

TOP SCHOLAR

AWARDS





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NZQA

Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Introduction

The Top Scholar Awards recognise the highest achieving students from the 2025 New Zealand Scholarship examinations.

The Top Scholar Awards ceremony was initiated by the Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa | New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) 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 40 Top Subject Scholar Awards.

Premier Awards

Premier Awards recognise the top New Zealand Scholarship students. At this year's ceremony, there are 13 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 education measurement and assessment – Professor Don Klinger (Deputy Chair), Dr Charles Darr, Professor Sharleen Forbes, Dr Maraea Hunia (Mātaatua, Te Arawa, Tainui), Professor Gavin Brown, Dr Elliot Lawes, Dr Michael Johnston, and Professor Jeffrey Smith.

Official Programme

- 2:30pm** All guests are seated.
- Ceremony begins with a karakia, mihi and waiata.
- 2:45pm** New Zealand Qualifications Authority Board Chair, Kevin Jenkins, speaks.
- 2:50pm** Top Subject Scholar Awards are presented.
- 3:10pm** Minister of Education speaks.
- 3:15pm** Premier Awards are presented.
- 3:35pm** The Prime Minister's Award for Academic Excellence is presented.
- 3:45pm** Ceremony ends with the singing of the National Anthem.
- 3:50pm** Official photographs.
- Refreshments served.
- 4:30pm** Event draws to a close.

Our thanks to the waiata roopu from Te Kura Māori o Porirua and musicians from Tawa College.

Top Subject Scholars

Accounting **Keira Croad**
Baradene College of the Sacred Heart

Agricultural and Horticultural Science **Timothy Bacchus**
St Kentigern College

Art History **Mason Drylie**
Westlake Boys' High School

Biology **Annabelle Stokes**
St Paul's Collegiate School

Calculus **Haotian Wang**
Auckland Grammar School

Chemistry **Conor McCormack**
Hamilton Boys' High School

Chinese **Aria Hua**
Rangitoto College

Classical Studies **Emily Roy**
Columba College

Dance **Khalen Quensell**
Mount Albert Grammar School

Design **Rosa Campbell**
Western Springs College

Design and Visual Communication **Marley Straka**
Long Bay College

Digital Technologies **Tymon Mieszkowski**
Long Bay College

Drama **Lachlan Robinson**
Kristin School

Earth and Space Science **Sophie Mayne**
Long Bay College

Economics **Leroy Stocks Stiven**
Mount Albert Grammar School

English **Zoe Hooton**
ACG Parnell College

French **Rémi Geron**
St Kentigern College

Geography **Shaun Ding-Hong Hsieh**
Westlake Boys' High School

German **Samaire Fern**
Wellington Girls' College

Health and Physical Education **Rui-Han Ong**
Rangitoto College

History **Thomas Dean**
Wellington College

Japanese **Megumi Watanabe Toh**
Trinity Catholic College

Latin **Bonnie Wang**
St Cuthbert's College

Media Studies **YuYang Ding**
Westlake Boys' High School

Music **Edward Sneyd-Utting**
Tawa College

Painting **Carmen Valentine Baxter**
Crimson AGE School

Photography **Leen Murad**
Rangitoto College

Physics **Reuben Foulds**
Kaiapoi High School

Printmaking **Titili Ahio**
Liston College

Psychology **Diya Kansara**
Westlake Girls' High School

Religious Studies **Jericho Basilla Tuburan**
St Peter's College (Auckland)

Samoan **Lourdes Telesia Saolotoga**
McAuley High School

Sculpture **Elaine Zhou**
Westlake Girls' High School

Spanish **Maxwell Clarke**
Auckland Grammar School

Statistics **Annabelle Stokes**
St Paul's Collegiate School

Te Tohu a Hinerēhia – Te Hiranga Te Ao Haka **Ahipukahu Edmonds**
Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ruamata

Te Tohu a Tānerore – Te Hiranga Te Ao Haka **Manawapohatu Shannon McGarvey-Borell**
Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ruamata

Te Reo Māori **Te Kanawa Wilson**
Ngā Taiātea Wharekura

Te Reo Rangatira **Te Kanawa Wilson**
Ngā Taiātea Wharekura

Technology **Cohnor Lowe Walsh**
St Andrew's College

Ethan Chong

Westlake Boys' High School

Outstanding Scholarships: Economics, Physics and Statistics

Scholarships: Biology, Calculus, Chemistry and English



Ethan was a Prefect at Westlake Boys' High School and was part of the Premier Advanced League of the Auckland Schools Debating competitions. He played in the Westlake Symphonic Band and coached junior debating teams, adjudicating the Junior Open. His academic accomplishments include earning High Distinction in the New Zealand Economics Competition (2024 and 2025), placing in the top 10 nationally in the New Zealand Physics and Mathematics Competition, and earning a Silver Medal in the New Zealand Chemistry Olympiad. He is also a Conrad Challenge Innovator, was a Silver Honour Finalist in the International Astronomy and Astrophysics Competition and received High Distinction in the International Chemistry Quiz. He enjoys badminton, table tennis, bouldering and playing the piano in his free time.

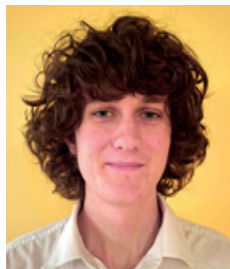
Ethan is now studying a conjoint Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) and Bachelor of Commerce in Economics at the University of Auckland, having been awarded a Top Achiever Scholarship. He hopes to pursue higher qualifications in aerospace engineering and economics.

Victor Coen

Mount Albert Grammar School

Outstanding Scholarships: Accounting, Calculus, Chemistry and Physics

Scholarships: Biology, Digital Technologies, Economics and Statistics



Victor was Dux of Mount Albert Grammar School in 2025 and was appointed a Prefect. He has demonstrated exceptional ability in computer science, representing New Zealand at the International Olympiad in Informatics, earning Bronze Medals in both Egypt and Bolivia. He achieved further success with his Science Bowl team placing second and Victor being recognised as the highest scoring individual competitor. He was a member of the winning team in the New Zealand Engineering and Science Competition and earned first place in the school category of the New Zealand Programming Contest.

Beyond academics, Victor is a highly ranked chess player and an accomplished orienteer, representing New Zealand as a junior and winning a Bronze Medal in the World School Orienteering Finals in Brazil, where his team won Gold overall.

Victor now studies Engineering and Economics at the University of Auckland, having received the prestigious Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship, awarded to students with exceptional academic performance.

Ava Dilly

St Cuthbert's College

Outstanding Scholarships: Biology, Classical Studies, English and Geography

Scholarships: Chemistry, Health and Physical Education, Latin, Media Studies and Statistics



Ava was Deputy Head Girl of St Cuthbert's College and was named NCEA Dux in 2025. She earned national recognition across multiple disciplines, including first place in the Poetry Aotearoa Yearbook Student Competition (Year 13) and finalist rankings in the International Ethics Olympiad and the Brain Bee Regional Finals. She is a three-time Gold Award recipient in the National Latin Exam and placed second in the Kate Edger School Competition.

Ava has played netball since primary school and currently competes socially for College Rifles, having previously represented the club's top Under-18 team. She also played for St Cuthbert's in its top Under-17 and Under-19 basketball teams.

Ava is now studying Biomedical Science at the University of Auckland, having been awarded a Top Achiever Scholarship. She aims to gain undergraduate entry into Medicine, with a particular interest in exploring fields such as forensic pathology, alongside broader medical and scientific career pathways.

Mason Drylie

Westlake Boys' High School

Outstanding Scholarships: Art History, Classical Studies, English and Media Studies

Scholarships: Music and Religious Studies

Top Subject Scholar: Art History



Mason was Dux of Westlake Boys' High School in 2025 and served as a Prefect, Premier Advanced Debater, member of the Symphonic Band and UNICEF Committee. He returns to the Top Scholar Awards for the third time, having previously earned a Premier Award and multiple Top Subject Awards.

A talented creative, Mason has played piano for nine years and was a percussionist and composer in multiple school ensembles, including having an original work performed by the Westlake Camerata at the KBB Festival, where they earned Gold. His films received multiple awards at the Westlake Oscars, and he was runner-up in History in the Northeastern London University Global Essay Competition.

Mason is now studying a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English and Philosophy at the University of Auckland, having been awarded a Top Achiever Scholarship. He plans to pursue a doctorate in English or Philosophy, alongside a long-term interest in writing professionally.

Rémi Geron

St Kentigern College

Outstanding Scholarships: Calculus, French and Physics

Scholarships: Digital Technologies, Economics, English, Religious Studies and Statistics

Top Subject Scholar: French



Rémi distinguished himself as an exceptional mathematician at St Kentigern College, earning the P. G. Hadfield Prize for Top in Year 12 IB, as well as IB Diploma prizes for Mathematics (Analysis and Approaches) and Physics. He earned a Gold Medal in the New Zealand Maths Olympiad and was selected for the New Zealand Maths Olympiad Squad.

Internationally, Rémi earned Second Prize in the French Automne Animaths competition and was admitted to a selective French Olympiad training camp. At school, he tutored students as leader of the Maths Olympiad Club and the Scholarship Calculus Club. Beyond academics, Rémi has achieved ABRSM Grade 8 in piano, played competitive table tennis, earned a PADI diving licence, and enjoys cycling.

Rémi is currently studying a Stage 3 Combinatorics course at the University of Auckland. He plans to attend a French competitive preparatory school, specialising in mathematics and physics, with long-term aspirations in pure mathematical research and related applications.

Rupert Heslop

Havelock North High School

Outstanding Scholarships: Accounting, Chemistry and Statistics

Scholarships: Biology, Calculus and Physics



Rupert was Dux and Academic Leader of Havelock North High School, earning prizes across Accounting, Digital Technology, Calculus, Biology, Statistics, Chemistry, and Physics. His academic achievements include earning the Gold Award in the New Zealand Chemistry Olympiad, leading to an invitation to the 2025 national training camp. He placed first in the New Zealand Physics and Mathematics Competition Wellington finals, showcasing his strengths in analytical thinking and applied problem-solving.

Outside the classroom, Rupert represented his school in the senior boys' badminton team, is a dedicated pianist, and stays active through tennis and the gym. He earned the Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award; and dedicates his spare time to tutoring secondary students.

Rupert is now studying Biomedical Science at the University of Auckland, having been awarded the University of Auckland Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship. He aims to enter Medicine through the undergraduate pathway and pursue a career as a doctor in New Zealand.

Nikash Lanka

Hamilton Boys' High School

Outstanding Scholarships: Chemistry, Economics and Statistics

Scholarships: Calculus, English, Geography, History, Physics and Religious Studies



Nikash was Dux of Hamilton Boys' High School in 2025 and served as Deputy Head Boy and Academic Captain. His accomplishments include a Top in the World Award in Cambridge IGCSE Coordinated Science and Mathematics and multiple Top in New Zealand distinctions across IGCSE subjects. He earned a perfect score of 100% in the International Chemistry Quiz, competing against more than 800 students internationally. In debating, Nikash was named Best Speaker at the Edmonds Judd Waikato Regional Schools' Debating Championship and represented Waikato at the National Championships.

Nikash enjoys football, pickleball, and a wide range of sports with friends. He has played alto saxophone in his school's big band and volunteered throughout the Multicultural Manaaki Centre, the Gully Restoration group, and a variety of school service projects.

Nikash is now studying a Bachelor of Science at the University of Melbourne and plans to work in engineering, using innovative science to ease the harms of social and environmental issues.

Conor McCormack

Hamilton Boys' High School

Outstanding Scholarships: Calculus, Chemistry and Statistics

Scholarships: Economics and Physics

Top Subject Scholar: Chemistry



Conor was Junior Dux of Hamilton Boys' High School and later served as a Prefect and member of the Cultural Committee. A committed debater, he was a key member of the team that won the Waikato Regional Senior Premier Cup and went on to represent the region at Nationals in consecutive years. He also volunteered his time coaching and adjudicating junior debating teams.

Conor plays football and competitive pickleball. He was a finalist in the New Zealand Physics and Mathematics Competition (Senior Division), completed a five-day Spirit of Adventure voyage, and earned the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. He has volunteered as a lifeguard for several years, serving as a qualified patrol captain, and plays both piano and guitar.

Conor received the University of Otago Academic Excellence Entrance Scholarship and is now studying a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Economics. He plans to continue his studies overseas, with aspirations to pursue a career in academia or public policy.

Tymon Mieszkowski

Long Bay College

Outstanding Scholarships: Calculus, Digital Technologies, Physics and Statistics

Scholarships: Chemistry

Top Subject Scholar: Digital Technologies



Tymon was Dux of Long Bay College in 2025, recognising exceptional academic performance. He is an accomplished informatics competitor who represented New Zealand at the 2025 International Olympiad in Informatics, earning a Bronze Medal in the competition. He has also achieved a Gold Medal in the French-Australian Regional Olympiad in Informatics, a Silver Medal in the Australian Invitational Informatics Olympiad, selection as an onsite finalist in the IMC Programming Contest, and medalled at the New Zealand Maths Olympiad in 2025. Tymon recently represented New Zealand at the International Artificial Intelligence Olympiad in Slovenia, earning a Silver Medal. Beyond academics, Tymon enjoys playing tennis.

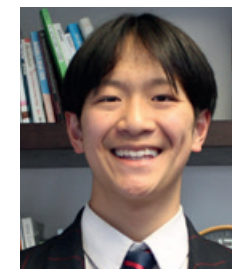
Tymon received the University of Auckland 140th Anniversary Academic Scholarship and is now studying Mathematics and Computer Science. He plans to continue competing in major international contests and aspires to have the freedom to drive his own mathematical research.

Joshua Wang

Rangitoto College

Outstanding Scholarships: Agriculture and Horticulture, English and Religious Studies

Scholarships: Biology, Calculus, Economics, Geography, Health and Physical Education, Physics and Statistics



Joshua is the Head Boy of Rangitoto College and holds significant leadership and coaching roles at school and in the wider community. He is deeply committed to economic education and environmental communication, hosting The Environmental Review, a research-focused podcast in which he interviews professors from around the world to make academic work more accessible. He is also the Co-Founder of the Junior Economics Club, a nationwide initiative improving youth financial literacy through firm tours, bespoke curriculum, guest speakers, and an upcoming national competition.

Joshua's academic achievements include placing first in New Zealand in the New Zealand Economics Competition, and first in the Economics Pursuits / Commerce Pursuits Quiz Competition. He is also an accomplished debater, selected for the Auckland White National Debating Team, and was awarded the Brash Cup for Outstanding Achievement in Debating.

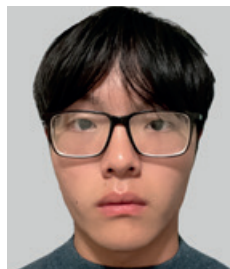
Joshua plans to pursue a commerce related career with a particular interest in green technology.

Yunxuan Sun

Rangitoto College

Outstanding Scholarships: Chemistry, English and Physics

Scholarships: Calculus, Economics, History, Music and Statistics



Yunxuan was the leader of both the Physics Club and the Maths Olympiad Club at Rangitoto College, contributing significantly to the school's academic culture. He has qualified as a finalist in the New Zealand Physics and Mathematics Competition, and competed in the Auckland Mathematical Olympiad, the Australian Mathematical Competition (achieving Distinction), the New Zealand Economics Competition and the NZAMT Senior Mathematics Competition. He has also earned several international music awards, including Absolute First Prize and Excellent Technique Special Award at the International Mozart Music Competition UK, First Prize at the WCMA International Music Competition, and First Prize in the Violin Category at the Gabriel Faure Music Competition.

Beyond academics, Yunxuan enjoys playing the violin, cooking, running, and performing music for local communities.

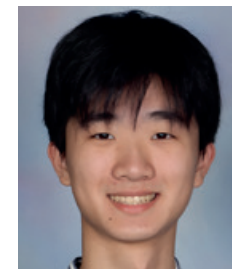
Yunxuan plans to continue his work in combinatorial graph theory while expanding into other areas of mathematics and STEM. He hopes to pursue deeper research in mathematics and applied mathematics; and collaborate with friends on software projects.

Alston Yam

Macleans College

Outstanding Scholarships: Calculus, Earth and Space Science and Geography

Scholarships: Chemistry, Digital Technologies, Physics and Statistics



Alston was a Prefect and House Captain at Macleans College. His achievements include representing New Zealand at the International Mathematical Olympiad, earning an Outstanding Award in the International Mathematical Modelling Challenge (top two teams globally), winning the Pullans Prize in the New Zealand Engineering and Science Competition, and placing first overall in the New Zealand Physics and Maths Competition. His interests outside academics include playing drums, solving Rubik's Cubes and competing in badminton.

Alston will begin university later this year and is spending the coming months continuing his work with the AI Youth Global Organisation, an international initiative he cofounded with students from the US, Nepal, and Korea. His focus includes expanding the organisation's reach and contributing to a summer research project developing educational resources on agentic AI. Looking ahead, he is particularly interested in research addressing global energy challenges.

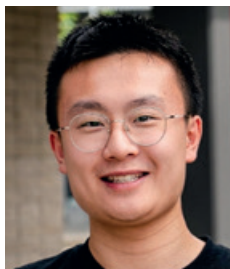
Premier Scholars

Hongliang Zhao

Westlake Boys' High School

Outstanding Scholarships: Biology, Chemistry and Economics

Scholarships: Calculus, Chinese, English, Geography and Physics



Hongliang was Proxime Accessit of Westlake Boys' High School in 2025, recognising his outstanding academic performance across sciences and humanities. His competitive achievements include earning a Bronze Medal in the 2025 International Chemistry Olympiad in Dubai, winning a Gold Medal in the New Zealand Chemistry Olympiad, and earning a Silver Medal in the New Zealand Maths Olympiad. He was also Top in New Zealand for the International Chemistry Quiz and received a monetary award in the New Zealand Economics Competition.

Beyond academics, Hongliang is an active sportsperson who plays badminton, enjoys disc golf, and regularly plays table tennis with friends. He also served as leader of the Westlake Science Club, contributing to school STEM culture and supporting younger students.

Hongliang is now studying Biomedical Science at the University of Auckland. He hopes to enter a clinical programme there and ultimately make a positive contribution to New Zealand's healthcare system.

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.



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