraduate education.

Admission to an honours programme requires a related bachelor with a certain GPA. To be awarded honours, students must have completed a full-time programme within 1 year or a part-time programme within 3 years.

In terms of level, a *Bachelor's degree* (NZQF level 7) is comparable to an HBO or WO bachelor's degree, depending on the type of study and specialization. Full description of NZQF level 7:
<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Studying-in-NZ/New-Zealand-Qualification-Framework/requirements-nzqf.pdf>

In terms of level, an *Bachelor Honours Degree* (NZQF level 8) is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree or to an HBO bachelor's degree, depending on the specialization. Full description of NZQF level 8:
<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Studying-in-NZ/New-Zealand-Qualification-Framework/requirements-nzqf.pdf>

Note: 3-year bachelor's programmes often do not contain a research component. For this reason it may be advisable to ask for an honours bachelor's degree for admission to a WO master's programme in the Netherlands.

Master's degree

A master's degree can be obtained after a 2-year postgraduate and/or research programme (240 credits, at least 40 of which must be at level 9 and the rest from at least level 8), with a 3-year bachelor's programme as an admission requirement. The admission requirement for master's programmes of fewer than 240 credits is usually a Bachelor Honours Degree, or a Bachelor's degree with relevant work experience.

There are various types of master's programmes in New Zealand:

Type of master's	Admission requirement	Credits	Content
Master by thesis	Bachelor Honours or postgraduate diploma	120	Research and thesis only
Master by coursework and thesis	Relevant bachelor's degree	240	Coursework (max. 150 credits) and research plus a thesis (90 credits).
Master by coursework only	Bachelor's degree and/or relevant work experience	120-240	Coursework, projects, research, professional master's (conversion master)

In terms of level, a *master's degree* (NZQF level 9) is comparable in the Netherlands to an HBO or WO master's degree, depending on the specialization.

Full description of NZQF level 8: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Studying-in-NZ/New-Zealand-Qualification-Framework/requirements-nzqf.pdf>

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has written a proposal to allow shorter Masters Degrees and change the nominal duration from two years (240 credits) to one and a half years (180 credits), following a 180-credit Bachelor degree. The purpose of this change is to enhance the international competitiveness of New Zealand and offer more coursework Masters.

PhD

All New Zealand universities provide programmes up to and including doctorate level ([NZQF level 10](#)). To qualify for admission, candidates must have completed an honours bachelor (in at least upper second class level) or have a research master's with good results in a relevant subject area. A doctoral degree takes an average of 3 to 4 years of study and research to complete, and normally consists of 360 credits (level 10). The coursework component may not be more than 1 year, and it must support the writing of the dissertation.

■ Higher professional education

Certificate

Higher education offers various types of certificate programmes (levels 1-7). Some of these programmes are intended for students who do not satisfy the university admission requirements (Certificate of Foundation Studies, Certificate in University Preparation); others provide exemption from certain subjects (200-level) in a diploma or bachelor's programme, are professional in nature and generally have a nominal duration of 1 year.

Diploma

These are 1-year higher education diploma programmes (500-level) in which students do not need to satisfy the general admission requirements of the universities, however there are also programmes offered for which this is the case. These programmes are often professional in nature and provide exemptions to students who enter a relevant bachelor's programme.

Graduate Certificate

These programmes (200-level and 300-level) take 1 semester (60 credits, with a minimum of 40 credits at Level 7 or above) and require a bachelor's degree (relevant or not) for admission.

Graduate Diploma

These programmes (200-level and 300-level) take 1 year (120 credits, with a minimum of 72 credits at Level 7 or above) and require a bachelor's degree (relevant or not) for admission.

Postgraduate Certificate

These types of programmes are essentially the first half of a postgraduate diploma programme, and take half a year to complete (60 credits – all at Level 8). The subjects (600-level) are selected from relevant honours bachelor's programmes, master's programmes or postgraduate diploma programmes (700-level). These programmes are more academic in nature and can provide exemptions in master's programmes.

Postgraduate Diploma

These programmes last 1 year (120 credits, with a minimum of 72 credits at Level 8) and require a relevant bachelor's degree for admission. Subjects (700-level) are selected from a relevant master's programme, which can provide exemptions if students decide to complete further study in the master's programme. These programmes are more academic in nature than the graduate diploma programmes, and often include a final paper.

■ Assessment systems

New Zealand has no uniform assessment system; universities use a range of letter-based systems. Information on the system used is usually provided on the academic record. An example is given below.

Letter grade	Description
A+	High First
A	Clear First
A-	Bare First
B+	High second
B	Clear second
B-	Bare second
C+	Sound pass
C	Pass
C-	Marginal pass
D+	Marginal fail
D	Clear fail
D-	Poor fail

An academic year consists of 120 credits, with each credit representing 10 hours of study (contact hours and self study).

■ Qualification frameworks

Since 1991, New Zealand has had a uniform qualification system for all educational qualifications, called the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The framework consisted originally of 8 levels, and since 2001 of the following 10:

1. Certificate (level 1)
2. Certificate (level 2)
3. Certificate (level 3)
4. Certificate (level 4)
5. Certificate (level 5), Diploma (level 5)
6. Certificate (level 6), Diploma (level 6)
7. Certificate (level 7), Diploma (level 7), Bachelor, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma
8. Bachelor Honours, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma
9. Master
10. PhD/ Doctoral Degree

The graduation requirements for each programme indicate the minimum number of credits that need to be obtained at each level.

From July 2010, the NQF was merged with the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (also known as KiwiQuals) and formed the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF). See under [Useful links](#).

Level descriptors and qualification types on the NZQF

LEVEL	NAMING SEQUENCE
10	Doctoral Degree
9	Master's Degrees
8	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelor Honours Degree
7	Bachelor's Degrees, Graduate Diplomas and Certificates
6	Diplomas
5	
4	Certificates
3	
2	
1	

Source: [New Zealand Qualifications Framework \(NZQF\)](#)

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

In New Zealand, two bodies are responsible for quality assurance and accreditation.

For universities, Universities New Zealand (the former New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC)) is responsible for the accreditation procedures of institutions and for approving their degree programmes (including changes thereto). Their handbook, "Committee on University Academic Programmes: Functions and Procedures" includes definitions of the various qualifications in the education system.

The Academic Audit Unit of the NZVCC performs quality audits on the universities and maintains contact with all quality assurance organisations in higher education in New Zealand and externally.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is responsible for the accreditation and quality assurance of all other institutions, including secondary schools. On 1 January 2011 it also became responsible for quality assurance at ITPs (previously the responsibility of ITP Quality). Its job is to approve programmes and grant accreditation to the providers.

All providers must first be registered with the NZQA before they can be accredited. PTEs do not need to be registered in order to provide education (provider-developed courses). However, registration and accreditation do provide benefits, such as being allowed to enrol international students, being eligible for government subsidies from bodies such as the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), and it can also be seen as a mark of quality.

The website of the NZQA lists the approved programmes for each institution. See under [Useful links](#).

The quality assurance system in New Zealand distinguishes between course approval and course accreditation. Course approval means that the programme satisfies the set standards and criteria; course accreditation means that the provider is qualified to deliver an approved course. An organisation can also apply for approval for a programme that it has developed itself, which will then be offered by another provider. In such cases, course approval is sufficient for the first organisation, and the actual provider must then apply for course accreditation.

In 2011 NZQA (in cooperation with representative bodies in higher education) wrote a proposal on Offshore Education Quality Assurance Requirements. In September 2012 the NZQF Offshore Programme Delivery Rules 2012 were determined for the offshore delivery of New Zealand's higher education programmes (www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/nzqf-related-rules/offshore-programme-delivery-rules-2012/).

■ International treaties

New Zealand ratified the Lisbon Convention in 2007.

■ Diploma Supplement

New Zealand recently developed a Tertiary Education Qualification Statement (TEQS) as the New Zealand's equivalent of the European Diploma Supplement. Implementation is still in its early stages. The NZQA and the Ministry of Education published guidelines for the format of the TEQS. It uses a standardized template with information on the nature, level, context, content and status of the completed program. The TEQS is issued on completion of a tertiary education qualification, however it is not compulsory for the education providers. At this moment a small number of institutions in New Zealand has implemented a TEQS. The section with the description of the higher education system is a uniform statement, which is annually updated and available online. See under [Useful links](#).

■ Composition of file

For secondary education, the Record of Achievement comprising the results achieved must be submitted, accompanied by the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

For higher education, students must submit their academic record along with their diploma.

Authenticity

On the websites of the various universities, it is possible to consult databases to verify the diplomas submitted. For example, see [the Massey University Graduates database](#). Data extends back to 1997.

The University of Auckland has a [graduation database](#) containing data starting from 1996.

Verification of graduates at the University of Canterbury with data starting from 1980 is possible through the [Graduate Search function](#).

The *Victoria University of Wellington* has a [Roll of Graduates](#) which dates back to 1998.

The *University of Otago* has [graduation lists](#) per year dating back to 2004.

■ List of higher education institutions

- [Website](#) of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) including an overview of all Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs).
- [Website](#) of the NZQA including an overview of higher education institutions in New Zealand, including Private Training Establishments (PTEs) and their programmes.
- [Website](#) of the NZQA, with an overview of all Government Training Establishments (GTEs).
- [Website](#) of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), with an overview of all ITOs.

■ Useful links

www.nzqa.govt.nz/

Website of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), the NARIC of New Zealand.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/index.do

Website of the NZQA, including an overview of approved programmes per institution.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/awards/university-entrance/approved-subjects/

Website of the NZQA with a list of approved subjects.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/nzqf/

Website of the NZQA, including information on the *New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF)*.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/national-education-information-centre/tertiary-education-qualification-statement/

Website of the NZQA with information on the Tertiary Education Qualification Statement (TEQS). At this page information on the Guidelines for implementing a Tertiary Education Qualification Statement in New Zealand is also available.

[/www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/](http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/)

Website of Universities New Zealand (the former New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC)).

www.minedu.govt.nz

Website of the New Zealand Ministry of Education.