



Briefing Note: Release of 2020 school leaver and associated data

To:	Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon. Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon. Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education Hon. Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	18 June 2021	Priority:	Medium
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	Yes	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- Note** that retention of students who have remained at school until at least 17 years old increased in 2020, which contributes to the increase in school leaver attainment in 2020.
- Note** that the results of the 2020 school leavers' NCEA and University Entrance attainment data and associated data products are ready for release on Education Counts.
- Note** that we propose to release 2020 school leaver products on 24 Jun 2021 via Education Counts.
- Note** that we will liaise with your office about the communications for the release and the timing.
- Agree** that this briefing note is proactively released.



Alexander Brunt

Acting Deputy Secretary

Evidence, Data and Knowledge

18/6/2021

☒ Agree ☐ Disagree



Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

23/6/2021

Key findings

1. This briefing informs you of the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and the University Entrance (UE) standard¹ attainment of 2020 school leavers, retention of students to age 17, and the tertiary education destinations for students who left school in 2019.
2. In response to COVID-19 in 2020, the Ministry and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) introduced a range of responses to NCEA to support students. Alongside the provision of Learning Recognition Credits, there were significant other supports available for students and schools through the year. These likely complemented the built-in flexibility within NCEA and our secondary education system resulting in a generally positive attainment outcome for 2020.
3. The key highlights for 2020 school leaver attainment are:
 - a. The school leavers' attainment statistics show that overall rates of national attainment of NCEA (inclusive of Learning Recognition Credits²) improved in 2020. Nationwide there was almost no change in the rate of attainment at NCEA Level 1 or above, a small positive change at NCEA Level 2 or above, with greater increases at NCEA Level 3 or UE standard and for attainment of UE standard.

Attainment rates of school leavers	2019	2020	2019-2020 (percentage point)
NCEA Level 1 or above	88.3%	88.4%	0.1pp
NCEA Level 2 or above	79.5%	80.8%	1.3pp
NCEA Level 3 or UE standard	55.0%	59.1%	4.1pp
University Entrance standard	40.4%	43.6%	3.2pp

- b. Māori school leaver attainment rates showed a decrease in NCEA Level 1 or above, no change for NCEA Level 2 or above. Increases for NCEA Level 3 or UE and attainment of UE standard were around national levels.
- c. Māori school leavers from Māori Medium Education (MME) continued to have a higher attainment rate across all NCEAs and UE standard in 2020, compared to Māori school leavers from English Medium Education (EME). Māori school leavers from MME had a decrease in NCEA Level 1 or above, but larger improvements in other NCEA levels and UE standard.
- d. In 2020, Pacific school leavers had the largest improvement in NCEA attainment rates, especially in NCEA Level 3 or UE.
- e. Retention of students who have remained at school until at least 17 years of age increased in 2020 after four years of decreases.
- f. There is a strong gradient in school leaver attainment across deciles, with all attainment and retention being consistently higher in high decile schools and lower in low decile schools.
- g. Auckland and Te Tai Tokerau had the highest attainment rate increase in both NCEA Level 2 or above and NCEA Level 3 or UE standard in 2020 compared to 2019.
- h. Student retention during 2020 was particularly high for Year 13 students and a higher proportion of students from Year 11 and 12 in 2020 were retained in school in 2021. The

¹ For school leaver reporting we collect attainment of UE standard from the attainment of UE award and attainment of UE standard from other non-NZQF assessments including International Baccalaureate (IB) or Cambridge International exams (CIE) or Accelerated Christian Education (ACE), or another overseas UE standard.

² To recognise and address the impact of COVID-19 disruption in 2020, everyone working towards NCEA was able to earn Learning Recognition credits, based on the number of credits achieved through internal and external assessment.

combined effect led to larger increases in the percentage of leavers attaining NCEA Level 3 or UE standard and UE standard.

- i. For school leavers who left school in 2019, 59.6% were enrolled in a tertiary qualification during 2020. This was almost the same as the proportion of school leavers who left school in 2018 (59.8%). The trends at the different levels of qualification have remained fairly flat for the last four years.
- j. The Ministry is implementing a package of changes to strengthen NCEA and ensure the national qualification meets these five principles - coherence, credibility, equity and inclusion, pathways and well-being. We are also working to ensure learners are able to see their culture, identity and language reflected in their learning.

Background

1. Each year, on Education Counts, the Ministry publishes indicators that describe school leavers' attainment of:
 - NCEA at Levels 1, 2 and 3,
 - University Entrance standard³,
 - Vocational Pathway awards, and
 - retention of students, the percentage of leavers aged 17 years or more.
2. In addition, we publish tertiary education destinations of the previous year's school leavers.
3. The Tertiary Education Commission uses the school leavers' data to provide reports on tertiary education destinations within its Ngā Kete toolkit. These reports are available to tertiary education organisations and secondary schools.
4. The school leavers' measure of NCEA attainment differs from the enrolment-based measure which NZQA provides to principals at the start of the year and publishes in its annual report. The school leavers' measure captures the attainment of all students who leave school each year. The enrolment based NCEA and UE statistics⁴ report attainment by year level among students who are still in school.

COVID-19 response

5. In response to COVID-19 in 2020, the Ministry and NZQA introduced a range of responses to NCEA to support students [METIS 1239965 refers]. These responses included:
 - Granting Learning Recognition Credits to students to recognise lost learning and assessment opportunities during the year;
 - Reducing the number of credits required for Merit and Excellence endorsements;
 - Reducing the number of credits required in each subject for University Entrance.
6. These responses were designed to support students to engage in and progress with their assessed learning, whilst maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualification. Additional learning recognition credits were made available to students in Auckland because of the additional COVID disruption in August.
7. NZQA provided you with a briefing on the impact of these interventions based on provisional results on 8 March 2021 [CR21878 refers] and provided final NCEA and UE attainment statistics to you on 15 April 2021 [CR 22173 refers]. Overall, the feedback from the sector demonstrates that the interventions had a strong motivational impact on students and overall were successful in maintaining engagement and student attainment.
8. Alongside the qualification response to COVID-19 disruption, there were significant other supports available for students and schools through 2020. NZQA and the Ministry provided guidance, templates, and resources to schools and kura to enable responsive assessment and

³ For school leaver reporting we collect attainment of UE standard from the attainment of UE award and attainment of UE standard from other non-NZQF assessments including International Baccalaureate (IB) or Cambridge International exams (CIE) or Accelerated Christian Education (ACE), or another overseas UE standard.

⁴ EBM measures the proportion of Year 11 students attaining NCEA Level 1, the proportion of Year 12 students attaining NCEA Level 2, and the proportion of Year 13 students attaining NCEA Level 3.

adjustments to course design, and support student learning during and after lockdowns. Examinations were also delayed in 2020 to provide more time for teaching and learning.

9. The Ministry also undertook analysis looking at how various measures of senior secondary engagement changed in 2020, and the results are broadly consistent with an increase in attainment. For example, the Ministry found that there was a large decrease in students leaving school in 2020⁵. The decrease was especially large for older students (aged 17+, likely to be in Year 13), Pacific students, lower decile schools, and students in Auckland. All these groups saw larger increases in attainment.
10. Another Ministry report of attendance⁶ found that school attendance for senior secondary students was higher in the weeks following both the national and Auckland lockdown than for the same weeks in 2019. (Barriers to attendance were concentrated in primary-aged students.) The Ministry is continuing to examine impacts that COVID-19 is having on various aspects of the education system.

⁵ More information is available [He Whakaaro: Is COVID-19 making students leave school? | Education Counts](#)

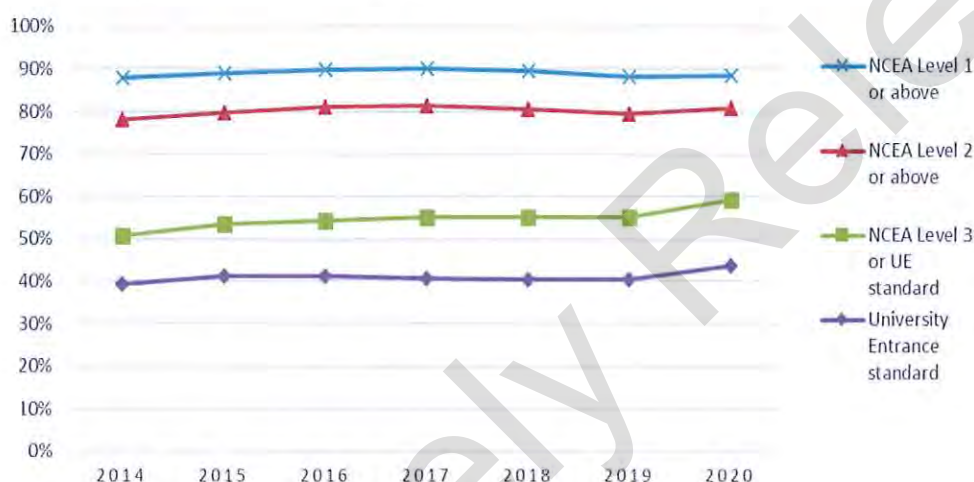
⁶ More information is available [He Whakaaro: How COVID-19 is affecting school attendance Publications | Education Counts](#)

The overall results

Nation-wide

11. There was an overall increase in school leavers' attainment rates for all NCEA Levels and UE standard in 2020, compared to 2019 (see Figure 1).
 - a. NCEA Level 1 or above increased 0.1 percentage points to 88.4%
 - b. NCEA Level 2 or above increased 1.3 percentage points to 80.8%
 - c. NCEA Level 3 or UE standard increased 4.1 percentage points to 59.1%
 - d. UE standard increased 3.2 percentage points to 43.6%.

Figure 1: School leavers' attainment, 2014 – 2020



12. Student retention is defined as school leavers, aged 17 or more when they leave school, as a percentage of all school leavers. Retention peaked at 85.0% in 2015. In 2020 student retention increased 0.7 percentage points to 83.5%, compared to 82.8% in 2019⁷.
13. This increase in retention contributes to the increase in school leaver attainment in 2020. Student retention during 2020 was particularly high for Year 13 students and a higher proportion of students from Year 11 and 12 in 2020 were retained in school in 2021. The combined effect led to larger increases in the percentage of leavers attaining NCEA Level 3 or UE standard and UE standard.
14. During 2020, the largest percentage reduction was in students leaving to go overseas, where the number of leavers dropped by more than half across the country. In addition, there were also large percentage reductions in students leaving for work or further education. This may indicate that COVID-19 induced students who may have chosen early tertiary pathways to remain in schooling.
15. In a normal year, a student may leave school mid-year because they enter employment or move overseas. In 2020, it was harder to do both things and the combination of the efforts from the Ministry and schools to support students and fewer opportunities elsewhere encouraged more students to stay enrolled.

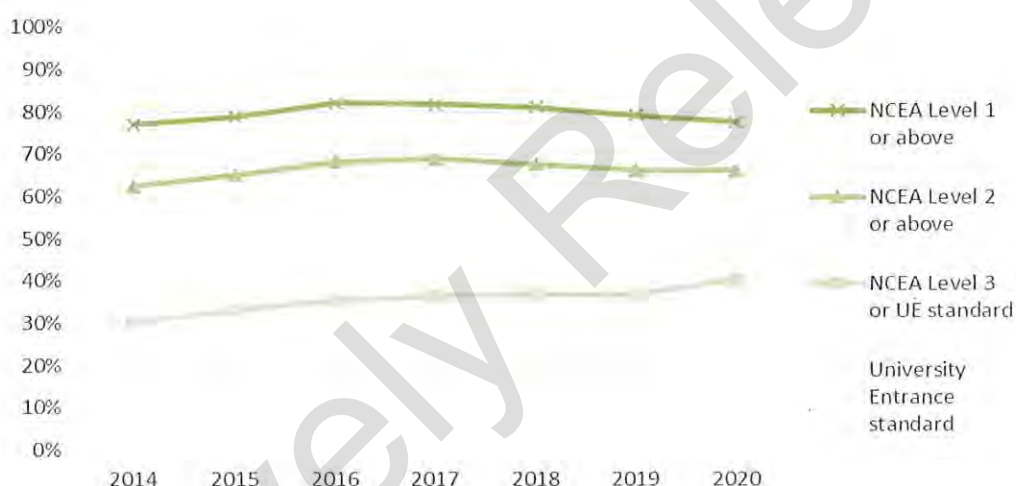
⁷ An in-depth analysis has been published in [He Whakaaro: Is COVID-19 making students leave school? | Education Counts](#).

16. Since 2014, the proportion of school leavers with NCEA Level 3 has grown from 50% to 60%. However, the proportion of attaining the UE standard hasn't experienced the similar growth, which increased from 40% - 44%. This raises concern that students may not be well supported to take subjects that would lead to study at degree-level.

Māori school leavers

17. Compared to 2019, Māori school leavers' attainment (see Figure 2) showed:
- A decrease in NCEA Level 1 or above (-1.6 percentage points to 77.5%)
 - An increase in NCEA Level 2 or above (0.1 percentage points to 66.1%)
 - An increase in NCEA Level 3 or UE standard (3.5 percentage points to 40.3%)
 - An increase in UE standard (2.4 percentage points to 21.9%, respectively)

Figure 2: Māori school leavers' attainment, 2014 – 2020



18. Māori school leavers' attainment was lower than national levels. In 2020, the gap in attainment rates ranged from 10.9 percentage points for NCEA Level 1 to 21.7 percentage points for the attainment of the UE standard.
19. The proportion of Māori students remaining at school until age 17 increased 0.3 percentage points from 70.7% in 2019 to 71.0% in 2020.
20. Māori student populations were not affected by the drivers of increased retention due to COVID-19 as other ethnic groups. Their population is not concentrated in Auckland, where the retention was higher.
21. The decrease in the category "NCEA level 1 or above" means that in 2020 the proportion of Māori students left school without any NCEA qualification increased compared to 2019. Around 60% (based on 2018 school leavers outcome data) are likely to experience limited employment during the year after leaving school.
22. The large increase in NCEA level 3 and in retention rate means there was a higher proportion of Māori students who stayed in school to attain higher qualifications in 2020, compared with 2019.

Māori Medium Education

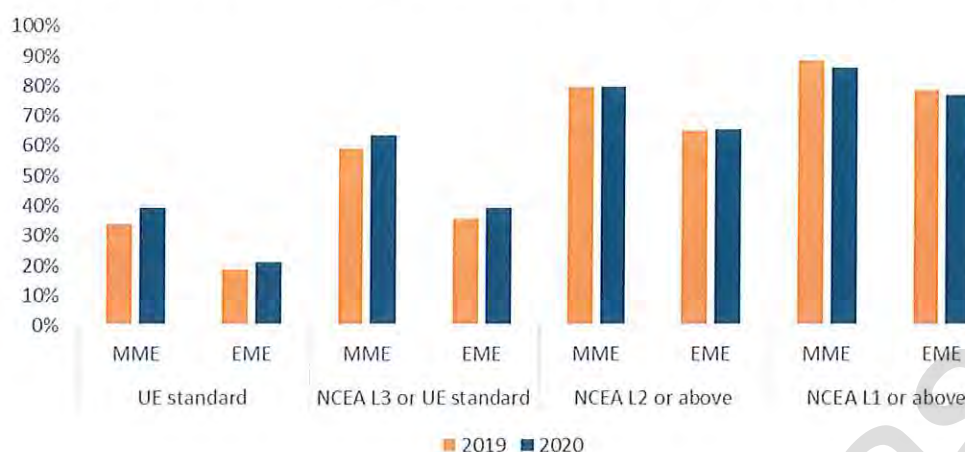
23. Of the 14,540 Māori students who left school in 2020, 4.6% of them were in Māori Medium Education (MME) when they left school (3.5% in 2014).
24. From 2014 to 2017, Māori school leavers' attainment in MME had only small fluctuations at all NCEA levels, with overall increases in 2018. Attainment of UE standard continued to increase in both 2019 and 2020 (see Figure 3).
25. Compared to 2019, Māori school leavers in MME 2020 attainment rates showed:
 - a. A decrease in NCEA Level 1 or above (-2.2 percentage points to 86.1%)
 - b. An increase in NCEA Level 2 or above (0.2 percentage points to 79.9%)
 - c. An increase in NCEA Level 3 or UE standard (4.7 percentage points to 63.7%)
 - d. An increase in UE standard (5.4 percentage points to 39.4%, respectively)

Figure 3: Attainment by Māori school leavers' in MME, 2014 – 2020



26. For NCEA Level 1 or above and NECA Level 2 or above these 2020 attainment rates were slightly lower than national levels (2.3 and 0.9 percentage points respectively). However, a higher proportion of these school leavers attained NCEA Level 3 or UE standard than national levels (63.7% compared to 59.1%).
27. Māori school leavers from MME had higher attainment rates across all NCEA levels and UE standard in 2020, compared to Māori school leavers from English Medium Education (EME) (see Figure 4).
28. Ākonga Māori are increasing as a proportion of our student population overall and the Ministry has taken actions to better serve these learners to reduce inequities. The refresh of Ka Hikitia and Tau Mai Te Reo helps that the education system is focused on the right things so that Māori learners enjoy education success as Māori and have the skills to contribute to Te Reo Māori, Aotearoa, and the wider world.

Figure 4: Māori school leavers in MME attained more highly in 2020 compared to 2019

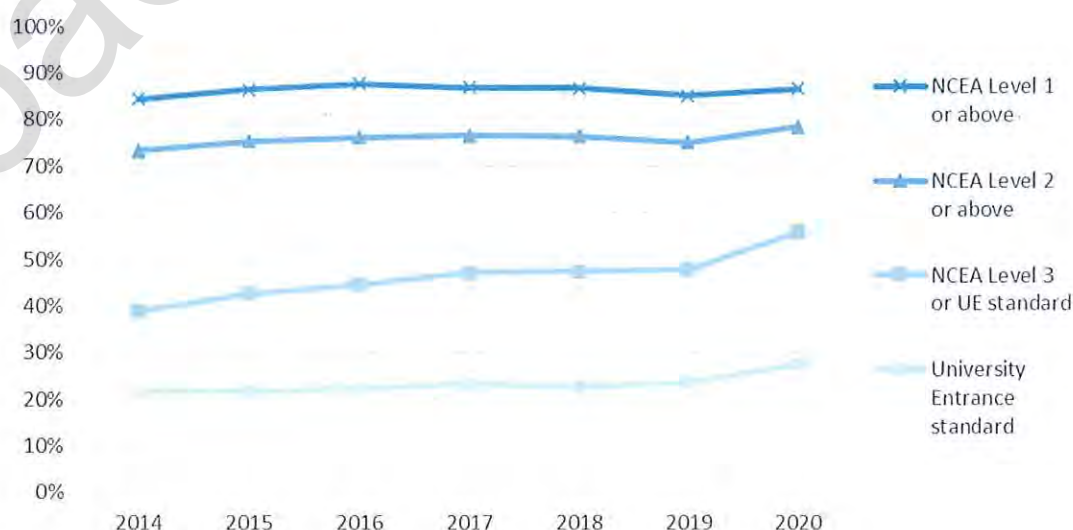


29. It is not unusual to have larger year to year variation in MME since the number of students is smaller. Retention of Māori students to age 17 is generally higher in MME than in EME.
30. In 2020 the proportion of Māori students from MME remaining at school until age 17 (76.3%) was higher than that of Māori students from EME (70.7%) but had a 5.7 percentage point decrease from 82.0% in 2019.

Pacific school leavers

31. In 2020, Pacific school leavers had the largest improvement in NCEA attainment, especially in attainment of NCEA Level 3 or UE standard (see Figure 5).
32. Compared to 2019, Pacific school leavers attainment rates increased at all levels in 2020:
- An increase in NCEA Level 1 or above (1.5 percentage points to 86.6%)
 - An increase in NCEA Level 2 or above (3.3 percentage points to 78.4%)
 - An increase in NCEA Level 3 or UE standard (8.0 percentage points to 55.8%)
 - An increase in UE standard (3.7 percentage points to 27.4%, respectively)

Figure 5: Pacific school leavers' attainment, 2014 – 2020



33. Pacific school leavers' attainment was lower than national levels. In 2020, the gap in attainment rates ranged from 1.8 percentage points for NCEA Level 1 to 16.2 percentage points for the attainment of the UE standard.
34. Pacific school leavers had the largest increase in retention, with a 1.9 percentage point increase from 82.7% in 2019 to 84.6% in 2020. This contributed to Pacific school leavers having the largest improvement in attainment.
35. The percentage of students going overseas dropped by four-fifths for Pacific students in Auckland. In addition, there were also large percentage reductions in students leaving for work or further education, with particularly large drops for Pacific students in Auckland, which implies that more Pacific students who may have chosen early tertiary pathways remained in schooling⁸.

By Decile

36. There is a strong gradient in school leaver attainment across deciles, with all attainment being consistently higher in high decile schools compared with low decile schools (see Figure 6).
37. Compared to 2019, 2020 school leavers from lower decile schools had larger improvement in attainment rate, especially in NCEA Level 3 or UE standard. For school leavers from decile 1 and 2 there was a 6.3 percentage point increase in attainment of NCEA Level 3 or UE standard, whereas for school leavers from decile 9 and 10 there was 2.4 percentage point increase.

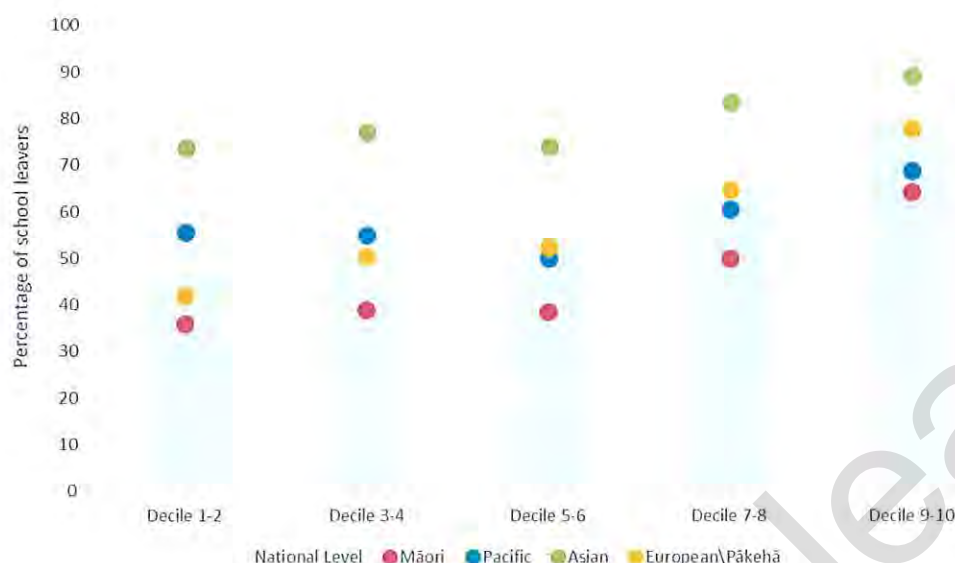
Figure 6: Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 3 or UE standard by decile (2019 and 2020)



38. In 2020, school leavers from lower deciles had a larger improvement in retention (1.3 percentage point increase in decile 1-2 compared to 0.2 percentage point increase for decile 9-10).
39. There is also a strong gradient in school leaver attainment by ethnicity across deciles. In 2020, 64.1% of Māori school leavers from deciles 9-10 schools attained NCEA Level 3 or UE standard. Whereas, the proportion of Māori school leavers from decile 1-2 schools was 35.8% (see Figure 7).
40. In 2020, Pacific school leavers from decile 1-2 schools and 3-4 schools had higher proportions attaining NCEA level 3 or UE standard than that for European/Pākehā school leavers.
41. Asian school leavers continued to have high proportion of attaining NCEA Level 3 or UE standard across all deciles, and decile 9-10 had the highest proportion (88.9%)

⁸ An in-depth analysis has been published in [He Whakaaro: Is COVID-19 making students leave school? Education Counts](#).

Figure 7: School leavers with NCEA Level 3 or UE standard by ethnicity and decile (2020)



By Education Area

42. Most education areas saw increases in attainment rates at NCEA Level 2 or above in 2020 compared to 2019 (see Figure 8). But decreases were observed in:

- Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast which decreased 0.7 percentage points from 78.9% to 78.2%
- Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatu decreased 0.5 percentage points from 79.8% to 79.3%
- Otago, Southland decreased 0.1 percentage points from 83.3% in 2019 to 83.2% in 2020.

43. Auckland and Te Tai Tokerau had the largest attainment rate increase for NCEA Level 2 or above and NCEA Level 3 or UE standard:

For NCEA Level 2 or above

- Auckland which increased 2.7 percentage points from 83.6% to 86.3%
- Te Tai Tokerau increased 2.6 percentage points from 72.9% to 75.5%.

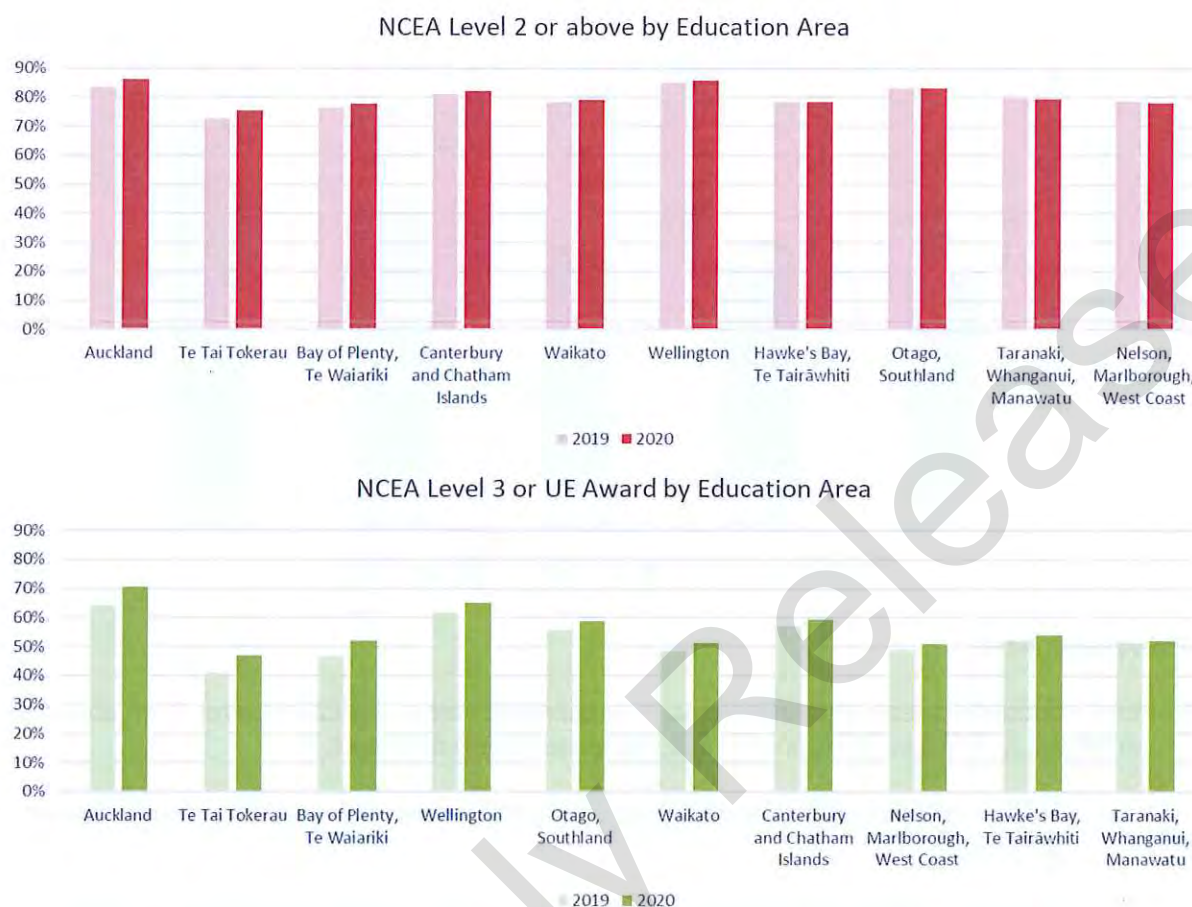
For NCEA Level 3 or UE standard

- Auckland increased 6.6 percentage points from 64.0% to 70.6%
- Te Tai Tokerau increased 5.8 percentage points from 41.1% to 46.9%

44. Auckland had the largest increase in retention rate between 2019 and 2020 (2.4 percentage points). In addition, Auckland had the highest retention to the end of 2020 (88.8% in Auckland compared to 83.5% at the national level), which may be due to more COVID-19 lockdown disruptions in Auckland.

45. Te Tai Tokerau had the second largest increase in retention rate between 2019 and 2020, increased 1.6 percentage points to from 72.4% in 2019 to 74.0% in 2020.

Figure 8: School leavers' attainment by Education Area 2019 – 2020



Vocational Pathway Awards

46. In 2020, 17.2% (10,374 students) of school leavers attained NCEA Level 2 with one or more Vocational Pathway Awards⁹. This is a decrease of 2.0 percentage points compared to 2019.

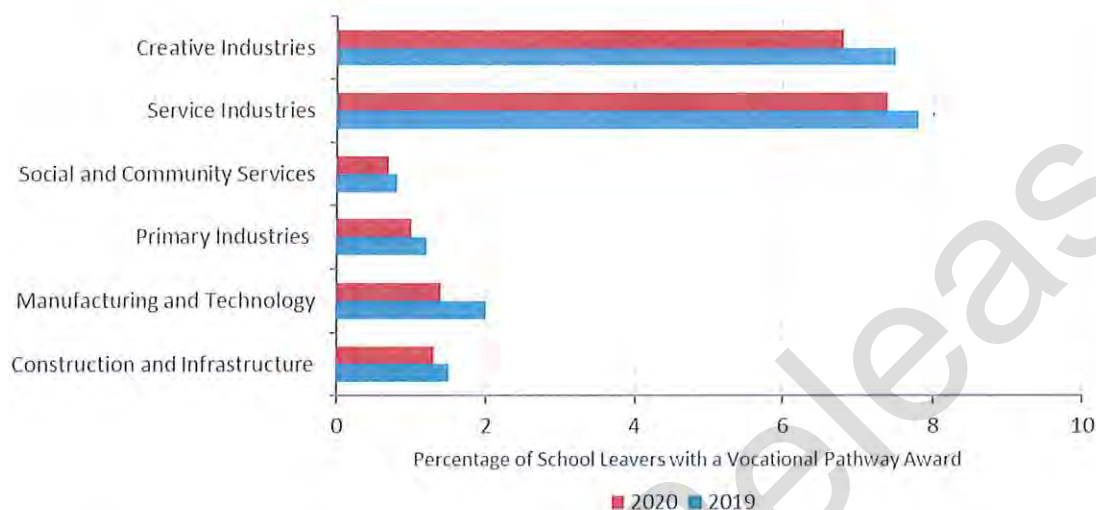
Figure 9: Percentage of school leavers with Vocational Pathway Awards (2013 – 2020)



⁹ More information about Vocational Pathways is available <https://youthguarantee.education.govt.nz/initiatives/vocational-pathways/>

47. A change in the requirements for the Vocational Pathways Awards came into effect in 2019¹⁰.
48. This decrease in 2020 compared to 2019 is primarily a result of a decrease in Creative Industry Awards (0.7 percentage points) and Manufacturing and Technology Awards (0.6 percentage points).

Figure 10: Distribution of Vocational Pathway Awards by Sector (2019 – 2020)



49. The overall decline in awards is something the Ministry will monitor, as we do want these Pathways to be able to adequately and meaningfully discriminate between the different vocational areas, though it may also reflect declining attainment caused by COVID-19 related disruption.
50. The Ministry's Secondary-Tertiary team in Early Learning and Student Achievement is currently reviewing the Vocational Pathways alongside the design of a new Vocational Entrance Award (name provisional) at Level 3. As a part of this work, they are exploring how pathways into further vocational education and training and pathways into employment can be strengthened, including opportunities provided by the Reform of Vocational Education.

2019 school leaver destination¹¹

51. Of the 60,003 students who left school in 2019, 59.6% were enrolled in a tertiary qualification at some time in 2020. This was almost the same as the proportion of school leavers who left school in 2018, with 59.8% enrolling in a tertiary qualification at some time in 2019 (See Figure 11).

¹⁰ 2020 is the first year where all students would have been attaining awards under the new criteria following the refinement of the criteria. Results from 2019 onwards cannot be sensibly compared to previous years.

¹¹ School leaver destinations here measure 2019 school leaver population enrolling in tertiary education during year 2020, not 2020 school leaver population the paper discussing in above paragraphs. The destinations are reported by the highest level of enrolment for each student in 2020.

Figure 11: Tertiary destinations of school leavers in their first year after leaving, by qualification level (2014 – 2019)



52. Compared to 2018 school leavers, there was almost the same proportion of 2019 school leavers enrolling at the different levels of tertiary education in 2020:

- Certificate Level 1-2 decreased 0.3 percentage points from 4.1% to 3.8%
- Certificate Level 3-7 and diplomas increased 0.2 percentage points from 23.7% to 23.9%
- Degree level or above qualifications decreased 0.1 percentage points from 32.0% to 31.9%.

53. In 2020, 46.3% of 2019 Māori school leavers enrolled in tertiary education, a decrease of 1.6 percentage points from the 2018 Māori school leavers enrolling in Tertiary in 2019.

54. During 2020, the proportion of 2019 Māori school leavers from MME enrolling in tertiary education was higher than 2019 Māori school leavers from EME (52.3% compared to 46.0%).

55. In 2020, 49.3% of 2019 Pacific school leavers, enrolled in tertiary education, a decrease 0.8 percentage points from 2019.

Next Steps

56. We will liaise with your office regarding the timing of the release on the Education Counts website.

57. Communications questions and answers are attached (Annex 5). We will continue to work with your office on communications surrounding this release.

Annexes

- Annex 1: Additional 2020 School Leaver Summary
- Annex 2: 2020 Māori School Leaver Summary
- Annex 3: 2020 Pacific School Leaver Summary
- Annex 4: 2019 School Leavers' Destination Summary
- Annex 5: Responding to 2020 school leavers' results
- Annex 6: Q&A

Proactively Released

Annex 1 Additional 2020 School Leaver Summary

School Leavers' Attainment

- Table 1 below shows that over the period of 2014-2020, school leavers' attainment has increased at all levels between 2009 and 2020. New University Entrance award requirements started in 2014.

Table 1: Percentage of school leavers attaining NCEA qualifications and UE standard, by level of attainment (2014 – 2020)

Attainment	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage point difference	
								2019-2020	2014-2020
University Entrance standard	39.3	41.2	41.1	40.7	40.5	40.4	43.6	3.2	4.3
NCEA Level 3 or UE standard	50.7	53.4	54.4	55.0	55.0	55.0	59.1	4.1	8.4
NCEA Level 2 or above	78.2	79.8	81.0	81.4	80.6	79.5	80.8	1.3	2.6
NCEA Level 1 or above	87.8	88.9	89.9	90.0	89.6	88.3	88.4	0.1	0.6
Vocational Pathway Award	30.5	29.7	33.1	34.7	30.4	19.2	17.2	-2.0	-13.3
Retained until at least 17-years-old	84.3	85.0	84.6	84.2	83.8	82.8	83.5	0.7	-0.8

- Vocational Pathway Awards offer a framework for students to see how their learning and achievement is valued by aligning selected Level 1 to 3 standards to the skills needed for industry, including specific 'sector-related' standards. Between 2018 and 2019, there was a big decrease that was expected due to significant changes in the requirements. These changes were expected to particularly affect Creative Industries and Service Industries pathways. In 2020, some of the Vocational Pathway Awards (e.g. construction) required students to be on site and this may have been restricted in the COVID-19 environment. Also 2020 is the first year where all students would have been attaining Vocational Pathway Awards under the new criteria.

Table 2: School leavers' Vocational Pathway Awards, 2014 – 2020

Vocational Pathway Award	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percentage point difference	
								2019-2020	2014-2020
Construction and Infrastructure	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.3	-0.2	-0.9
Manufacturing and Technology	2.2	1.7	2.8	2.8	2.4	2.0	1.4	-0.6	-0.8
Primary Industries	2.4	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.1	1.2	1.0	-0.2	-1.4
Social and Community Services	1.0	0.9	1.7	1.8	1.3	0.8	0.7	-0.1	-0.3
Service Industries	5.7	5.4	8.9	11.0	9.0	7.8	7.4	-0.4	1.7
Creative Industries	21.1	21.0	20.7	20.8	19.0	7.5	6.8	-0.7	-14.3
Any Vocational Pathway	30.5	29.7	33.1	34.7	30.4	19.2	17.2	-2.0	-13.3

Annex 2: 2020 Māori School Leaver Summary

All Māori school leaver attainment compared to national level:

Percent of school leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above Māori and Total (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Māori school leavers	77.0	78.8	82.0	81.8	81.1	79.1	77.5
National Level	87.8	88.9	89.9	90.0	89.6	88.3	88.4
Percentage point difference between Māori leavers and national level	-10.8	-10.1	-7.9	-8.2	-8.5	-9.2	-10.9

Percent of school leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above Māori and Total (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Māori school leavers	62.4	65.1	68.1	68.9	67.6	66.0	66.1
National Level	78.2	79.8	81.0	81.4	80.6	79.5	80.8
Percentage point difference between Māori leavers and national level	-15.8	-14.7	-12.9	-12.5	-13.0	-13.5	-14.7

Percent of school leavers with NCEA Level 3 or UE standard Māori and Total (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Māori school leavers	30.4	33.2	35.2	36.4	36.8	36.8	40.3
National Level	50.7	53.4	54.4	55.0	55.0	55.0	59.1
Percentage point difference between Māori leavers and national level	-20.3	-20.2	-19.2	-18.6	-18.2	-18.2	-18.8

Percent of school leavers with UE standard Māori and Total (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Māori school leavers	17.3	18.9	19.0	19.4	19.5	19.5	21.9
National Level	39.3	41.2	41.1	40.7	40.5	40.4	43.6
Percentage point difference between Māori leavers and national level	-22.0	-22.3	-22.1	-21.3	-21.0	-20.9	-21.7

Notes: Data in above tables, including totals, have been rounded to the nearest 0.1, so the sum of individual counts may not add to the total.

Māori school leaver in Māori Medium Education attainment (MME) compared to Māori school leaver in English Medium Education (EME):

Percent of school leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above, Māori in MME and Māori (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Māori school leavers from Māori Medium Education (MME)	87.0	86.0	87.9	86.4	88.8	88.3	86.1
Māori school leavers from English Medium Education (EME)	76.6	78.5	81.7	81.6	80.7	78.7	77.1
Percentage point difference between Māori leavers from MME and EME	10.4	7.5	6.2	4.8	8.1	9.6	9.0

Percent of school leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above, Māori in MME and Māori (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Māori school leavers from Māori Medium Education (MME)	77.3	78.2	80.2	76.2	81.1	79.7	79.9
Māori school leavers from English Medium Education (EME)	61.9	64.7	67.7	68.6	66.9	65.3	65.5
Percentage point difference between Māori leavers from MME and EME	15.4	13.5	12.5	7.6	14.2	14.4	14.4

Percent of school leavers with NCEA Level 3 or UE standard, Māori in MME and Māori (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Māori school leavers from Māori Medium Education (MME)	55.2	55.0	58.7	56.0	61.0	59.0	63.7
Māori school leavers from English Medium Education (EME)	29.5	32.5	34.4	35.6	35.6	35.7	39.2
Percentage point difference between Māori leavers from MME and EME	25.7	22.5	24.3	20.4	25.4	23.3	24.5

Percent of school leavers with UE standard, Māori in MME and Māori (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Māori school leavers from Māori Medium Education (MME)	29.7	33.0	31.9	30.6	32.6	34.0	39.4
Māori school leavers from English Medium Education (EME)	16.8	18.4	18.5	18.9	18.8	18.8	21.1
Percentage point difference between Māori leavers from MME and EME	12.9	14.6	13.4	11.7	13.8	15.2	18.3

Notes: Data in above tables, including totals, have been rounded to the nearest 0.1, so the sum of individual counts may not add to the total.

Annex 3: 2020 Pacific School Leaver Summary

Pacific school leaver attainment compared to national level:

Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 1 or above, by ethnicity (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Pacific school leavers	84.5	86.4	87.6	86.8	86.7	85.1	86.6
National level	87.8	88.9	89.9	90.0	89.6	88.3	88.4
Percentage point difference between Pacific leavers and national level	-3.3	-2.5	-2.3	-3.2	-2.9	-3.2	-1.8

Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above, by ethnicity (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Pacific school leavers	73.4	75.3	76.2	76.5	76.4	75.1	78.4
National level	78.2	79.8	81.0	81.4	80.6	79.5	80.8
Percentage point difference between Pacific leavers and national level	-4.8	-4.5	-4.8	-4.9	-4.2	-4.4	-2.4

Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 3 or standard, by ethnicity (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Pacific school leavers	39.0	42.7	44.6	47.1	47.4	47.8	55.8
National level	50.7	53.4	54.4	55.0	55.0	55.0	59.1
Percentage point difference between Pacific leavers and national level	-11.7	-10.7	-9.8	-7.9	-7.6	-7.2	-3.3

Percentage of school leavers with a UE standard, by ethnicity (2014 to 2020)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Pacific school leavers	21.7	21.9	22.3	23.3	22.7	23.7	27.4
National level	39.3	41.2	41.1	40.7	40.5	40.4	43.6
Percentage point difference between Pacific leavers and national level	-17.6	-19.3	-18.8	-17.4	-17.8	-16.7	-16.2

Notes: Data in above tables, including totals, have been rounded to the nearest 0.1, so the sum of individual counts may not add to the total.

Annex 4: 2019 School Leavers' Destination Summary

Percentage of school leaver enrolled in tertiary education one year after leaving school by year left school (2014-2019)

Qualification level	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percentage point difference	
							2018-2019	2014-2019
Degree level or above	32.5	33.4	32.5	32.2	32.0	31.9	-0.1	-0.6
Level 3 to 7 certificates and diplomas	24.4	23.5	23.4	24.3	23.7	23.9	0.2	-0.5
Level 1 and 2 certificates	8.0	7.0	5.7	4.6	4.1	3.8	-0.3	-4.2
Enrolled in Tertiary	64.9	63.9	61.6	61.1	59.8	59.6	-0.2	-5.3
Not Enrolled in Tertiary	35.1	36.1	38.4	38.9	40.2	40.4	0.2	5.3

Percentage of Māori school leaver enrolled in tertiary education one year after leaving school by year left school (2014-2019)

Qualification level	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percentage point difference	
							2018-2019	2014-2019
Degree level or above	13.6	14.4	13.8	14.3	14.3	13.7	-0.6	0.1
Level 3 to 7 certificates and diplomas	25.2	26.1	25.2	25.7	24.9	24.7	-0.2	-0.5
Level 1 and 2 certificates	16.0	14.2	11.6	9.8	8.7	7.9	-0.8	-8.1
Enrolled in Tertiary	54.8	54.7	50.6	49.8	47.9	46.3	-1.6	-8.5
Not Enrolled in Tertiary	45.2	45.3	49.4	50.2	52.1	53.7	1.6	8.5

Percentage of Māori school leaver from MME enrolled in tertiary education one year after leaving school by year left school (2014-2019)

Qualification level	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percentage point difference	
							2018-2019	2014-2019
Degree level or above	18.5	18.8	17.6	19.2	18.6	17.2	-1.4	-1.3
Level 3 to 7 certificates and diplomas	23.8	25.6	27.4	23.8	24.4	30.2	5.8	6.4
Level 1 and 2 certificates	13.6	10.1	8.0	7.6	6.2	5.0	-1.2	-8.6
Enrolled in Tertiary	55.9	54.5	53.0	50.6	49.2	52.4	3.2	-3.5
Not Enrolled in Tertiary	44.1	45.5	47.0	49.4	50.8	47.6	-3.2	3.5

Percentage of Pacific school leaver enrolled in tertiary education one year after leaving school by year left school (2014-2019)

Qualification level	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Percentage point difference	
							2018-2019	2014-2019
Degree level or above	19.9	20.4	19.4	20.3	20.0	19.2	-0.8	-0.7
Level 3 to 7 certificates and diplomas	28.8	27.4	26.2	26.3	25.7	26.0	0.3	-2.8
Level 1 and 2 certificates	9.9	8.4	7.4	5.4	4.4	4.1	-0.3	-5.8
Enrolled in Tertiary	58.6	56.2	53.0	52.0	50.1	49.3	-0.8	-9.3
Not Enrolled in Tertiary	41.4	43.8	47.0	48.0	49.9	50.7	0.8	9.3

NCEA Change Programme: How we are supporting Māori and Pacific learners

Through the NCEA Change Programme, we are implementing a package of seven changes to strengthen NCEA and ensure the national qualification meets these five principles - coherence, credibility, equity and inclusion, pathways and well-being.

We have also been working to ensure learners are able to see their culture, identity and language reflected in their learning. We believe that providing learners the opportunity to learn the histories, culture and language of their heritage and to have that learning recognised in a national qualification would be a significant step towards demonstrating the 'inclusion and equity' principle of the NCEA Change Programme.

- In line with this, we intend to develop five Pacific language subjects as Achievement Standards-based NCEA subjects. Three of these – Cook Islands Māori, Lea Faka Tonga, and Gagana Sāmoa – will be redevelopments of existing subjects.
- One of the key changes we are delivering is to ensure that mātauranga Māori is explicitly and equitably valued in NCEA. We are also seeking to ensure te ao Māori pathways are acknowledged and supported in NCEA. This will involve changes to the way ALL subjects are developed so that regardless of whether students/ākonga learn in Māori-medium or English-medium settings, the content of NCEA will demonstrate parity for te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori, ākonga Māori can see themselves reflected in the learning and assessment in the new NCEA, and all ākonga are aware of mātauranga Māori alongside other bodies of knowledge.
- In the Review of Achievement Standards (a large project to rebuild all NCEA Achievement Standards over the next three years),
 - a) we have recently developed NCEA Level 1 material for seven subjects aligned to Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMOA), the Māori-medium curriculum. These subjects include Hangarau, Pūtaiao, Ngā Toi, Tikanga-ā-lwi, Hauora, Pāngarau and Te Reo Rangatira. These subjects will be piloted in schools next year.
 - b) we have developed draft NCEA Level 1 material for Te Reo Māori, which is aligned to The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and delivered across English-medium and Māori-medium settings. This subject will be piloted in schools and kura next year.
 - c) draft learning material for all other Level 1 subjects aligned to NZC have been written by Subject Expert Groups which explicitly include mātauranga Māori in this content. Public feedback on this material is now being incorporated and assessment material is under development.
 - d) we are exploring opportunities to reflect mana ōrite (parity or equity) through the introduction of new mātauranga Māori subjects.
- We are currently piloting Te Ao Haka, a new Māori Performing Arts subject aligned to NZC, in 36 schools and kura, across all three NCEA levels and including recognition for University Entrance. Introducing Te Ao Haka as an NCEA subject with Achievement Standards is a significant step towards achieving equity (mana ōrite) for ākonga Māori and ensuring parity for Māori knowledge in our education system. [Note: Previously, Māori Performing Arts was not recognised as a subject in its own right with a set of achievement standards which contribute to University Entrance. This means it has often been treated as an extra-curricular activity, rather than a valued school subject.]
- Fees for NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship, which were a barrier for students in low decile schools, were removed in 2019.

Proactively Released

Annex 6: NCEA 2020 attainment data - Questions & Answers

1. What is school leaver attainment?

School leaver attainment is the highest qualification attained by the student prior to leaving school.

2. Why is it collected?

School leaver data helps us:

- monitor the outcome of students from the New Zealand education system
- support policy analysis and other national and international data collections
- see where more support may be needed.

3. How does it differ from the results released by NZQA earlier this year?

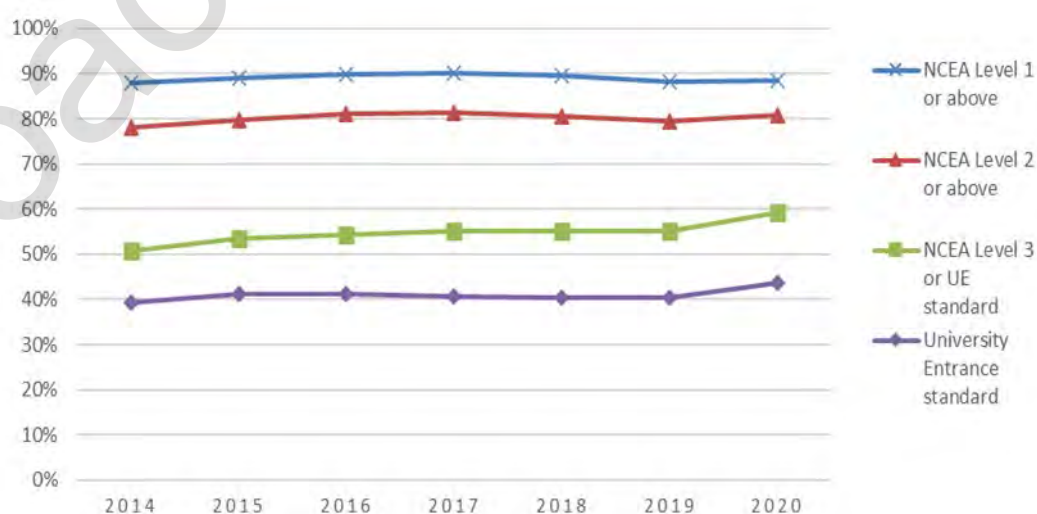
Data published by NZQA at the beginning of each year records NCEA attainment made by students as they progress through school but not necessarily their final attainment record. The NZQA statistics use year level to report on how many students are attaining the typical year level NCEA qualifications and UE Award among students who are still in school.

The school leaver data reports on the attainment of all students as they leave school.

4. What does the data show?

In 2020 there was an overall increase in school leavers' attainment of NCEA at all levels and the University Entrance compared to 2019. Specifically:

- NCEA Level 1 or above increased 0.1 percentage points to 88.4% in 2020 compared to 2019.
- NCEA Level 2 or above increased 1.3 percentage points to 80.8%
- NCEA Level 3 or University Entrance (UE) standard increased 4.1 percentage points to 59.1%
- UE Award increased 3.2 percentage points to 43.6%.



5. These numbers look positive. Are you pleased to see more ākonga | students achieving?

Absolutely. We are always pleased when more young people achieve their learning goals. We should celebrate their success. But it is concerning to see more Māori young people leaving school without any qualifications. We are implementing a range of strategies to better support these learners. (See Q9)

6. Why did attainment increase, despite so much classroom time being lost due to COVID-19?

There are many factors which will have impacted positively on student attainment last year, including the extraordinary support from schools, teachers and whānau – alongside the interventions put in place by government – which helped students to keep studying and have their learning recognised.

7. Did more learners stay in school last year?

Yes. Due to the unusual circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, far fewer students unenrolled from school during 2020, after a decreasing retention trend since 2014.

Part of the reason attainment increased in 2020 school leaver statistics is that retention to the end of the year increased, more students stayed enrolled in school to the end of the year, the retention during 2020 was particularly high for Year 13 students.

This is a good thing. The longer a student stays in school the better the chance of attaining qualifications.

In a normal year a student may leave school mid-year because they enter employment or move overseas. In 2020, it was harder to do both things and the combination of the efforts from the Ministry and schools to support students and fewer opportunities elsewhere encouraged more students to stay enrolled.

Retention to the end of 2020 and into 2021 was higher in Auckland. We think this means that the more disruption due to lockdowns increased the likelihood that students would stay enrolled.

Students from Year 11 and Year 12 in 2020 were also more likely to return to school in 2021 than the previous cohort (who were in Year 11 and 12 in 2019).

The net effect of the increased retention within the cohorts is that for 2020 school leavers there is a higher proportion of students who completed the school year and a higher proportion of Year 13 students than in 2019 because more students from Year 11 and Year 12 stayed in school in 2021.

The school leaver retention measure for Māori students in Māori Medium declined in 2020, because there was a lower proportion of students in Year 13 in 2020. It is not unusual to have larger year to year variation in trends in Maori Medium education since the number of students is smaller. Retention of Māori students to age 17 is generally higher in Māori Medium Education than in English Medium Education.

An in-depth analysis has been published in He Whakaaro/Education Insights: Is COVID-19 making students leave school? ([He Whakaaro: Is COVID-19 making students leave school? | Education Counts](#)).

8. What was done to support students?

The interventions in 2020 were developed by NZQA, the Ministry of Education and the NCEA Professional Advisory Group with input from a range of teachers and school leaders.

There was feedback that significant learning and assessment time had been disrupted for all students, and that many were losing confidence in their ability to achieve in 2020.

The interventions were designed to be proportionate to the disrupted opportunities which students faced and to provide them with the motivation to stay engaged in learning and assessment through the rest of the school year.

Feedback from students, teachers, and school leaders demonstrated that everyone worked extraordinarily hard through 2020, with national student attendance and retention higher than previous years.

9. What are you doing to support Māori and Pacific ākonga | learners?

While we should celebrate the hard work of our ākonga for achieving their learning goals, we are introducing changes aimed at supporting ākonga at risk of not achieving their goals, particularly those who are leaving education without qualifications.

Through the NCEA Change Programme, we are implementing a package of seven changes to strengthen NCEA and ensure the national qualification meets these five principles - coherence, credibility, equity and inclusion, pathways and well-being.

We have also been working to ensure learners are able to see their culture, identity and language reflected in their learning. We believe that providing learners the opportunity to learn the histories, culture and language of their heritage and to have that learning recognised in a national qualification would be a significant step towards demonstrating the 'inclusion and equity' principle of the NCEA Change Programme.

- In line with this, we intend to develop five Pacific language subjects as Achievement Standards-based NCEA subjects. Three of these – Cook Islands Māori, Lea Faka Tonga, and Gagana Sāmoa – will be redevelopments of existing subjects.
- One of the key changes we are delivering is to ensure that mātauranga Māori is explicitly and equitably valued in NCEA. We are also seeking to ensure te ao Māori pathways are acknowledged and supported in NCEA. This will involve changes to the way ALL subjects are developed so that regardless of whether students/ākonga learn in Māori-medium or English- medium settings, the content of NCEA will demonstrate parity for te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori, ākonga Māori can see themselves reflected in the learning and assessment in the new NCEA, and all ākonga are aware of mātauranga Māori alongside other bodies of knowledge.
- In the Review of Achievement Standards (a large project to rebuild all NCEA Achievement Standards over the next three years),

- a) we have recently developed NCEA Level 1 material for seven subjects aligned to Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMOA), the Māori-medium curriculum. These subjects include Hangarau, Pūtaiao, Ngā Toi, Tikanga-ā-iwi, Hauora, Pāngarau and Te Reo Rangatira. These subjects will be piloted in schools next year.
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 - d) we are exploring opportunities to reflect mana ōrite (parity or equity) through the introduction of new mātauranga Māori subjects.
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[Note: Previously, Māori Performing Arts was not recognised as a subject in its own right with a set of achievement standards which contribute to University Entrance. This means it has often been treated as an extra-curricular activity, rather than a valued school subject.]
 - Fees for NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship, which were a barrier for students in low decile schools, were removed in 2019.

10. How did Māori and Pacific attainment change relative to other ethnicities?

Despite the challenges of distance learning – attainment has improved for Māori and Pacific students, especially for NCEA level 3 or UE standard.

Pacific achievement has increased more than other groups because of the higher retention at all year levels, the improvement is even larger at level 3 for Pacific students due to the higher proportion of Year 13 students in the leaver population in 2020.

Attainment of NCEA Level 3 or UE standard increased to 40.3 percent amongst Māori school leavers (+3.5 percentage points), 55.8 percent for Pacific school leavers (+8.0 percentage points), 60.4 percent for European school leavers(+2.8 percentage points) and 81.3 percent for Asian students (+5.4 percentage points).

11. How did students in Auckland attain, compared to those in the rest of the country?

Auckland saw the highest attainment rate increase both in NCEA Level 2 or above and NCEA Level 3 or UE standard compared to 2019.

12. Can I get information by region/school/?

Attainment by region is published on our education counts website, from the statistics page. Attainment by school is available on our education counts website, from the Find Your Nearest School page.

Note that the school leaver data used to report attainment does not allow accurate like-for-like comparisons between schools.

13. Does the increase in attainment mean that too many Learning Recognition Credits were awarded?

There are many factors which will have impacted on student attainment last year, and the 2020 attainment statistics suggest that students and schools broadly adapted well. NZQA and the Ministry received feedback from schools that the mitigations gave students confidence that they would not be disadvantaged compared to previous years and encouraged students to stay engaged in their learning and assessment. Schools reported that for many students, knowing the adjustments to NCEA and UE were made gave a much-needed reduction in worry and stress at a very difficult time.

14. Did you consult the sector?

Learning Recognition Credits were announced by Education Minister Chris Hipkins on in early June 2020, following extensive sector consultation. At the time, Minister Hipkins said COVID-19 created "massive" disruption to the school system, and the Government was moving to ensure students would not be penalised, while preserving the integrity of the national qualification.

The announcement was supported by SPANZ and positively received by students, teachers and school leaders.

15. What would have happened to attainment if Learning Recognition Credits and changes to UE had not been available?

There are many factors which impact on student attainment, which makes the impact of any one factor such as the LRCs or different UE criteria difficult to estimate with certainty.

NZQA has however modelled 2020 NCEA and UE attainment without the modifications in place. This modelling shows that attainment would have fallen well below 2019 levels for all demographics.

NZQA estimates attainment of NCEA Level 1 (Year 11) would have reduced by 9.2 percentage points from 2019, Level 2 (Year 12) would have dropped 4.2 percentage points, Level 3 (Year 13) would have decreased 4.5 percentage points and University Entrance would have reduced by 8.3 percentage points from 2019.

It's been very clear from school feedback that the mitigations had a major effect on student engagement and building student confidence, which schools believe was a critical factor in attainment.

16. Did you over-correct and offer too much support?

Mitigations were based on the best evidence and assessment that we were able to make in the circumstances. NZQA believes that, any lower level of mitigation would have been unlikely to have delivered the necessary level of confidence from students which had a beneficial effect on engagement and attainment.

17. Why is the increase in NCEA Level 3 and UE attainment higher than for NCEA Levels 1 or 2?

Schools have reported that significant effort was put into supporting NCEA Level 3 students in particular; and this may partially explain the somewhat higher increase at NCEA Level 3 and UE compared to the NCEA Level 1 and 2 increases. Retention also increased in 2020 and 2021 which has contributed to increased attainment. Student retention during 2020 was particularly high for Year 13 students and a higher proportion of students from Year 11 and 12 in 2020 were retained in school in 2021. The combined effect led to larger increases in the percentage of leavers attaining NCEA Level 3 or UE standard and UE standard.

18. If there's a re-emergence of COVID-19, would we put the same mitigations in place at the same level?

In the event of another regional or national lockdown, the Ministry, NZQA and the NCEA Professional Advisory Group will work with the sector to understand the level of disruption and ensure appropriate interventions are applied as required. This would be informed by our understanding of the impact of the interventions last year, and the level of readiness within schools and the education system.

We would aim to ensure we provide learners the opportunity to validly demonstrate their learning and have it credentialled towards a qualification, while ensuring the response is equitable and credible.

19. Do you expect attainment to drop in 2021, given that the 2020 interventions will not be carried forward?

A range of factors likely contributed to the 2020 attainment results. We cannot say what attainment might be like in 2021 because a key driver was work put in by students, teachers and whānau. That could decrease without a range of interventions. We are focussed on ensuring students have valid opportunities to participate in learning and assessment and will continue to work with the sector to offer appropriate support should further disruptions occur.