

Rapid Response: **Update on the potential impact of the upcoming mega strike actions on upcoming student examinations**

To:	Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education		
Cc:			
Date:	10 October 2025	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In-Confidence	OC No:	OCO2123
Key Contact:	Jann Marshall	DDI:	██████████
Deputy Chief Executive:	Jann Marshall	DDI:	██████████

Request

You requested an update on the potential impact of the strike actions (currently scheduled for 23 October and 5 November 2025), on upcoming student examinations; and current plans to mitigate risks for students, including contingency measures.

NZQA Response

The 2025 End-of-Year examination period commences on Tuesday 4 November 2025 and are administered by NZQA employed staff. In advance of the examination period NZQA works with the school's Principal's Nominee and the Examination Centre Manager to ensure that the school is well prepared to deliver the examinations.

Throughout the examination period, NZQA communicates with Examination Centre Managers (NZQA employed staff) about potential disruptions and how to mitigate any effects on examination delivery. We will use these regular communications to encourage Examination Centre Managers to work with their school around managing any risks relating to unavailability of support staff supplied by the school.

For the strike action planned for 23 October, there is minimal impact or risk for students.

There will be examination material deliveries to a group of schools on that day. As long as the schools are open, these deliveries will not be impacted as it is NZQA employed staff who are required to be there to receive the material.

Examinations falling on 5 November 2025 are for NZ Curriculum subjects only and include:

Subject	Time	Number of examination centres (and of those, with Special Assessment Condition provisions)	Number of learners (and of those, with approved Special Assessment Condition provisions)
Level 3 English	9:30am-12:30pm	431 (293)	23,174 (1974)
Level 2 Geography	2:00-5:00pm	310 (208)	6,084 (650)
NZ Scholarship Earth and Space Sciences	2:00-5:00pm	52 (17)	295 (23)

There are some risks arising from the planned strike action for 5 November due to examinations with large numbers of students entered both in the morning and afternoon.

At the moment we understand the strike to be of two hours duration.

The successful delivery of NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship examinations during strike action will rely on schools being able to ensure sufficient non-union staff are available to carry out critical functions.

These functions include student supervision before the start of the examination, keeping other students away from examination rooms, technical support for digital examinations, and for special assessment conditions (SAC) — all of which are essential to maintaining exam integrity, safety, and fairness.

NZQA will work closely with schools to understand their local capacity and contingency planning. While NZQA cannot ensure staffing availability, we will work to support schools in planning for alternative arrangements where possible.

Derived grades

Where schools are unable to run examinations or SAC provisions are unable to be supported, derived grades are available for NCEA examinations

Note:

- Schools are required to provide NZQA evidence-based grades in case a student requires a derived grade. These grades are based on authentic standard-specific evidence, i.e. evidence such as a student's performance in a formal practice assessment at school.
- The derived grade provides a valid alternative grade if the student is prevented from sitting an examination or their performance is impaired.

However, derived grades are not available for New Zealand Scholarship subjects as they are competitive awards. Schools need to prioritise supervision and support to enable SAC provision.

Previous data or insights

We are not aware of any previous strike actions impacting on examinations, and there is no record of industrial action causing disruption to exam administration.