

Pathways to tertiary education

2008 update:

Auckland University has announced it will probably cease open entry from 2010, due to changes in government funding. Victoria has flagged it may follow. Homeschooled students will still be able to gain entry via foundation courses, and we are hoping a discretionary entry pathway may become available.

All 8 NZ Universities have an open entry policy for adults (20 yrs+) at present. This is referred to as “adult admission” or “special admission”. Students under 20 yrs old are required to achieve fixed entrance standards to gain entrance into University. The purpose is to ensure those studying for a degree have “a fair and reasonable chance of success” (i.e. not just starting a degree but successfully completing it).

To enter at under 20 years of age students must have an entrance qualification, such as one of the following:

1. University Entrance via NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement)
- a minimum of 42 credits at level 3 or higher. These comprise 14 credits in each of 2 subjects, selected from a list of 40 approved subjects, and a further 14 from no more than 2 additional subjects, selected from the approved list or from the National Qualifications Framework. Also included must be 8 credits in literacy at level 2 or higher, 4 in reading and 4 in writing, and 14 credits in maths at level 1 or higher.

The University Entrance standard is set out on the NZQA website www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/for-students/ue/index.html. On this page are links to the “Standards fulfilling the literacy requirement” and the “University Entrance approved subjects list.” Two of the subjects selected must be typical academic ones, but the remaining two may be of the student’s choice and the selection is wide.

2. Equivalent qualifications (Ad Eundem Statum) which comprise:

ACE (Accelerated Christian Education)

CIE (University of Cambridge International Examinations)

IB (International Baccalaureate) diploma

Equivalent qualification from overseas country

Foundation studies at a recognised tertiary education provider.

SAT tests only if they are accompanied by a high school diploma.

3. Discretionary entrance. This applies only to students who have excellent NCEA level 2 marks (i.e. 80 credits in yr 12, have not completed yr 13) and must also have a recommendation from the school. Provisional entrance applied to the old 6th form certificate and has been phased out.

There is a widespread belief amongst home educators that our students are eligible for the discretionary entry pathway, possibly by submitting a portfolio of work. This is incorrect. Currently there is no provision for alternative qualifications than the ones listed. Individual assessments can be done, but cost the university time and money.

It’s worth asking the enrolment officer for an interview, but the usual outcome is that the student will be directed to a foundation or other ground level course, prior to enrolling in the one they are aiming for.

Our recommendation:

Either wait till age 20 to attend university. Use the intervening 2 years to build up an employment record (very important to NZ employers) and to gain maturity and clarify goals. Be aware that certain courses have restricted entry (medicine, law and others) and that popular courses may have added entry requirements. Check the website of the university you want to attend, for the requirements for each course. Requirements can vary between institutions. Enquire as far in advance as possible (yr 10 onwards) so you can plan what you need to do.

Or achieve the required standards in NCEA. Tertiary providers prefer this and it is transferable to any course.

Or enrol in a bridging course at the institution you want to study at.

NCEA at levels 1, 2 and 3 can be obtained by enrolling in:

1. A registered school for yrs 11, 12 and/or 13 any time before the age of 19 yrs. You can enrol to do NCEA level 2 or 3 without having completed the one before it (subject to acceptance by the school). The downside to public school is the long hours involved as much of the work is done as homework on top of the school day. The advantage is that school is cheaper than most bridging courses (even taking uniforms and school fees into account).

Theoretically a home-ed student can link with a school for NCEA and there is a form on the NZQA website for this www.nzqa.govt.nz but in practice this probably means the student actually attending school due to the internal assessment component, and the only circumstances in which students are likely to be accepted to attend part-time is if they pay a full fee for the course.

2. The Correspondence school www.correspondence.school.nz The Correspondence school costs a full fee of about \$700-\$1000 per subject. The adult rate is about \$80 per subject. In 2008 a new young adult category was introduced, free to full time students age 16 -18 yrs (plus a school donation)

3. An arrangement with a NZQA qualified tutor for subjects like music.

Other options - Equivalent entry qualifications

1. ACE programme, cost \$US 200-\$300 per year approx for whole course www.schooloftomorrow.com USA high school diplomas typically have 4 years of English & 4 years of History/Geography so there is a lot of work involved, and they are weighted towards English rather than science subjects.

2. Cambridge exam - sit this following your own course of study. These exams are tough, and weighted towards English language. Contact your local home ed regional networking group (eg Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington or Christchurch Home Educators) to find out where to sit, or if your local high school has students sitting Cambridge exams they may let your student sit with them (although they are often not willing to do this as there is extra organizing and costs involved for them). Exam fee is \$55 per subject. www.acsnz.org.nz (FAQ) for details. It may be difficult to do the practical exam component of science subjects at home. Course textbooks are available from educational book suppliers.

3. SAT I and II exams – could possibly be accepted if very good marks in SAT II subject exams not just the SAT I aptitude exam, and accompanied by references.

4. Foundation and Bridging courses, or other entry level course. All tertiary providers will have some sort of entry course from which you can staircase up to what you really want to do. Besides providing access to degree courses they are useful to build confidence and ensure your students have done the appropriate prerequisite work and practise good study habits. They are not always transferable between institutions, and for an accomplished student can be a discouraging waste of a year, as well as added expense. Bridging courses vary widely in cost, and can be from as little as \$450 per year but more likely up to \$3,500 per semester.

Additional information

Universities

The 8 NZ universities are

Auckland www.auckland.ac.nz

Auckland University of Technology www.aut.ac.nz

Massey (Palmerston North, Albany, Wellington) www.massey.ac.nz

Waikato – (Hamilton, Tauranga) www.waikato.ac.nz

Victoria (Wellington), www.victoria.ac.nz

Lincoln University (Christchurch) www.lincoln.ac.nz

Canterbury (Christchurch) www.canterbury.ac.nz

Otago (Dunedin) www.otago.ac.nz

In our experience Otago and Victoria universities have the most flexible entry requirements and welcome enquiries from home-ed students. Both also provide limited distance learning courses. Otago has courses that others don't, e.g. dentistry, surveying, medical radiation therapy.. Any student with an entrance qualification may enrol in First-Year Health Sciences. At the end of the first year selection into health sciences programmes such as medicine is made. It has offices in Auckland and Wellington for queries and enrolments.

Auckland has the most stringent requirements. Many courses have extra entrance requirements on top of

the University Entrance standard. Their website is extremely thorough and provides the necessary information. Some diploma courses from other tertiary ed providers may be credited towards Auckland university courses, but certificate courses are not usually considered, and they don't accept SATs. They do have excellent foundation courses at a cheap rate.

Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology www.itpnz.ac.nz

The 19 ITPs that are members of ITPNZ require NCEA for most (not all) sub-degree courses, and University Entrance for degree programmes. Students without NCEA will usually be directed to a certificate course from which they can staircase to other courses, although 20+ years may get in with other qualifications. Most ITP courses are around \$2,000-\$3,000 per semester (\$4,000+ per yr), but the costs vary and so do the course requirements. Home-educated students are not eligible for the STAR scheme which allows students to attend a course for a couple of days to see if they like it (as these days are purchased by schools for their students) but some ITPs will allow home-educated students to join STAR for a small fee, or have other provision for trial days.

Unitec www.unitec.ac.nz is an institute of technology that does not belong to ITPNZ.

Open Polytechnic www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz

has open entry to many courses, the work is done online and fees are reasonable. Their bridging course is called OP4240 Certificate in Tertiary Study Skills. It consists of 2 courses and it costs \$534 (2008).

The Southern Institute of Technology has a Zero fees scheme, and campuses in Invercargill, Gore and Christchurch www.sit.ac.nz

My comment:

Care must be taken when choosing a course because the “knowledge economy” has meant a number of providers have made available a multitude of courses which are strictly money-making ventures and have little practical use for the student. Your students could easily find themselves, as too many others have, with a massive debt, wasted years, and no useful qualification. Examples often include sports and outdoor pursuits courses, some IT courses and performing arts and media courses.

Unfortunately such courses are often legitimized by careers guidance counsellors from school and Work and Income who have these courses listed on their books and freely recommend them to students on the basis that any course is preferable to being unemployed, and that their responsibility ends when the student leaves their office.

Youth Training

Free courses for unemployed 15–17 year old with few or no qualifications, funded by the Tertiary Education Commission. A number of providers are funded for these courses, which are aimed at less academic and sometimes alienated students, who have left school early and without qualifications. Some of these may be suitable for some homeschooled students to get a starting qualification or gain confidence. YMCAs are youth training providers.

Look on the website below to find what is available in your area. Taught are basic work skills, CV, interpersonal and self-esteem exercises, often a stage of the driver's licence along with subjects as diverse as business skills, IT, hospitality industry, and various trades. (Each provider specializes in one or two subjects). Students are assisted to find work or further training after the course. See www.tec.govt.nz/templates/standard.aspx?id=481 (search “Participating providers”)

Unemployed 18-24 year old students without qualifications are eligible for the same free work skills training through Work and Income's TOPS scheme, which is available to the long-term unemployed (over 6 months registered with Work and Income). See www.tec.govt.nz/templates/standard.aspx?id=476

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are available to 16-21 year old students, and require the student to get the job first, then have an interview with the apprenticeship board. Usually NCEA 1 is required, and you will probably be required to do a pre-apprenticeship training course before starting your job (cost \$2,500 for a very basic 8 week course – something of a catch 22, especially if you end up not getting the apprenticeship).

After that training costs are subsidized by the government, plus the trainee is paid a wage. You may be able to get a scholarship from www.competenz.org.nz

You will also need a provisional driver's licence, a vehicle, and you will have to buy your own tools (often the employer will lend you the cost of these). A youth training or TOPS course can help you obtain an apprenticeship.

www.tools4work.co.nz/smart-steps-for-the-future/smart_steps.aspx Contains a wealth of information plus links to youth support services. Also see www.modern-apprenticeships.govt.nz/en/ and www.skillnz.org.nz/modern-apprenticeships which helps match up trainees to employers. As well, Skills4Work helps apprentices into jobs www.skills4work.org.nz/apprentice/home/home.aspx Home-ed students are not eligible for Gateway programmes as these are purchased for their students by the participating schools.

Additional Information:

Kiwi Careers is a government website that is very thorough and worth reading although it may take several days to get through (see pathfinder section). They also produce a booklet which lists about 700 jobs. www.kiwicareers.govt.nz

My advice to students is, if you want to go into a profession such as medicine, nursing, teaching, engineering or law, get NCEA or equivalent like CIE as soon as possible. Otherwise, don't rush into an expensive course until you are sure it is what you really want to do, and have ascertained where it will get you. While tertiary qualifications are an essential prerequisite to a job in other countries, NZ employers look for the right attitude, abilities and prior experience, and in many fields will consider a CV containing a good work record with evidence of ability, as readily as a qualification. It is still possible in NZ to start at the bottom and work your way up, especially if you start in the workforce at a young age. Once you decide that you need certain qualifications to get where you want to go, your options may include in-house, part-time or online study.

Marianne Wilson updated June 2008