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## Provisional 2021 Enrolment-based NCEA and University Entrance National Attainment Statistics

Date:	18 January 2022	NZQA Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In confidence	Report No.	CR 23498

	Action Sought	Deadline
Minister of Education	<p>a. <b>note</b> that provisional 2021 NCEA and University Entrance (UE) enrolment-based national attainment statistics have been produced.</p> <p>b. <b>note</b> that schools will be provided with access to their own school's provisional attainment statistics and the national provisional statistics on 26 January 2022 in the late afternoon.</p> <p>c. <b>note</b> that the 2021 provisional enrolment-based statistics show that overall national attainment of NCEA and University Entrance is lower than 2020, however that it is similar or better than 2019 attainment.</p> <p>d. <b>note</b> that final 2021 statistics will be made available in April 2022.</p> <p>e. <b>note</b> that the 2021 provisional results for Māori and Pacific are similar or better than 2019 but show a decline from 2020 for all levels of NCEA and UE.</p> <p>f. <b>note</b> that attainment trends for both the Unexpected Event Grade (UEG) regions and the rest of New Zealand have largely been maintained.</p> <p>g. <b>note</b> that UEG grade distributions provided by schools in Northland, Auckland and parts of the Waikato were generally higher than the grade distributions of NZQA marked and assessed external standards.</p> <p>h. <b>note</b> that these statistics indicate that the COVID-19 related modifications to NCEA and UE were successful in supporting students to achieve in 2021.</p> <p>i. <b>note</b> that NZQA and the Ministry of Education will be undertaking further analysis to quantify the impact of the COVID-19 related modifications on NCEA and UE</p>	

	attainment, and will report back to you by late April 2022.	
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**Enclosure/Appendix: Yes**

**Round Robin: Yes**

**Contact for Telephone Discussion (if required)**

Name	Position	Telephone	Cellphone	1 <sup>st</sup> Contact
Andrea Gray	Deputy Chief Executive - Assessment Division	04 463 4264	[REDACTED]	√
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**The following departments/agencies have seen this report:**

- Ministry of Education
  Tertiary Education Commission
  Other (specify)

**Minister's Office to Complete:**

- Noted
  Seen
  Approved  
 Needs change
  Withdrawn
  Overtaken by Events  
 See Minister's comments
  Declined

Referred to:

**Comments:**

## Provisional 2021 Enrolment-based NCEA and University Entrance National Attainment Statistics

### Executive Summary

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The provisional 2021 NCEA and University Entrance (UE) attainment statistics are now available. This report provides an overview of these statistics, broken down by ethnicity, gender and decile. It includes some early analysis on the effect on attainment of the COVID-19 related modifications to NCEA and UE, including the unexpected event grades (UEGs) and learning recognition credits (LRCs).

The 2021 provisional enrolment-based statistics show that overall national attainment of NCEA (with the addition of the UEGs and LRCs) is lower than in 2020, but in line with historical patterns from 2019 and earlier. This is an indication that the COVID-19 related modifications to NCEA and UE were successful in supporting students to achieve in 2021. These provisional results reflect the hard work put in by students, teachers, whānau and across the education sector to support attainment.

The 2021 provisional results show a decline in overall attainment for Māori and Pacific students compared with 2020, but similar to 2019 and previous years. It is expected that once results have been finalised, Māori and Pacific attainment will be equal to or higher than 2019.

Reflecting their higher level of disruption, students in Auckland, Northland and Waikato received the most support for their NCEAs including the application of the better of their UEG or examination grade, additional LRCs and a lower threshold for NCEA certificate endorsement. For NCEA Level 3 and University Entrance, attainment rate trends (and any differentials between Auckland, Northland, Waikato and the rest of New Zealand) have been largely been maintained, although 2021 NCEA Level 3 attainment in Northland is slightly elevated compared with 2020. Overall, this indicates that the additional modifications for the UEG regions were appropriate.

NZQA and the Ministry of Education are undertaking further analysis to determine the actual impact of COVID-19 on the learning through 2021 and the efficacy of the policy responses to COVID-19, and will provide you with a preliminary report by late-February, followed by a final report in April. In particular, further work on grade distributions in UEG regions will be undertaken.

Provisional data indicated that the 2021 UEG grade distributions provided by schools in Northland, Auckland and parts of the Waikato were generally higher than the grade distributions of NZQA marked and assessed external standards. Schools have provided detailed information about the quality assurance arrangements they used to derive these grades, and insights into why UEG achievement increased.

### Recommended Action

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It is recommended you:

- a. **note** that provisional 2021 NCEA and University Entrance (UE) enrolment-based national attainment statistics have been produced.

- b. **note** that schools will be provided with access to their own school's provisional attainment statistics and the national provisional statistics on 26 January 2022 in the late afternoon.
- c. **note** that the 2021 provisional enrolment-based statistics show that overall national attainment of NCEA and University Entrance is lower than 2020, however that it is similar or better than 2019 attainment.
- d. **note** that final 2021 statistics will be made available in April 2022.
- e. **note** that the 2021 provisional results for Māori and Pacific are similar or better than 2019 but show a decline from 2020 for all levels of NCEA and UE.
- f. **note** that attainment trends for both the Unexpected Event Grade (UEG) regions and the rest of New Zealand have largely been maintained.
- g. **note** that UEG grade distributions provided by schools in Northland, Auckland and parts of the Waikato were generally higher than the grade distributions of NZQA marked and assessed external standards.
- h. **note** that these statistics indicate that the COVID-19 related modifications to NCEA and UE were successful in supporting students to achieve in 2021.
- i. **note** that NZQA and the Ministry of Education will be undertaking further analysis to quantify the impact of the COVID-19 related modifications on NCEA and UE attainment, and will report back to you by late in April 2022.

Proactive Release Recommendation

NZQA recommends.

- a. **agree** that this report is not proactively released until the attainment data has been finalised in April.

**Agree/Disagree**



**Dr Grant Klinkum**  
Pouwhakahaere/Chief Executive  
18 January 2022



**Hon Chris Hipkins**  
Minister of Education

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# Provisional 2021 Enrolment-based NCEA and University Entrance National Attainment Statistics

## Purpose of Report

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1. The provisional 2021 NCEA and University Entrance (UE) attainment statistics are now available. This report provides an overview of these statistics, broken down by ethnicity, gender, decile and region. It includes some early analysis on the effect on attainment of the COVID-19 related modifications to NCEA and UE.
2. The 2021 NCEA and UE results will be made available to students on Thursday 20 January 2022. NZQA will make available to school principals and administrators their school's provisional enrolment-based attainment statistics, and the corresponding national and decile comparators on Wednesday 26 January. These will be in the 'Principal's Report' and other statistics reports accessible online via their school's secure login.
3. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) has been consulted on this briefing and has provided input.

## Background

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### COVID-19 related modifications to NCEA and UE

4. In order to ensure that students had a fair and equitable opportunity to achieve their NCEA qualifications and awards in 2021 despite COVID-19 related disruptions, changes to the qualification and award rules were made for the 2021 year. These changes varied significantly across New Zealand, given the disparity in time spent in lockdown in Auckland (in particular) and Northland and Waikato, when compared to the rest of the country. They included the application of learning recognition credits (LRCs), the invoking of an Unexpected Event Grade (UEG) for Auckland, Northland and Waikato, changes to the rules for certificate and course endorsements, and changes to the University Entrance award for Auckland, Northland and Waikato. These changes were developed in consultation with your NCEA Professional Advisory Group (PAG) and the Ministry of Education, and the university Vice-Chancellors for UE.
5. These changes were designed to support students to engage and progress with their assessed learning whilst maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualification. See Appendix 1 for a summary of these changes.
6. 2021 is the second year there have been COVID-19 related modifications made to NCEA and UE. Outside of Auckland, Waikato and Northland (the most impacted regions), the 2021 COVID-19 related modifications for NCEA were lower than in 2020, and no modifications were made to UE for students in the rest of New Zealand.

### 2021 External Assessment

7. The 2021 NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship examinations were held from 22 November to 14 December.

8. To reflect the COVID disruption at the start of Term 4, when students are normally preparing for examinations, NZQA invoked a regionally based Unexpected Event for Auckland, Waikato and Northland.
9. Attendance patterns in non-UEG regions mostly stayed close to historical norms, while Auckland, Waikato and Northland saw lower levels of examination attendance (49.9%, 72.9% and 57.0% respectively).

## Overall attainment

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10. The attainment data presented in this report is provisional, as summer school results have not all been reported, schools can submit late results until the end of February, and students have an opportunity to apply for reviews and reconsiderations of their externally assessed results. For these reasons, attainment data is not finalised until April each year. Attainment rates usually increase by one to two percentage points between January provisional numbers and April final reported numbers.

## NCEA and University Entrance

- 11.
12. There was significant disruption to teaching and learning in the second half of 2021 due to COVID-19. 2021 provisional attainment (particularly for NCEA Level 3) reflects the support teachers and whānau provided to students during lockdown. The 2021 COVID-19 modifications appear largely to have been set appropriately to support students to achieve at expected levels.
13. The 2021 provisional enrolment-based statistics show that overall national attainment of NCEA (with the addition of LRCs) is lower than final 2020 attainment. The 2021 provisional attainment statistics are as follows:

### Year 11 NCEA Level 1

Year	Achieved (N)	Achieved (%)	Total Students	Difference from 2020	Difference from 2019
2019	43,065	70.6%	60,982		
2020	43,835	71.8%	61,046		
2021	42,505	68.2%	62,287	-3.6pp	-2.4pp

### Year 12 NCEA Level 2

Year	Achieved (N)	Achieved (%)	Total Students	Difference from 2020	Difference from 2019
2019	42,677	77.5%	55,101		
2020	45,100	80.1%	56,292		
2021	44,017	77.2%	57,032	-2.9pp	-0.3pp

### Year 13 NCEA Level 3

Year	Achieved (N)	Achieved (%)	Total Students	Difference from 2020	Difference from 2019
2019	31,165	67.3%	46,304		
2020	33,597	72.1%	46,598		
2021	33,532	69.7%	48,136	-2.4pp	2.4pp

### Year 13 UE

Year	Achieved (N)	Achieved (%)	Total Students	Difference from 2020	Difference from 2019
2019	22,832	49.3%	46,304		
2020	24,901	53.4%	46,598		
2021	23,499	48.8%	48,136	-4.6pp	-0.5pp

14. Figure 1 below gives a ten-year view of NCEA and UE attainment. The 2011 to 2020 percentages are final, the 2021 percentages are provisional.

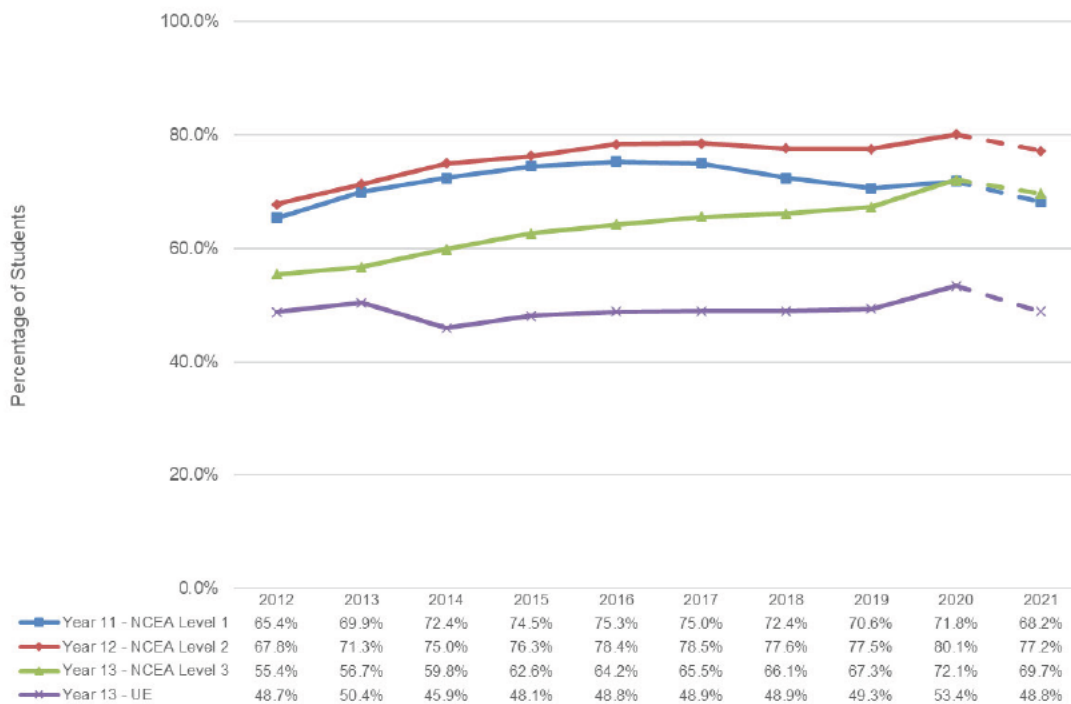


Figure 1: Enrolment-based NCEA and University Entrance Attainment 2011 – 2021 (2021 provisional)

### National attainment by ethnicity, gender and decile band

15. Appendix 2 figures 1 to 12 provide a more detailed breakdown of attainment for 2011 to 2021, including by ethnicity, gender and decile band.

16. The 2021 provisional results for Māori and Pacific are similar or better than 2019 but show a decline from 2020 for all levels of NCEA and UE. It is expected, however, that once results are finalised in April 2022, 2021 attainment rates for Māori and Pacific students will be at their 2019 levels or better.

17. The overall equity gap in attainment remains. Comparing attainment of Māori, Pacific and NZ European students over the last five years, the gap appears to be narrowing between these groups at NCEA Level 2 and NCEA Level 3, however not at UE – see Figure 2 below.

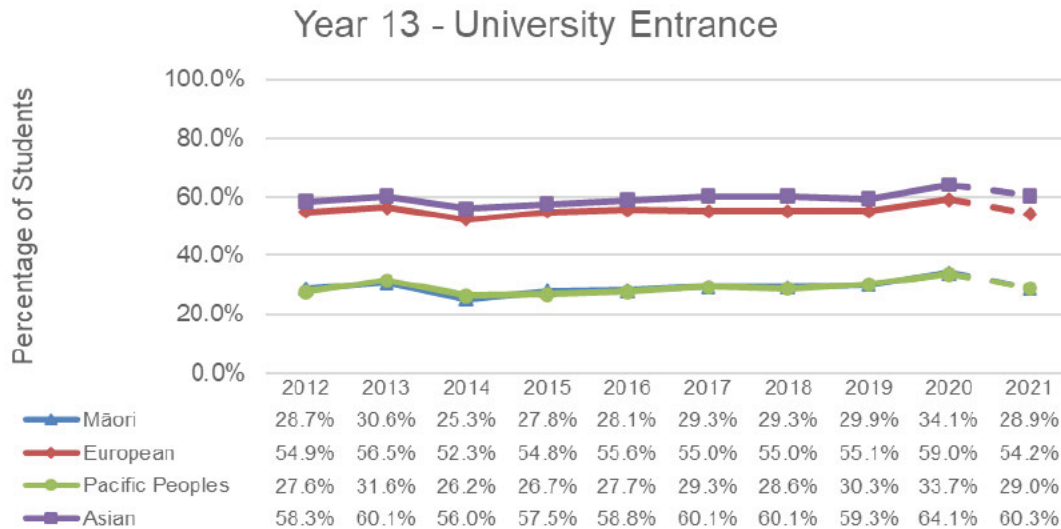


Figure 2: Enrolment-based University Entrance Attainment 2012 – 2021 (2021 provisional) by ethnicity

### NCEA Certificate Endorsements

18. The thresholds for obtaining a merit or excellence certificate endorsement were lowered from 50 credits to 44 (for Auckland) and 46 (for Waikato, Northland and several individual schools). The rest of New Zealand stayed at the 50 credit threshold. National provisional 2021 NCEA certificate endorsement rates are very similar to final 2020 rates. See tables below with 2019 data included for comparative purposes.

#### Year 13 NCEA Level 3 Certificate Endorsements

Type	2019	2020	2021
Excellence	14.8%	17.5%	17.3%
Merit	26.2%	26.3%	25.5%

#### Year 12 NCEA Level 2 Certificate Endorsements

Type	2019	2020	2021
Excellence	16.7%	17.9%	17.4%
Merit	25.1%	24.9%	24.1%

19. Figure 3 below provides an overview of merit and excellence certificate endorsements for Year 13 students attaining NCEA Level 3 for the last 10 years. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of students gaining certificate endorsements over this time.



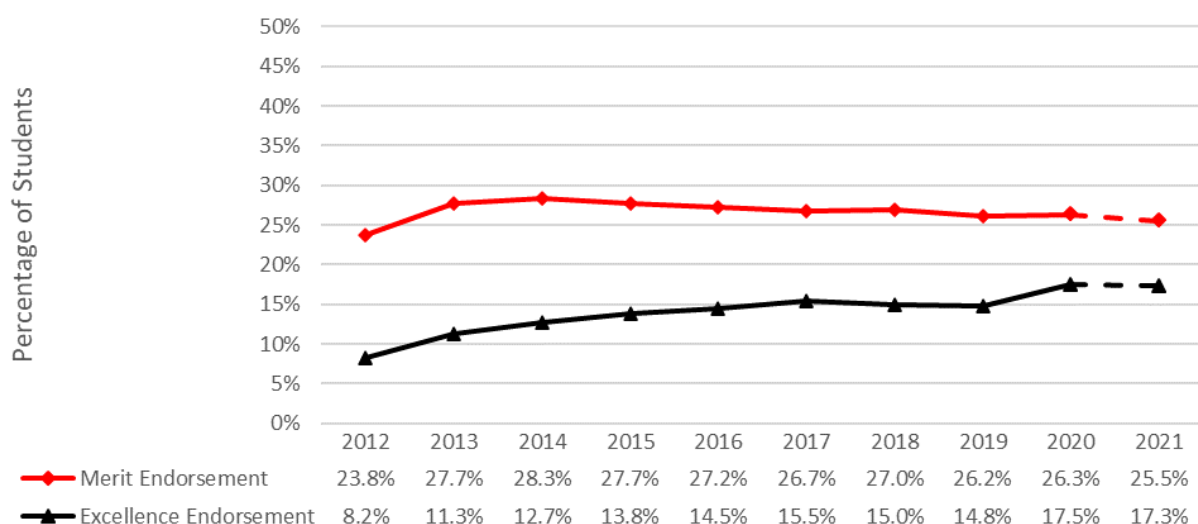


Figure 3: NCEA Level 3 Endorsements achieved by Year 13 students with NCEA Level 3 2012-2021 (2021 provisional)

### The COVID-19 affected regions compared with the rest of New Zealand

20. Reflecting their higher level of disruption, students in Auckland, Northland and Waikato received the most support for their NCEAs including the application of the better of their UEG or examination grade, additional LRCs and a lower threshold for NCEA certificate endorsement.

21. Figures 4 and 5 below provides an overview of NCEA Level 3 and UE attainment of Year 13 students in Auckland compared to the rest of New Zealand. They show that for NCEA Level 3 and University Entrance attainment rate trends (and any differentials between Auckland, Northland, Waikato and the rest of New Zealand) have been largely maintained, although 2021 Level 3 attainment in Northland is slightly elevated compared with 2020. Overall, this indicates that the additional modifications for the UEG regions were appropriate.

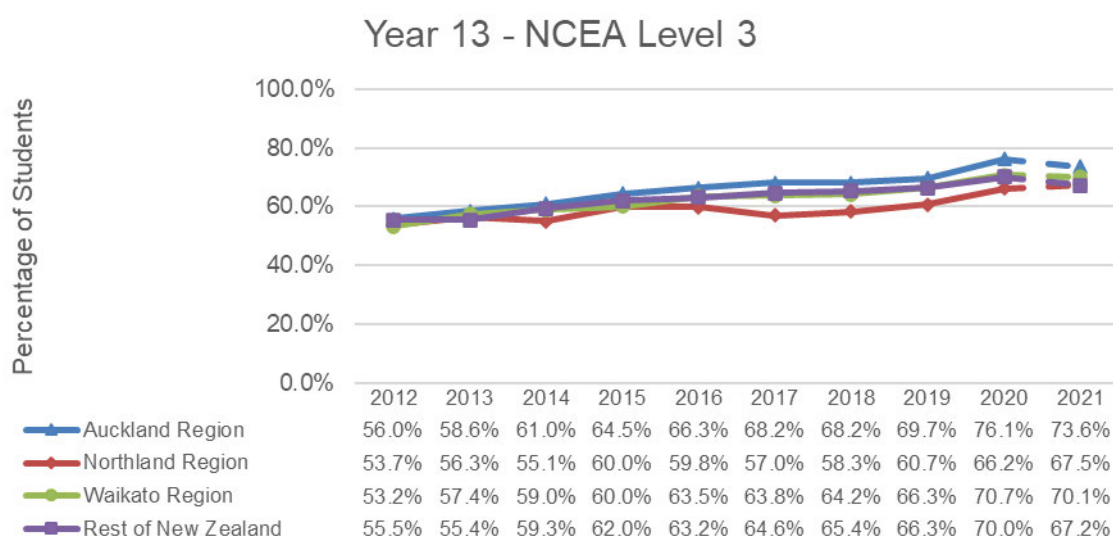


Figure 4: NCEA Level 3 attainment of Year 13 students in Auckland, Northland, Waikato and the rest of New Zealand.

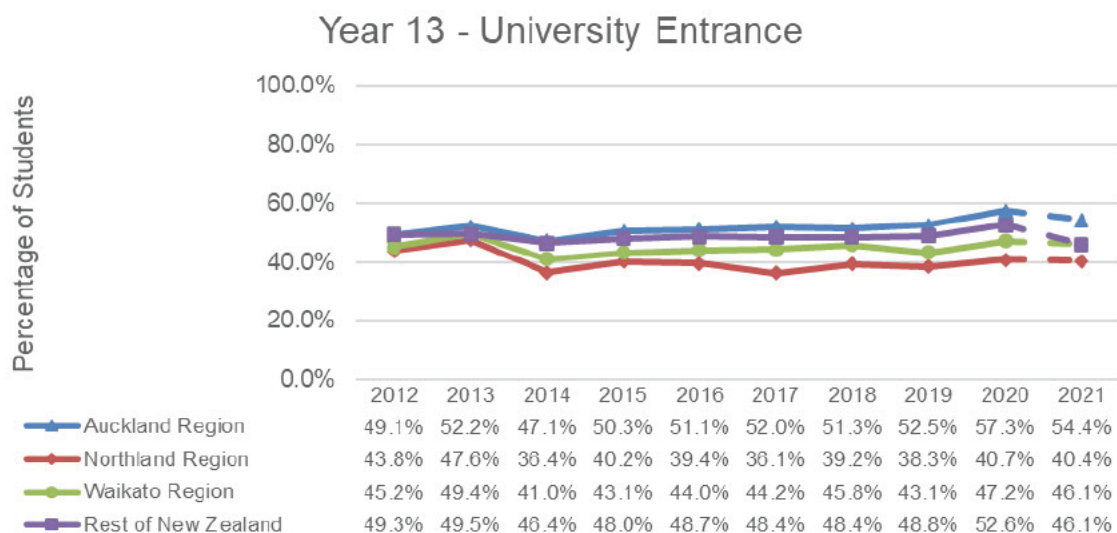


Figure 5: UE attainment of Year 13 students in Auckland, Northland, Waikato and the rest of New Zealand.

22. We have reviewed attainment by decile within the COVID-19 affected regions. We are comfortable that 2021 attainment in lower decile schools follows the same overall pattern as 2019 attainment in lower decile schools in the rest of New Zealand. We are not seeing a closing of existing equity gaps but these are not widening either. We will, however, be looking more closely at this over the coming months.
23. Although at a national level 2021 NCEA Certificate Endorsements at Merit and Excellence for NCEA Level 2 and Level 3 are similar to final 2020 rates, Certificate Endorsements at Excellence increased for Auckland (in particular) but also slightly for Northland and Waikato and decreased for the rest of New Zealand compared with 2020. See tables below with 2019 data included for comparison purposes.

#### Year 13 NCEA Level 3 Certificate Endorsements

	Excellence			Merit		
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021
Auckland	15.9%	20.4%	23.4%	28.3%	28.3%	27.6%
Northland	12.1%	11.4%	12.4%	23.1%	22.3%	20.6%
Waikato	12.4%	12.8%	13.8%	19.7%	21.0%	20.2%
Rest of New Zealand	14.3%	16.2%	13.6%	25.4%	25.5%	24.5%

#### Year 12 NCEA Level 2 Certificate Endorsements

	Excellence			Merit		
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021
Auckland	19.1%	20.5%	23.5%	27.2%	27.8%	27.0%
Northland	11.1%	11.5%	11.8%	19.3%	20.7%	18.2%
Waikato	14.3%	15.3%	15.8%	22.9%	23.7%	24.1%
Rest of New Zealand	16.4%	17.7%	14.6%	25.1%	24.2%	23.3%

24. There are two related factors that may have contributed to this: the lower threshold for Certificate Endorsement and the application of the better of the examination grade or the

UEG grade in the COVID-affected regions. The 2021 UEG grade distributions provided by schools in Northland, Auckland and parts of the Waikato were generally higher than the grade distributions of NZQA marked and assessed external standards. For those regions, the better of the UEG grade or the examination results was applied, or the UEG grade if the student was absent.

25. For example, the higher 2021 UEGs include an increase in rates of Excellence in the UEG regions. While nationally there has been only a one (1) percentage point increase in the proportion of Excellence grades for Level 3 achievement standards overall, the comparable Excellence rates for externally assessed achievement standards is seven (7) percentage points higher than in 2020, and these increases have been concentrated in the UEG regions.
26. Schools have provided detailed information about the quality assurance arrangements they used to derive these grades, and insights into why UEG achievement increased. Schools have expressed that this change in UEG performance profile has been largely driven by the use of a wider range of standard specific evidence gathering techniques instead of relying on one-off practice exams.
27. NZQA is continuing to work with the Ministry to determine the impact of COVID-19 on student learning through 2021 and the efficacy of the policy responses to COVID-19.

## Next steps

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28. After the current analysis has been conducted, the Ministry and NZQA will provide you with a preliminary report by late February, followed by a final report by late April. These will focus on the specific impacts of the policies implemented in 2021 to inform response to any further COVID-19 disruption, and the extent to which the 2021 disruption to learning may require further interventions to address.
29. As part of its continuous improvement, NZQA will review its approach to managing unexpected events at scale, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

## COVID-19: NCEA and University Entrance changes for 2021

Additional changes to NCEA and University Entrance (UE) give students a fair opportunity to achieve qualifications and awards despite the disruption to teaching, learning and assessment from COVID-19, while preserving the integrity of NCEA and UE. These changes apply only for 2021.

The additional changes are:

- Students working towards an NCEA can gain additional Learning Recognition Credits, based on the number of credits they achieve during the 2021 school year. For every 5 credits a student achieves towards their NCEA through internal or external assessment, they can be awarded an additional 1 credit. Students at NCEA Level 1 are eligible for up to a maximum of 8 (16 for Auckland, 10 for Waikato and Northland) additional credits while those at Levels 2 or 3 are eligible for up to a maximum of 6 (12 for Auckland, 8 for Waikato and Northland) additional credits. These will be known as Learning Recognition (LR) credits.
- Students in Auckland will be awarded a certificate endorsement if they achieve 44 credits (46 for Waikato and Northland) at Merit or Excellence level, rather than the usual 50. Students in Auckland, Waikato and Northland achieving 12 credits at Merit or Excellence level in a course – rather than 14 – will be awarded a course endorsement.
- Current UE requirements have been reduced to 12 credits in three UE-approved subjects, from 14 credits in each of three approved subjects for students in Auckland, Waikato and Northland. Students still need to attain NCEA Level 3 and meet the literacy and numeracy requirement to be awarded University Entrance.

**Enrolment-based national NCEA and UE attainment by decile band 2011 – 2021 (2021 provisional)**

Figure 1: Year 11 NCEA Level 1

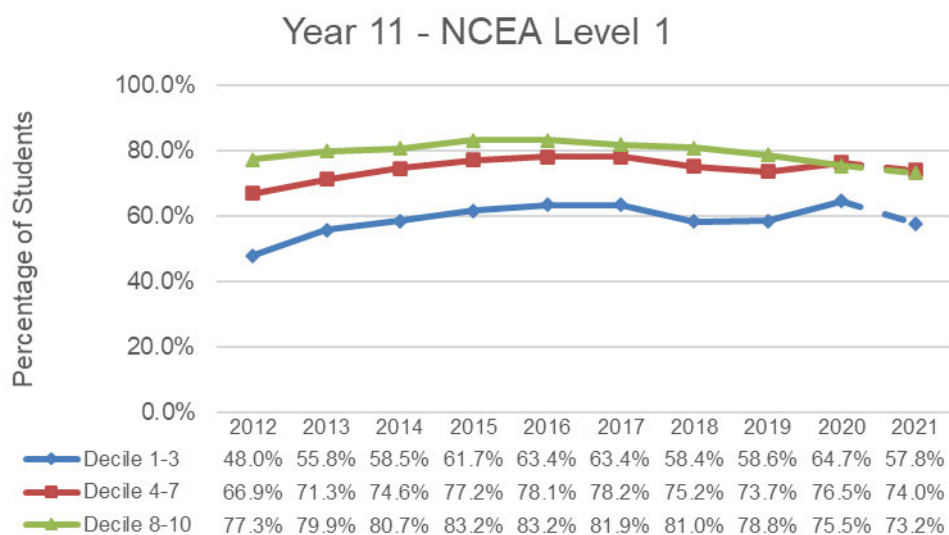


Figure 2: Year 12 NCEA Level 2

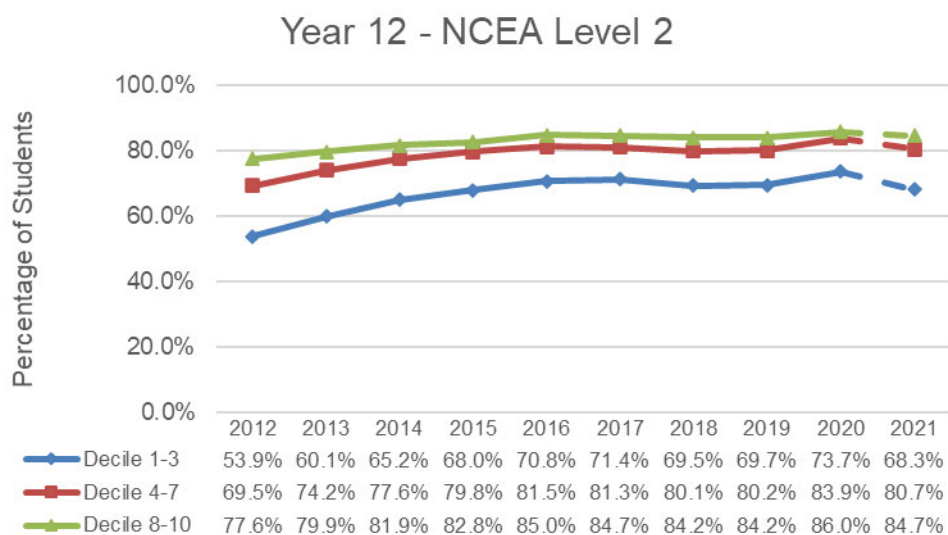


Figure 3: Year 13 NCEA Level 3

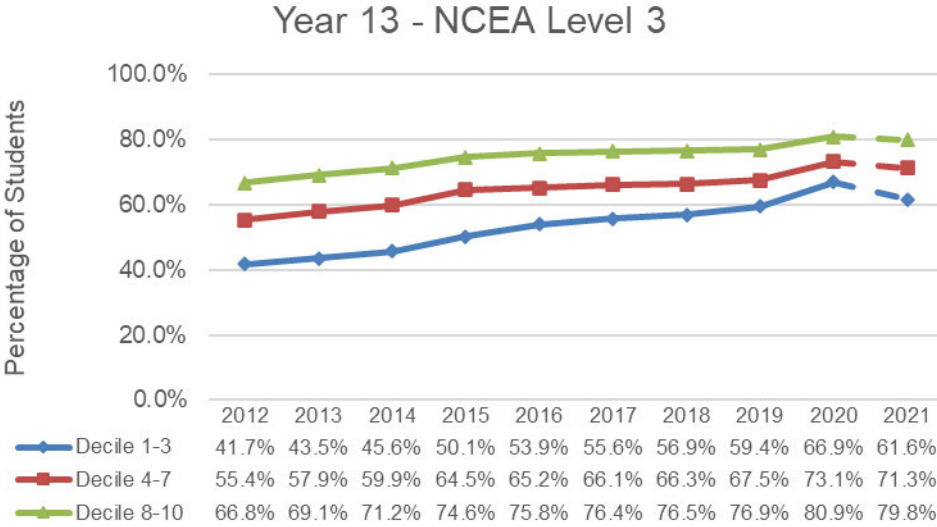
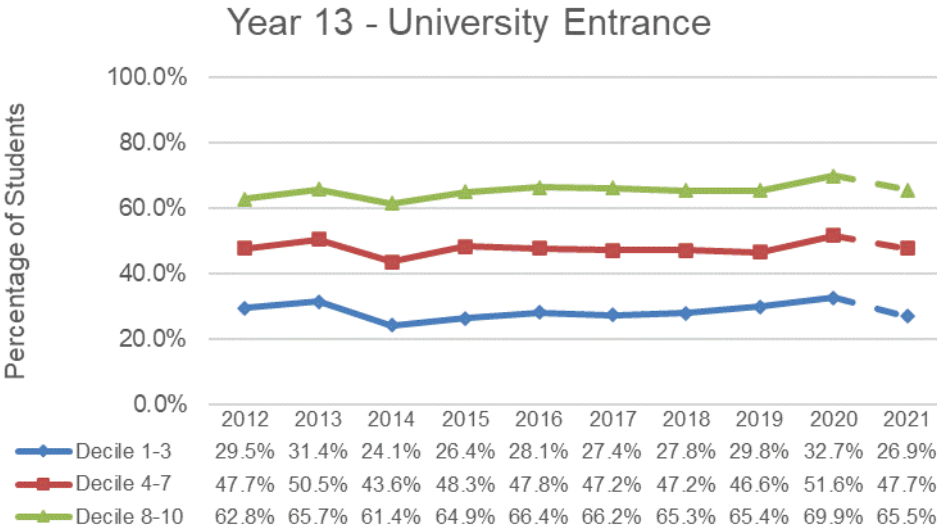


Figure 4: Year 13 University Entrance



**Enrolment-based national NCEA and UE attainment by ethnicity 2011 – 2020 (2020 provisional)**

Figure 1: Year 11 NCEA Level 1

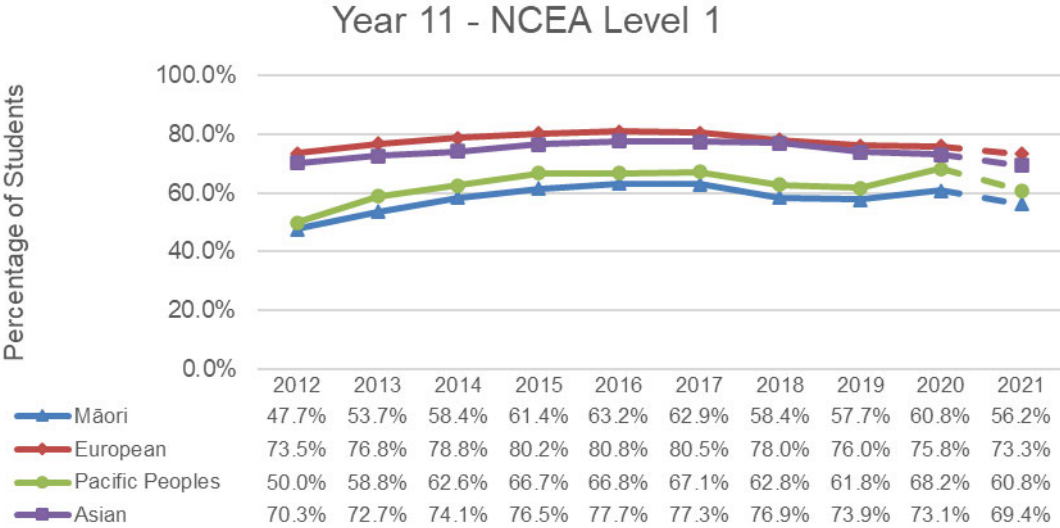


Figure 2: Year 12 NCEA Level 2

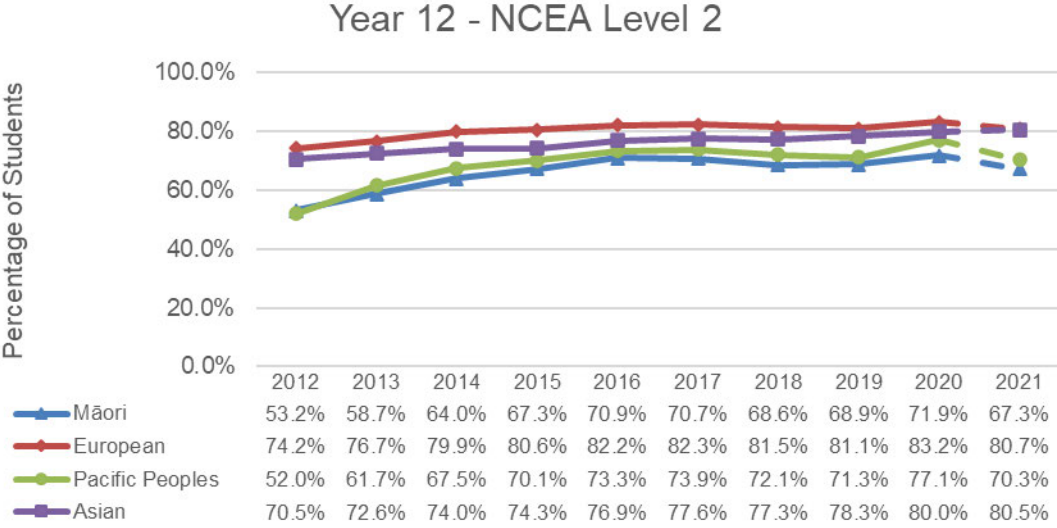


Figure 3: Year 13 NCEA Level 3

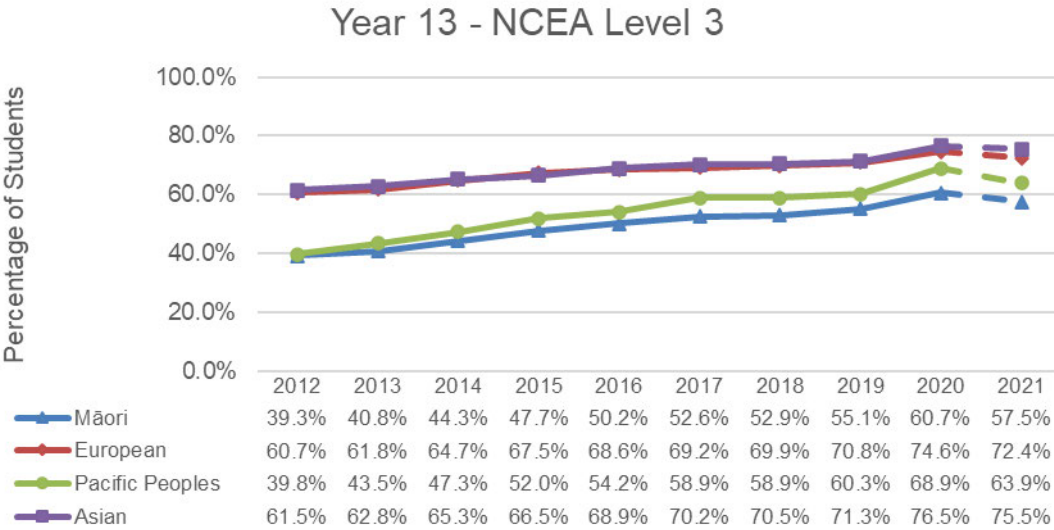
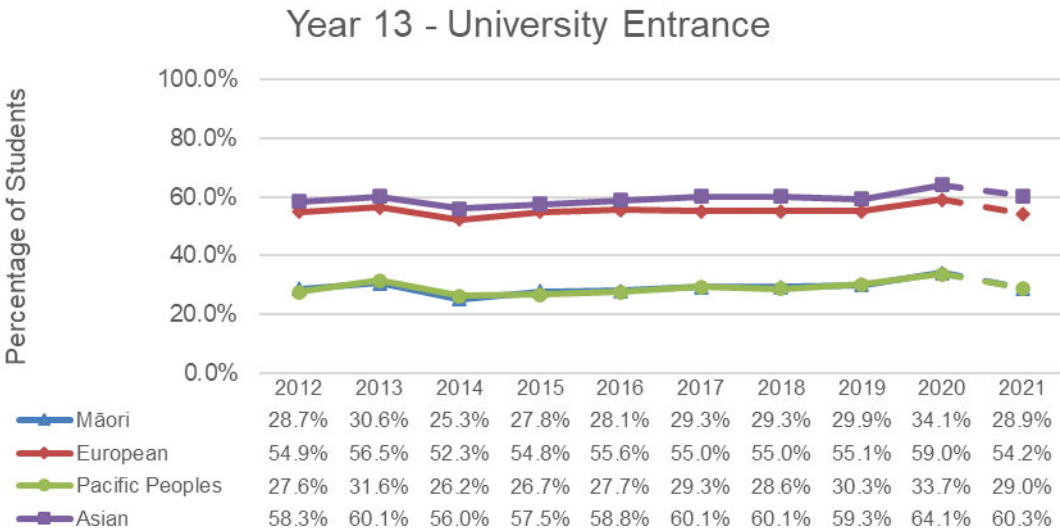


Figure 4: Year 13 University Entrance





**Enrolment-based national NCEA and UE attainment by gender 2011 – 2020 (2020 provisional)**

Figure 1: Year 11 NCEA Level 1

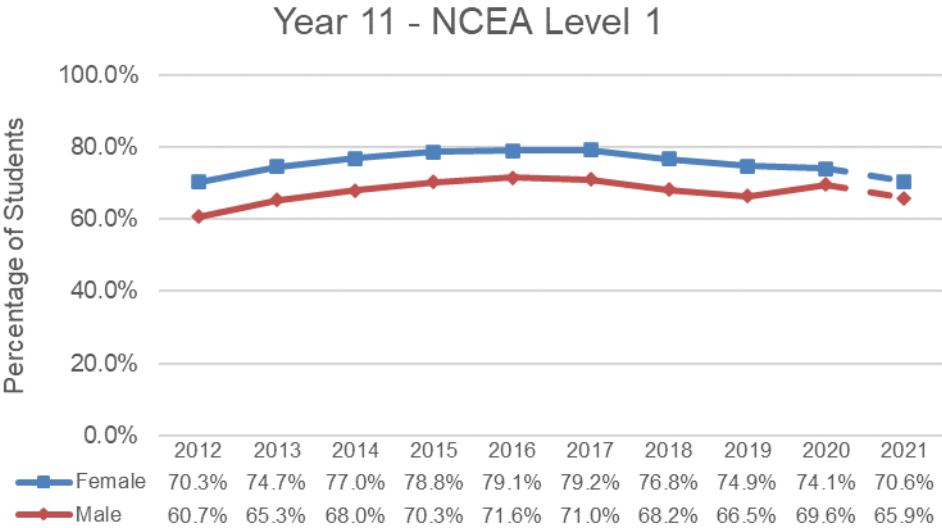


Figure 2: Year 12 NCEA Level 2

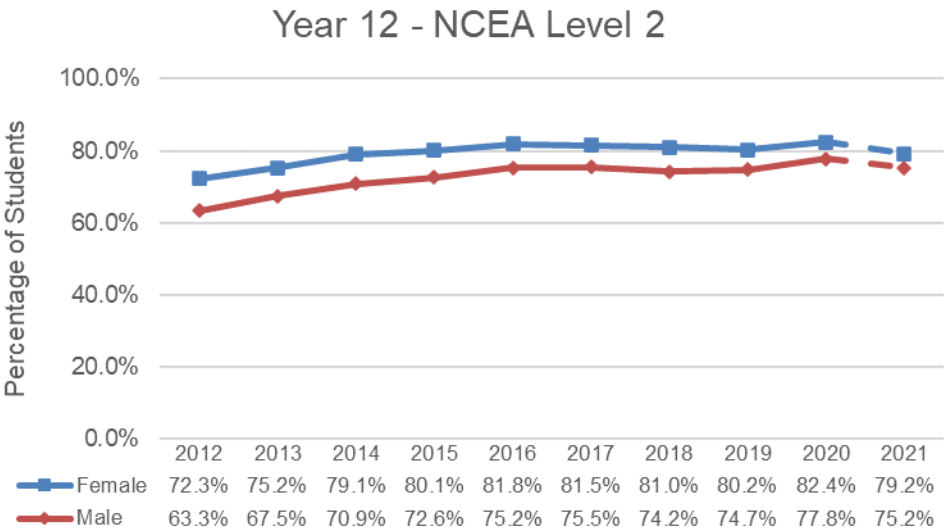


Figure 3: Year 13 NCEA Level 3

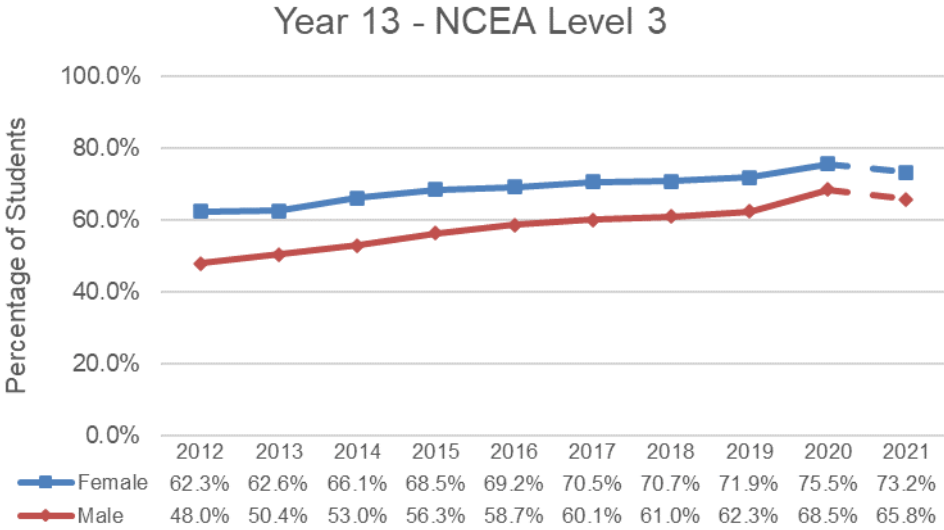


Figure 4: Year 13 University Entrance

