

# TOP SCHOLAR

# AWWARDS



**NZQA**  
Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

**OFFICIAL PROGRAMME**

Banquet Hall, Parliament, Wellington,  
7 May 2025

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Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority



# Introduction

The Top Scholar Awards recognise the highest achieving students from the 2024 New Zealand Scholarship examinations.

The Top Scholar Awards ceremony was initiated by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) | Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa in 1991 and the first awards were hosted at Government House, Wellington, in April of that year.

Following the introduction of New Zealand Scholarship in 2004, the awards became the New Zealand Scholarship Top Scholar Awards. Two types of awards were presented – Top Subject Scholar Awards and Premier Awards.

In 2011, the Prime Minister's Award for Academic Excellence was established and presented for the first time.

## About the awards

### Top Subject Scholar Awards

Top Subject Scholar Awards recognise the highest achieving student in an individual New Zealand Scholarship subject. There are 37 Top Subject Scholar Awards.

### Premier Awards

Premier Awards recognise the top New Zealand Scholarship students. At this year's ceremony, there are 12 Premier Award winners.

### Prime Minister's Award for Academic Excellence

The Prime Minister's Award for Academic Excellence recognises the success of the highest achieving New Zealand Scholarship student. The winner will have the highest overall level of academic excellence of the Premier Award winners.

The Premier Award winners and the winner of the Prime Minister's Award for Academic Excellence have been recommended to NZQA by the Technical Overview Group Assessment (TOGA).

TOGA is chaired by Professor Jenny Poskitt and includes some of New Zealand's leading academic experts in assessment – Professor Don Klinger (Deputy Chair), Professor Gavin Brown, Professor Jeffrey Smith, Professor Sharleen Forbes, Dr Charles Darr, Dr Maraea Hunia (Mātaatua, Te Arawa, Tainui), Dr Earl Irving, Dr Michael Johnston, Dr Elliot Lawes, and Dr Piata Allen (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Hinemanu, Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa).

## Official Programme

<b>2:00pm</b>	All guests are seated. Ceremony begins with a karakia, mihi and waiata, <i>Hūtia te rito</i> .
<b>2:15pm</b>	New Zealand Qualifications Authority Board Chair, speaks.
<b>2:20pm</b>	Presentation of the Top Subject Scholar Awards.
<b>2:40pm</b>	Minister of Education speaks.
<b>2:45pm</b>	Presentation of the Premier Awards.
<b>3:05pm</b>	Presentation of The Prime Minister's Award for Academic Excellence.
<b>3:15pm</b>	Ceremony ends with the singing of the National Anthem.
<b>3:20pm</b>	Official photographs. Refreshments served.
<b>4:00pm</b>	Event draws to a close.

## Our thanks to the musicians from Wellington High School and Te Kura Māori o Porirua

## Top Subject Scholars

Accounting	<b>Natasha Deakin</b> Mount Albert Grammar School
Agricultural and Horticultural Science	<b>Ethan Gee</b> Wellington College
Art History	<b>Mason Drylie</b> Westlake Boys' High School
Biology	<b>Monique Faire</b> Aquinas College
Calculus	<b>Nicholas McKinlay</b> St Kentigern College
Chemistry	<b>Simon Zhou</b> Westlake Boys' High School
Chinese	<b>Yinuo Yin</b> St Cuthbert's College
Classical Studies	<b>Frank Ison</b> Glendowie College
Dance	<b>Frances Damu</b> Mount Roskill Grammar School
Design	<b>Yufan Yang</b> Bethlehem College
Design and Visual Communication	<b>Donatella Paton</b> Epsom Girls' Grammar School
Drama	<b>Aliki Wilson-Lousi</b> Dilworth School
Earth and Space Science	<b>Samuel Reeves</b> Mount Albert Grammar School
Economics	<b>Thomas Raybould</b> Westlake Boys' High School

English	<b>Clara Ballantyne</b> Columba College
French	<b>Anika Hayes</b> Waitaki Girls' High School
Geography	<b>Davin Yuan</b> Westlake Boys' High School
German	<b>Leon Kment</b> Michael Park School
Health and Physical Education	<b>Simon Zhou</b> Westlake Boys' High School
History	<b>Clara Ballantyne</b> Columba College
Japanese	<b>Ayaka Yamaguchi</b> Takapuna Grammar School
Latin	<b>Alan Chen</b> St Kentigern College
Media Studies	<b>Mason Drylie</b> Westlake Boys' High School
Music	<b>YuYang Ding</b> Westlake Boys' High School
Painting	<b>Ida Scott</b> Cashmere High School
Photography	<b>Violet Boniface</b> Wellington East Girls' College
Physics	<b>Alexander Mathieson</b> Hillcrest High School
Printmaking	<b>Saffron Mogridge</b> Rangi Ruru Girls' School
Religious Studies	<b>Mason Drylie</b> Westlake Boys' High School
Samoan	<b>Monica Lemalu</b> Mangere College
Sculpture	<b>Albert Siasau</b> Liston College
Spanish	<b>Ayman Zewada</b> Rongotai College
Statistics	<b>Ysabella Ho</b> Burnside High School
Te Ao Haka	<b>Mareikura Mahaki</b> Rotorua Girls' High School
Te Reo Māori	<b>Waikoru Wikaira</b> Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Tonga o Hokianga
Te Reo Rangatira	<b>Temaea Teaki</b> Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Koutu
Technology	<b>Lucian Petherick</b> Wellington High School

# Premier Scholars

## Clara Ballantyne

Columba College

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Art History, English, History and Statistics

**Scholarship:** Geography

**Top Subject Scholar:** English and History



Clara was Dux of Columba College, where she served as an Academic Prefect. She was the Captain of her school and regional debating teams and lead the New Zealand Secondary School team to the World Competition in Serbia.

A former competitive dancer, Clara performed at the Red Cross Humanitarian Concert for Ukraine and achieved high honours in both Cecchetti Ballet and Jazz Dance. She has been involved in various volunteer activities, including tutoring ESOL students, coaching debate teams, and raising money for girls schooling in Kenya and Tanzania as part of the 'So They Can' initiative. Clara is passionate about equity in women's health and has participated in both the New Zealand Model Parliament and Model United Nations.

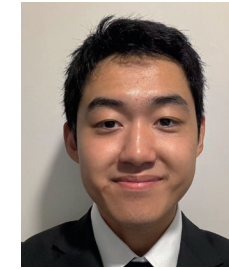
Clara is the recipient of the Girdlers' Scholarship for 2025 and will study History and Politics at the University of Cambridge. She intends to pursue a career in diplomacy or foreign policy, with a particular focus on Pacific relations and climate change impacts.

## Tianlang (William) Gong

Auckland Grammar School

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Chemistry, English, Physics and Statistics

**Scholarships:** Agricultural and Horticultural Science, Calculus and Geography



William served as the leader of Auckland Grammar School's Amnesty International Group and was involved with football, table tennis, the Premier Chamber Orchestra, and the Headmaster's Committees. Beyond school, he competed in the New Zealand Maths Olympiad, was the head organiser of the 2024 Auckland Science Bowl Competition and a geometry instructor for MINDNZ, a non-profit organization offering maths problem solving tutorials to high school students via Zoom. In 2023, he won the New Zealand Young Physicists' Tournament, and in 2024, he was selected to be part of the New Zealand Young Physicists' Tournament Squad from which the national team was chosen. He also received the Flying Officer Alfred P. Fogerty Memorial Scholarship for ranking first in Year 12 at his school, the Gold Award at the New Zealand Chemistry Olympiad and was a shortlisted candidate for the Sir Douglas Myers Scholarship.

He is currently studying a Bachelor of Science majoring in Mathematics at the University of Auckland.

## Mason Drylie

Westlake Boys' High School

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Art History, English, Media Studies and Religious Studies

**Scholarships:** Classical Studies and Geography

**Top Subject Scholar:** Art History, Media Studies and Religious Studies



Mason was previously recognised as the Top Subject Scholar in Media Studies as a Year 11 student. He achieved this award again as a Year 12 student, adding awards for Art History and Religious Studies. Now completing Year 13 at Westlake, Mason serves as a Prefect and represents the school at debating, competing in the Premier Advanced League.

A talented musician, Mason enjoys playing the piano and writing music, and is a member of the Westlake Symphonic Band. He has created several short films and media projects, contributing to the media teams for Westlake's Academic Council and UNICEF.

Possessing a talent for writing, Mason contributes to the student newspaper and in 2024 won the Paul Seideman Scholarship for his essay evaluating how Holocaust commemoration has changed over time.

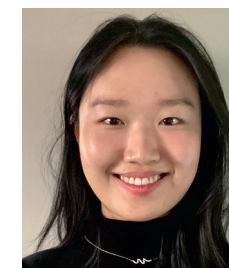
Mason plans to pursue a double major in English and Philosophy at university, aiming for an eventual Master's Degree and a future in lecturing or writing.

## Lianne Kim

Rangitoto College

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Agricultural and Horticultural Science, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Geography and Health and Physical Education

**Scholarships:** Calculus, Physics and Statistics



Throughout her time at Rangitoto College, Lianne was a member of the Academic Committee, participated in the Premier Advanced debating team, and served as a debating coach. She volunteered to aid junior Mathematics students and taught violin to children for three years. Lianne was named Dux of Rangitoto College in 2024 and amassed a truly remarkable amount of NCEA Excellence credits in her time at the school. She holds a Trinity College London Diploma in Violin performance and was selected for the KBB Music Festival Honours Programme.

Lianne's accolades include the Physics subject cup in Year 12, the Statistics subject cup in Year 13, and a Year 12 Leadership Award. She also competed in the New Zealand Brain Bee Challenge, an international neuroscience competition.

Lianne has been awarded a University of Auckland Top Achievers' Scholarship and is currently studying Biomedical Science there. She aims to pursue a career in medicine, with a particular interest in surgery.

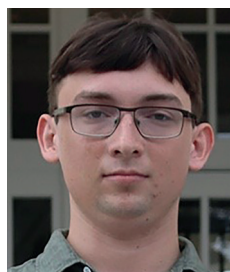
# Premier Scholars

## Jacob Miller

Mount Albert Grammar School

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Calculus, Economics and Physics

**Scholarships:** Biology, Chemistry, Classical Studies, Earth and Space Science, Geography and Statistics



In 2024 Jacob was named Mount Albert Grammar School Proxime Accessit and won an impressive set of school awards including first place in Economics, the Joseph Shaw Senior Chemistry Prize and the Bull Mathematics Prize.

As a member of the New Zealand Biology Olympiad Team, he earned a Bronze medal at the international competition in Armenia in 2022, and a Silver medal in the United Arab Emirates in 2023. He secured 1st place in the University of Auckland Engineering Science Competition in 2024 and was part of the team that placed 3rd in the New Zealand Senior Math Competition in 2023. He received an Honorable Mention as a New Zealand qualifier in the International Mathematical Modelling Challenge and earned a High Distinction in the New Zealand Economics Competition.

Jacob's extracurricular interests include playing table tennis, curling, and chess.

Jacob earned a Top Achiever Scholarship from the University of Auckland and is now studying a Bachelor of Science there, majoring in Mathematics and Statistics.

## Luca Ririnui

Mount Maunganui College

Ngāi Te Rangi

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Biology, Chemistry, English, History and Statistics

**Scholarships:** Calculus, Earth and Space Science, Geography and Physics



Luca was named Dux of Mount Maunganui College in 2024, having been top student every year he attended. He served as an Academic Prefect and volunteered his time tutoring, coaching debating and contributing to STEM programs like STEAM-ED Robotics and the Rotary National Science & Technology Forum. A keen badminton player, Luca was selected for the Bay of Plenty regional team four years in a row.

His accolades include being awarded a Royal Society London International Youth Science Forum Scholarship in 2023, a Gold Medal in the New Zealand International Biology Olympiad, a Bronze Medal at the 2024 International Biology Olympiad in Kazakhstan, representing New Zealand at the 2024 World Schools Debating Championships in Serbia, Best Speaker at the 2024 New Zealand Schools Debating National Championships, and multiple VEX Robotics and Sheilah Winn Shakespeare National Festival awards.

Luca is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Science at the University of Auckland. He aims to work in the neuroscience of mental illness, particularly in neuropharmacology or neurotechnology, as a researcher or in a related role.

## Thomas Raybould

Westlake Boys' High School

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Art History, Biology, Classical Studies, Economics and English

**Scholarships:** Geography and Media Studies

**Top Subject Scholar:** Economics



Thomas was named Dux of Westlake Boys' High School in 2024 and served the school as a Prefect, House Captain, a leader of the Academic Council and the student representative on the Board of Trustees.

Thomas is a true all-rounder and participated in a vast array of activities whilst a student at Westlake Boys. A talented cricketer, he represented Westlake in the 1st XI, coached younger students, and played for his local club side. He also plays football and basketball socially and enjoys tutoring and baking.

Thomas was the Debating Captain in his final year of school and debated in the premier regional divisions for several years.

Thomas was awarded The Sir George Elliot Charitable Trust scholarship, which contributes towards the tertiary education of outstanding school leavers. He is now studying a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Politics and International Relations, and aspires to work as a diplomat or archaeologist.

## Jifei Shao

St Cuthbert's College

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Chemistry, Classical Studies, Geography, Health and Physical Education, History, Physics and Statistics

**Scholarships:** Art History, Biology, Calculus, Earth and Space Science, English and Music



Jifei was Deputy Head Girl and Dux (NCEA) at St Cuthbert's College, excelling across multiple disciplines. She represented New Zealand at the International Biology Olympiad, winning a Silver Medal in Kazakhstan in 2024 and a Bronze in 2023 in the UAE. She was awarded a Gold in the New Zealand Chemistry Olympiad and a Platinum Award in the New Zealand Biology Olympiad.

Beyond academics, she ranked 5th in Premier Advanced Auckland Debating and served as both a coach and adjudicator. She co-led SAGE, an initiative delivering STEM education via Zoom, and co-founded a fundraising initiative for the Starship Foundation.

A keen performer, Jifei was the Choir Leader of Saints Alive which received Gold at the Big Sing, and was a Runner-up in the National School Production at the Sheilah Winn Shakespeare Festival. As a cello soloist, she was a semi-finalist in the National Young Performer Awards, and with the school's Sebastian Squad, she won the KBB Outstanding Soloist Award.

Jifei was the recipient of a University of Auckland Top Achiever Scholarship and is currently studying Biomedical Science there.

# Premier Scholars

## Devin Shen

Westlake Boys' High School

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Calculus, Chemistry, Earth and Space Science and Physics

**Scholarships:** Agricultural and Horticultural Science, Economics, English and Statistics



Devin was named as Westlake Boys' Proxime Accessit for 2024, excelling across a number of subjects, particularly Maths and Sciences. He enjoys running, playing basketball with friends and playing the drums and clarinet.

Devin is a talented musician, serving as the clarinet section leader in various premier musical groups. He represented his school in debating, volunteered as a tutor at a local primary school and was an integral member of Westlake's Interact group. He was a Top 10 Year 13 student in round 1 of the New Zealand Physics and Mathematics competition and also placed 4th in the NZ Economics Competition in 2024. Devin's dedication to his community and his humble leadership make him a standout student.

Devin is in his first year studying Engineering at the University of Auckland and hopes to specialise in Software Engineering and secure a programming role in the future. Alongside his studies, he tutors high school students on the North Shore.

## Yina (Ena) Yin

St Cuthbert's College

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Calculus, Chemistry and Statistics

**Scholarships:** Art History, Chinese, Economics, English, Health and Physical Education and Physics



Ena is receiving a Premier Award for the second year in a row. She was awarded IB DUX of St Cuthberts College in 2024 and has amassed an impressive number of scholarships and medals in international competitions in Chemistry, Informatics, Mathematics, and Physics.

A passionate pianist, Ena competes both as a soloist and in duets with her sister, and is completing her LTCL piano diploma. She was an accompanist for her school choir and chapel services, and actively participated in various clubs, including founding the Coding Club and leading the music and robotics clubs.

Ena is an empowerment volunteer at UN Women Aotearoa NZ, organising events and campaigns. She enjoys dancing, extreme sports, and holds a PADI scuba diving license, with plans to acquire skydiving and aviator licenses.

Ena is the platform coordinator at Founder VC and is considering offers to study at Stanford University, Oxford University and the California Institute of Technology. She aims to revolutionise the pharmaceutical industry, using innovative models to improve drug research and distribution.

## Daniel Xian

St Kentigern College

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Calculus, Chemistry, Physics and Statistics

**Scholarships:** Economics and English



Daniel has earned numerous accolades during his time at Saint Kentigern College, including the prestigious 2024 P. G. Hadfield Prize for Top in Year 12 IB. He has excelled in various competitions, securing a Gold medal in the New Zealand Chemistry Olympiad and a Silver medal at the International Chemistry Olympiad in Saudi Arabia, the highest New Zealand ranking in 30 years. Daniel also won Silver in the New Zealand Maths Olympiad and first place in the NZ Senior Maths Competition for two consecutive years.

Daniel played for the Saint Kentigern College Concert Band, earning a Gold award at the KBB Music Festival. He is a member of the Academic Council and a leader in Chemistry and Physics Tutorials, as well as the Mathex Club. Beyond academics, Daniel enjoys playing golf and badminton. He was the recipient of a Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award.

Daniel is in his final year of the IB Diploma Programme. He plans to study engineering at university and aims to become a material scientist.

## Yinuo (Belle) Yin

St Cuthbert's College

**Outstanding Scholarships:** Calculus, Chinese and Health and Physical Education

**Scholarships:** Art History, Chemistry, Economics, English, and Statistics

**Top Subject Scholar:** Chinese



Belle is receiving her second Premier Award and was the IB Proxime Accessit of St Cuthbert's College in 2024. Her academic achievements include a Bronze Medal at the International Young Physicists' Tournament, representing New Zealand at the International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics, and a Gold Medal at the New Zealand Maths Olympiad.

As co-chair of the Albert Eden Youth Board, Belle led community initiatives and ensured that youth voices were heard. She was also the leader and coordinator of Forest & Birds Youth, leading conservation efforts and climate action. She co-founded U&Earth with her sister, promoting period equity through eco-friendly products. Their startup was a Top 10 Global Finalist at the Young Entrepreneur Summit in Germany.

Belle enjoys cooking, extreme sports like skydiving and scuba diving, and has a passion for music and dance, playing the piano and double bass.

She will pursue planetary science, astrophysics, and energy engineering at Stanford University, having also received an offer from the University of Cambridge. Before university, she is assisting a remote sensing research project at the University of Auckland.

## National Anthem of New Zealand

E Ihowā Atua,  
O ngā iwi mātou rā  
Āta whakarangona;  
Me aroha noa.  
Kia hua ko te pai;  
Kia tau tō atawhai;  
Manaakitia mai  
Aotearoa.

God of Nations at Thy feet,  
In the bonds of love we meet,  
Hear our voices, we entreat,  
God defend our free land.  
Guard Pacific's triple star  
From the shafts of strife and war,  
Make her praises heard afar,  
God defend New Zealand.

**NZQA**

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