Assessment Specifications

# Level 2 Biology 2026

Published in October 2025

## General information

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| **Domain:** | Biology |
| **Standards:** | 91156, 91157, 91159 |
| **Assessment method:** | Examination, end of year |
| **Assessment medium:** | Printed paper |

Biology subject page

National secondary examinations timetable

## Information relating to all achievement standards

Candidates may be required to interpret diagrams and new information, draw diagrams, and write responses of one or more paragraphs.

Some questions may be resource-based.

Candidates may use annotated diagrams to show evidence where appropriate.

### Special assessment conditions

Refer to the NZQA website for further information:

Aromatawai special assessment conditions

## Specific information for individual achievement standards

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| **Standard:** | 91156 |
| **Title:** | Demonstrate understanding of life processes at the cellular level |
| **Version:** | 2 |
| **Number of credits:** | 4 |

Photosynthesis includes both the light-independent and light-dependent processes.

Cell respiration includes both anaerobic and aerobic respiration.

Cell division includes the process of semi-conservative replication. An understanding of the antiparallel arrangement of DNA strands and complementary base pairing is expected.

Movement of materials may also include facilitated diffusion.

Factors that affect enzyme activity within cells may include temperature, pH, substrate concentration, co-enzymes, co-factors, and enzyme inhibitors.

Factors affecting the processes may include both direct and indirect availability of resources.

Similarities and differences between cells may relate to the overall functioning of the organism and justifying the reasons for these similarities and differences.

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| **Standard:** | 91157 |
| **Title:** | Demonstrate understanding of genetic variation and change |
| **Version:** | 2 |
| **Number of credits:** | 4 |

Mutation as a source of new alleles requires candidates to understand the difference between gametic and somatic mutations.

Candidates may be required to draw and or interpret Punnett squares for any of the specified monohybrid or dihybrid inheritance patterns, and calculate the expected proportions of genotype and phenotype (expressed as a ratio, fraction, percentage, or decimal).

Understanding of linked genes is considered to include sex linkage.

Understanding of genetic drift is considered to include founder effect and genetic bottlenecks.

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| **Standard:** | 91159 |
| **Title:** | Demonstrate understanding of gene expression |
| **Version:** | 2 |
| **Number of credits:** | 4 |

For nucleic acid structure and the nature of the genetic code, the bases are adenine, thymine, guanine, cytosine, and uracil; the relationship between them should be understood.

Gene mutations may include examples from plants or animals (including humans).

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