

Higher Education in New Zealand

There is an extensive system of post compulsory education and training in New Zealand. This includes universities, polytechnics, teacher training, and various private education institutions (PTE).

- Higher, degree-level education is mainly offered at universities. Programmes are research-led and generally academic, as distinct from vocational.
- Vocational degree level education is offered at polytechnics and a few larger PTEs. Such degrees tend to be specific and applied.
- PTEs' programmes are mostly in specific vocational niches at certificate and diploma level.

Universities: There are eight universities in New Zealand, providing a wide array of subject area studies at all levels from bachelor's through doctoral degrees.. All universities offer courses in the usual faculties of arts, science, and commerce. Most universities specialize in certain fields.

Polytechnics: Polytechnics provide a diverse range of academic, vocational, and professional programs and cover an increasing number of subjects at various levels of specialization. There are 23 polytechnics in New Zealand. Polytechnics, which are more career-focused than universities, offer certificates, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and some doctoral degrees.

Bachelor's degrees take from three to four years to complete, depending on the subject, with Honors degrees typically taking a year longer. Master's degrees can be earned in one to two years and doctoral degrees are available at the universities and some polytechnics.

Private training establishments: which provide vocational training, offer diplomas, certificates and some degrees, with the focus on getting the student into the workforce quickly. There are large numbers of private training establishments (PTEs) in New Zealand, of which about 800 are registered with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). PTEs that enrol foreign students are required by law to have course approval and accreditation from the NZQA. The legislation provides protection for foreign students who pay tuition fees in advance. PTEs offer a wide range of courses, often in niche markets.

New Zealand Qualifications Framework

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) contains a comprehensive list of all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand. All qualifications that are worth 40 credits or more and have been quality assured by a recognised quality assurance body are eligible to be added to the NZQF

The NZQF has ten levels of qualification. Each level is based on the complexity of learning, with level 1 the least complex and level 10 the most. Each level has a designated credit value and qualification type. The table below shows the levels and types of qualification on the NZQF.

Level	Qualifications Type
10	Doctorate
9	Masters Degrees
8	Postgraduate diplomas and certificates, Bachelors degrees with Honours
7	Bachelors Degree, Graduate diplomas and certificates
6	Diplomas
5	
4	Certificates
3	
2	
1	

Admission criteria for universities and polytechnics varies by institution with some having open admissions after minimum requirements are met while others have selective admissions criteria. Unlike most countries where completion of secondary school is the minimum requirement, New Zealand's universities and polytechnics require completion of specific subjects and levels which may vary by school and program. Some programs also require portfolios or interviews. In general, polytechnics have less rigorous requirements than the universities.

Tuition fees are reasonable for undergraduate programs when compared with tuition in the US and other western countries but can get quite expensive for some graduate programs, especially those in business.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education is responsible for higher education budgeting, strategy and statistics and the Tertiary Education Council is responsible for funding. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority is the primary body responsible for higher education quality assurance and all reputable institutions will be registered with this body.

International Students.

According to a 2009 UNESCO report, over 33,000 international students attended a higher education institution in New Zealand with over 5,000 of those students coming from North American and Western Europe. International students can choose to apply as full degree students, as exchange students through their current schools or as independent study abroad students who will attend for only one or two semesters.

Admissions requirements for degree programs vary by country and university and in some cases require students to have already completed some college and/or have received above average scores on standardized tests in their own country. Some universities also offer foundation level coursework to prepare students for a degree program if they don't qualify for a degree program initially. Those whose primary language is not English may have to pass a standardized language exam.

The New Zealand Government has put in place strong national quality assurance systems, designed to help institutions maintain the quality and consistency of training and assessment programmes. All courses, programmes and qualifications offered by registered providers must be approved by the NZQA. Education providers (such as English language schools) that are **not registered** with NZQA cannot offer an officially recognised course. New Zealand Immigration will not issue a permit unless for an approved course.

Rights of International Students in New Zealand studying at a PTE

As a student in New Zealand you have certain rights:

- NZQA requires all registered PTEs to have policies and procedures for student withdrawals and refunds. You should have received this information from your PTE before you enrolled.
- Registered PTEs must have adequate protection of student fees in the event of their insolvency, de-registration by NZQA and/or partial or complete loss of accreditation.
- If you have any issues with your provider you can make an official complaint to NZQA.

International comparability of tertiary qualifications

Bachelors degrees from New Zealand tertiary education providers are comparable overall to:

- British Bachelors (Ordinary) degrees
- Australian Bachelors degrees
- US Bachelors degrees.

New Zealand Bachelors degrees are recognised for enrolment in postgraduate programmes at universities throughout the world, subject to the normal grade and subject specialisation requirements. Australia and New Zealand have declared mutual recognition of vocational education and training qualifications.

New Zealand is a member of the Lisbon Qualification Recognition Convention. This means that New Zealand qualifications are more easily recognised in each of the 50 Lisbon convention countries. The Lisbon Convention is recognised as setting international best practice for assessing and comparing qualifications from around the world. Along with New Zealand, signatories to the Lisbon Convention include the UK, France, Germany, Italy, USA, Canada and Australia.