

3 March 2025

Tēnā koe

### Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request of 12 February 2025, under the Official Information Act 1982, for the following information:

*I would like to obtain information about exactly how marks were allocated in the 2023 and 2024 Scholarship Chemistry examinations.*

*The 2023 Scholarship Chemistry assessment schedule does not show any mark allocation information. It uses highly vague phrases such as "a range of the following" to describe the requirements for Scholarship question scores (5-6) and Outstanding Scholarship question scores (7-8). I would like to see what exactly guidance was available to markers with respect to the following in 2023:*

- what distinguishes a question score of 5 vs 6, and similarly what distinguishes a question score of 7 vs 8*
- what exactly constitutes "a range of the following" for Scholarship and Outstanding Scholarship answer criteria (e.g., does this mean 2 out of 3 bullet pointed criteria for each column in the assessment schedule are required, or does this vary per question?)*

*I would also like to see similar mark allocation information for the 2024 Scholarship Chemistry examination.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982.

The 2023 and 2024 Scholarship Chemistry examinations have been marked using the assessment schedules available on NZQA's website: [New Zealand Scholarship Chemistry :: NZQA](#)

Previously, the assessment schedules for 2021 and 2022 used specific mark allocations to differentiate between a 5 and a 6 for Scholarship, and a 7 and an 8 for Outstanding. However, this was changed for the 2023 examination.

Scholarship assessment is standards-based. Examination questions and marking schedules are designed to assess the performance standards for each subject. Markers use the schedule to award scores that reflect these standards, with scores of 5 and 6 indicating Scholarship level performance, and 7 and 8 indicating Outstanding level performance for each question. A candidate's total score across all questions in an examination must include at least one score of 5 or higher, to meet the Scholarship standard. The minimum cut score for most standards is typically half of the total available score plus 1, ensuring at least one score of 5.

At this point, cut scores are set, with a cutoff that awards Outstanding to 0.3% of the subject cohort and Scholarship to the top 3.0% of the cohort.

In 2021 and 2022, less than 3.0% of subject cohort attained Scholarship Chemistry. NZQA, with input from expert Chemistry teachers, reviewed the examinations and assessment schedules. They determined that the assessment schedules and mark allocations were too constraining, preventing candidates from receiving appropriate credit for their knowledge and understanding.

The assessment schedule was changed for the 2023 examination, enabling the markers to make holistic judgements using all aspects of the candidate evidence within the Scholarship and Outstanding elements of the performance standard. Therefore the 2023 and 2024 assessment schedules are different to the schedules from 2021 and 2022.

This change has enabled more candidates to receive appropriate recognition for their high-level knowledge and skills and gain a Scholarship Award, as a higher proportion of the subject cohort, closer to 3%, achieved the minimum cut score.

Our response to your request may be published on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed before publication.

If you require further assistance or believe we have misinterpreted your request, please contact [ministerials@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:ministerials@nzqa.govt.nz)

You have the right to seek an investigation or review by the Ombudsman of this decision under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982. Details of how to make a complaint can be found at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz). You can also telephone 0800 802 502 or write to the Ombudsman at PO Box 10152, Wellington, 6143.

Nāku nā



Dr Grant Klinkum  
Pouwhakahaere/Chief Executive