



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

AFS NCEA Guidebook 2019

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Guide to Getting NCEA and Getting into University

So you're thinking about doing an exchange? Great! You're obviously open to new ideas, you're looking for a challenge, something exciting; you want the chance to be yourself and spread your wings.

Well an exchange will give you all this and much more!

But... you're worried that missing a year of school will mean you can't get into university. Totally normal. Most of our students think something along these lines! The good news is, doing an exchange does NOT mean you won't be able to get into university – it actually opens doors for you, not shuts them!

It's very important that you talk your plans through with a careers advisor or dean at your school, as well as enrolment services at your chosen university. The more time you have to plan, the easier it will be! There's a lot of information written in this guide, so please do read the whole way through it, even if it looks like the answer is in the first paragraph.

There are three main ways undergraduates can gain entrance into university:

- ✓ Discretionary Entrance
- ✓ Special Admission
- ✓ Using their high school qualifications

We'll go over all of these, as well as course requirements.

This guide has been written with a ten-month exchange in mind – if want to do a five month exchange, this information still applies. You just have a bit more time to get it done.

Please note: This guide is accurate as at the time of publication (March 2019). Gaining University Entrance is highly dependent on your own abilities, your school's flexibility and the requirements of the facility you wish to attend.

This is a general guide to show you how it *can* be done, but you will need to check with your school and chosen university to ensure that this will work for you.

*****Please don't take this guide as fact. It is correct to the best of our knowledge, as at March 2019. AFS spoke to a number of professionals and schools in creating this guide. However, all schools are different, so please make sure you double and triple check that your school can help you.***

Talk to a teacher or careers advisor who can support what you're trying to achieve and can help you find a way to do an exchange (it can be done!). Please also check that your chosen tertiary education provider will accept your high school qualifications. **

Discretionary Entrance

If you have not achieved University Entrance, you can get into university via Discretionary Entrance.

What this means is that a university will evaluate your application on its own merits, at their discretion. The requirements do vary from university to university; but in general, all that is needed is NCEA Level 2 endorsed with Merit (or the equivalent in CIE or IB) and written evidence of your overseas exchange from your student exchange provider. That's AFS NZ!

Just get in touch if you would like us to write a letter to your tertiary education provider on your behalf, we are more than happy to do this.

Here are the links to NZ universities' Discretionary Entrance requirements.

[University of Auckland](#)

[AUT University](#)

[University of Waikato](#)

[Massey University](#)

[Victoria University of Wellington](#)

[University of Canterbury](#)

[Lincoln University](#)

[University of Otago](#)

The only thing to keep in mind with Discretionary Entrance is that you ***cannot*** attempt NCEA Level 3 after June, the year before you want to go to University. If you do, you will need to complete NCEA Level 3 and get into university using the Level 3 results. Discretionary entrance is also at the discretion of the university, so while it is very unlikely that they would decline your application, it is a possibility.

Special Admission

If you're over 20 years old, you can get into university via Special Admission. That is basically all there is to it!

Special Admission seems to have some kind of bad reputation among secondary students, but once you're at university, nobody cares how you got in! Lots of students seem to want to go to uni with all their friends and for some reason they are scared of being two years older than most other freshmen – strange but true.

To them, we would say – you've already left your friends behind once when you went on exchange, and there are always more friends to make! Some of your friends will have gone off to other universities and have got jobs or apprenticeships.

You could spend the two years between high school and uni working, earning and saving money (this will make a huge difference when you're a poor student and living off budget pasta and baked beans), or even just nailing down exactly what it is you want to study.

There are so many students out there who start three year degrees straight out of high school, and then realise halfway through that it's not what they want to do. Learn from their mistakes and know yourself and what you want to achieve before you get into it.

Here are links to NZ universities' Special Admission requirements:

[University of Auckland](#)

[AUT University](#)

[University of Waikato](#)

[Massey University](#)

[Victoria University of Wellington](#)

[University of Canterbury](#) – UofC is a little bit different, as they have a Certificate of University Preparation that they require all adult students to do. This only takes one semester and you can do it simultaneously with 100-level papers.

[Lincoln University](#)

[University of Otago](#)

School Qualifications

National Certificate of Educational Achievement

Obviously achieving all NCEA levels and doing an exchange in three years is going to take a bit more hard work than just achieving NCEA in three years. Good thing we love a challenge, right?

You all know [how NCEA works](#):

- Level 1 - 80 credits at any level (including ten literacy and ten numeracy requirements) will get you NCEA Level 1.
- Level 2 - 60 credits at level 2 or above, in addition to 20 credits from any level. The Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements must also be met.
- Level 3 - 60 credits at level 3 or above, plus 20 credits from level 2 or above. The Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements must also be met.

And hopefully you all know what [University Entrance](#) is – you will need all of the below:

- NCEA Level 3
- 10 Literacy credits at NCEA Level 2 or above
- 10 Numeracy credits at NCEA Level 1 or above
- 14 credits each in three [approved subjects](#) at Level 3

And that will get you into university. The trick with doing an exchange is how to get all of these in a shorter space of time. Or you could always repeat the year when you return. For some reason, students don't often want to do this, but it could be the right option for you. Read on and see.

So when should you do an exchange?

Doing an exchange in Year 11:

Great! Are you thinking of doing an exchange **at the start of the year**? If so, then come back to school when you return and do NCEA Levels 2 and 3 and you'll be able to get university entrance.

You might need to put in a lot of work once you start Level 2 (seeing as you're essentially skipping Level 1), but keep at it, and you can always get the support you need from your school. Why don't you see if you can do some NCEA Level 1 internals during Year 10? That way you won't miss out.

Are you thinking of doing an exchange **halfway through the year**? Even better! See if you can do all of your internals in the first half of the year and try and get as many credits as you can. You might be able to gain NCEA Level 1 without sitting any of your externals.

You can even talk to your school about sitting some of the easier Level 2 assessments early, so that you don't miss out on the credits. Then when you get back, you might be able to sit your Level 2 externals (and internals, if you have the time) and complete NCEA Level 3 alongside your peers.

Doing an exchange in Year 12:

Awesome! Are you planning on doing an exchange **at the start of the year**? Then get NCEA Level 1 before you go and then get NCEA Level 3 when you get back. It sounds hard, but if you put in enough effort in Year 13, you can definitely get NCEA Level 3.

Of course you should take NCEA Level 3 in your newfound foreign language! You will get an Excellence Endorsement in that subject without much effort.

Also keep in mind that you don't have to take all Level 3 subjects – you only need 60 Level 3 credits (14 each from three approved subjects, so the other 18 could come from subjects like Tourism or Hospitality – no-one is forcing you to take calculus and physics - unless of course you need to as your university course requires it. More on that later!) You could also take a Level 2 subject to get the other 20 credits needed.

Are you planning to do an exchange **in the middle of the year**? Okay, this is a bit trickier, but definitely doable as always, we like to make things happen! There are a couple of ways you can get UE while doing an exchange that departs in the middle of Year 12:

1. Prior to departure, see if you can sit as many NCEA Level 2 internals as you can. Then, on your return, see if you'd be able to sit all of the NCEA Level 2 externals. You will need to check this with enrolment at your preferred University or other provider. If you get at least a Merit endorsement overall, use this (and a letter from AFS NZ) to get Discretionary Entrance into University.
2. Prior to your departure, see if you can sit as many NCEA Level 3 internals as you can (essentially skipping Level 2). Then, on your return, see if you can sit all of the NCEA Level 3 externals. If you achieve NCEA Level 3, use this to get into university. We won't lie, this is one of the more difficult ways to get UE - It requires a lot of work, especially when you return from your exchange, totally not in exam mode.
But if you do them and even only get an achieved, that's still credits in the bank. If you do not achieve NCEA Level 3, you won't be able to use Discretionary Entrance (regardless of whether you have Level 2 or not – if you attempt NCEA Level 3 after June, the year prior to University, you can't use Discretionary Entrance). So you may need to...
3. Return to school the following year to sit Level 3 and get UE.

Doing an exchange in Year 13:

Fantastic! Are you planning on **leaving for your exchange at the start of the year**? Get NCEA Level 2 before you go, and then use it to apply for Discretionary Entrance. Alternatively, see if you can spend Year 12 doing NCEA Levels 2 and 3 at the same time. Or if there are certain subjects that you need to achieve for your university course admission, see if you can sit those ones early so you don't miss out.

Are you planning on **leaving for an exchange in the middle of the year**? This is the best and easiest time to go on an exchange! Knock NCEA Level 3 off in the first half of the year, so you're sitting pretty when you depart on your exchange. This does mean you may not be able to get an endorsement for NCEA Level 3, as you won't be able to sit your externals unless you do them upon your return, but in terms of University Entrance, endorsements don't actually matter.

Cambridge International Examinations

Cambridge is a little bit trickier to work with, but still doable. You need to have the following grades to get [University Entrance with CIE](#):

- Numeracy – Minimum grade of D in IGSCE Mathematics (or D in GSCE Maths, or E in AS Maths)
- Literacy – Minimum grade of E in AS English Language, AS Literature in English or AS Language and Literature in English
- And a minimum of 120 points of the UCAS Tariff, including a minimum of a D grade in each of at least two subjects equivalent to those on the List of Approved Subjects, and a minimum D grade in either one further subject from the approved list or a subject related to a domain on the National Qualifications Framework.

Here is the UCAS Tariff table:

UCAS POINTS	A* Grade	A Grade	B Grade	C Grade	D Grade	E Grade
AS LEVEL	N/A	60	50	40	30	20
A LEVEL	140	120	100	80	60	40

CIE is actually really great, in that AS Levels are a university entrance qualification in themselves, so you don't actually need to do A2 in order to get University Entrance.

Doing an exchange in Fifth Form (Year 11)

Ensure that you can get your numeracy requirements! Would you be able to sit IGSCE Maths before your departure? If not, make sure that you are able to sit it (or AS Maths) when you get back.

Doing an exchange in fifth form is possibly the best year you can do an exchange if you take CIE, as IGCSEs aren't part of university entry requirements. Ask your school about missing the IGCSEs and coming straight back into AS Level.

Doing an exchange in Sixth Form (Year 12)

Thinking of departing on your exchange at the **start of the year**? Having got your GCSEs, I think your best bet would be to sit AS when you return to NZ in Seventh Form. Then use your AS qualification to obtain University Entrance.

Are you thinking of departing in the **middle of the year**? Start your AS Levels, and complete them when you get back. Then use your AS qualification to obtain University Entrance.

Doing an exchange in Seventh Form (Year 13)

Are you thinking of departing on your exchange at the **start of the year**? Great! You will have already gotten your AS Levels, so you should actually have university entrance by now! Nothing to worry about then.

Are you thinking of departing in the **middle of the year**? Even better! You've got your AS Levels, so see if you can do your A2 level examinations in the first exam session, in May/June, to see if you can get some grades at this level. Even if you just get E's, that is 40 points! Equivalent to getting a C in AS Level!

International Baccalaureate

For students studying towards the International Baccalaureate Diploma, each University/Institution has its own regulations and policies for admissions and student placement. See the table below for a list of Universities that recognise the diploma and their requirements. For more information visit <http://www.ibschools.org.nz/recognition.html>.

Universities and Institutions that recognize the IB diploma	Is there a minimum score and/or pre-requisites/assumed knowledge for entry into courses?	Is there an entry pathway for candidates who have attempted the IB Diploma and not been successful?
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)	Yes , both local and international students will be admitted at Entrance Level provided they have achieved the following; Numeracy: Group 5 any option Literacy: English as Group 1 option General Subjects: The Diploma must have been completed (24 points minimum) before admission at entrance level may be granted.	New Zealand students who have not been awarded the IB Diploma should contact AUT's Student Information Centre to enquire about Discretionary Entrance. All applicants for discretionary entrance will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Discretionary entrance is not available to international students.
Lincoln University	Yes , students must score a minimum of 24 points for entry into Lincoln University undergraduate programmes, please note that some courses have higher minimum entry requirements.	Yes , applicants not awarded the Diploma will be offered a place in a suitable bridging or pre-university programme. More information is available at this link: www.lincoln.ac.nz/Degrees-Diplomas-and-Certificates/Pre-University-programmes/
Massey University	Yes , students must have completed the full Diploma, and have gained at least 24 points.	No , however students should contact their nearest Massey Student Liaison Adviser regarding discretionary entrance which will be assessed on the basis of your academic background and an adviser's recommendation.
University of Canterbury	There is no minimum score for entry although applicants must have been awarded the IB Diploma.	Yes , New Zealand students who have achieved 24 IB points but who have not been awarded the IB Diploma may apply for Discretionary Entrance www.canterbury.ac.nz/liaison/university_entrance.shtml (this is not currently available to Australian students). Domestic Students (this includes Australian students) who have less than 24 points may apply for admission to the Certificate of University Preparation www.uco.canterbury.ac.nz/bridging/cup/ International students who have not been awarded the IB Diploma may apply for admission to the University of Canterbury Certificate of Foundation Studies www.uco.canterbury.ac.nz/bridging/foundation/ .
University of Otago	Yes , to be eligible for admission domestic students will need to gain the IB Diploma (24 points minimum). The entry score requirement for Preferential Entry for the applicable undergraduate programmes from IB is 26 points. Scores which do not meet this requirement will be considered for Competitive Entry. International students are required to have completed the Diploma with a minimum of 26 points before being eligible to apply for admission to the University of Otago.	Yes , students who have achieved a lower score than expected may like to consider the University of Otago Foundation Year or Bridging Courses: www.otago.ac.nz/uolcfy/index.html Successful completion of Foundation Year to the required standards provides you with opportunities to study at all universities in New Zealand.

University of Waikato	Yes , students are required to have completed the IB Diploma with a minimum overall score of 24 points before being eligible to apply for admission. Please note that some programmes of study may require a higher overall score to be achieved.	Yes , Waikato pathways programmes put tertiary study within your reach. If you didn't get the marks needed for direct entry into university, then Waikato has a pathway to help you achieve your goals. Please visit this link for more information: www.waikato.ac.nz/study/qualifications/pathways.shtml
Victoria University of Wellington	Yes , University Entrance through IB consists of the full IB diploma (24 points minimum). The Guaranteed Entry Score (GES) from IB is 26 points for all undergraduate degrees, except the Bachelor of Architectural Studies and Bachelor of Building Science which have a GES of 27. Some courses also have degree specific requirements, e.g. performance audition. Please use the Course Catalogue for more information on degree specific requirements: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/subjects/coursecatalogue.aspx	Yes , applicants may be interested to explore one of the Victoria University or Wellington University Preparation courses: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/up/

Because the IB diploma curriculum needs to be completed over two consecutive years, here are some things to think about regarding the timing of your exchange:

- It might be better for you to go in Year 11, so that you have the two consecutive years needed for the IB diploma.
- Or if you do go in Year 12 or Year 13, a mid-year departure might be best for you – that way the NZ holiday months are included in your exchange, so you're only really missing eight months of school, rather than ten.
- Finally, check and see if doing an exchange count as part of your CAS – an intercultural exchange will provide you with a wealth of knowledge and experience!

Talk to your Dean or principal who should be able to help you out.

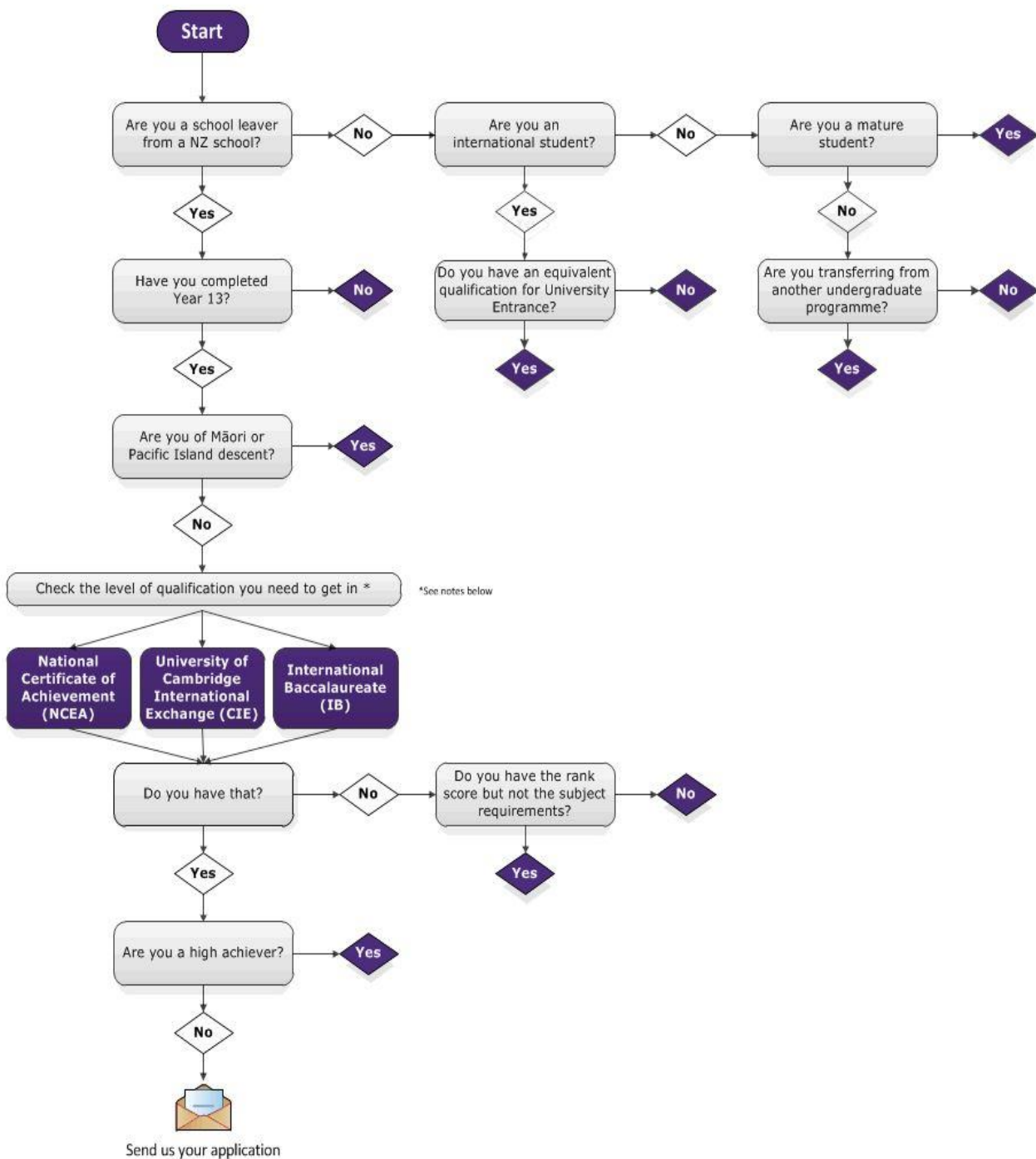
Course Admission

Finally, 'course admission' - you've got your UE, so what's this about? Well, certain university courses have prerequisites, which they require a student has achieved before they can allow admission into the course.

This is in addition to the regular university entrance requirements. Of course, we recommend you double check your course requirements regardless of which courses you're doing, but notable degrees that have prerequisites include Bachelors of Architecture, Engineering, Medicine, Property and Technology. Pre-requisites also vary by university – double check your chosen university's requirements for that course.

As these courses are quite competitive, these requirements are often only needed for Guaranteed Entry into the course. There are often alternative pathways to getting into these courses – for example, if you have the admission score, but are missing the required secondary school subjects, check into the university and see if they offer courses that are equivalent to what you are missing.

Sometimes this may just be one bridging course, but it might also be a diploma from a polytechnic. For example, see this flow chart below from the University of Auckland about doing Engineering – there are lots of ways that you can get in! Each purple square is an admission pathway.



Of course, you may not want to do a bridging course or a separate diploma. In this case, it may be easiest for you to return to school and do the subjects that you missed out on.

Doing NCEA by Correspondence

This is something that previous students have done and in fact AFS strongly discourages it. You will be participating in school while in your host country, (homework inclusive!), so if you do NCEA by correspondence, you would effectively be doing twice the school work.

In addition to this, it will severely impede your ability to integrate into your community. You're spending all your time doing NCEA and not involving yourself with your host family, host school and friends. It will make it much, much harder for you to make good friends if you're really actively involved in something that you alone are able to do – and you would be doing it alone.

The major benefit of a student exchange is the cultural immersion and leaving your old life in NZ behind, while creating a new one that fits you equally as well. If you're doing NZ school work, it shows you're not focused on your host country – your mind is in New Zealand and that doesn't equate well with immersing yourself in your new culture.

Once you've found your feet in your new country and with your new family and friends, the last thing you're going to feel like doing is NZ homework on the weekends! You'll want to be off exploring and having fun discovering a new world.

If you're thinking about doing NCEA by correspondence, please do think about it long and hard. Know AFS discourage it strongly, and the reason is that it plain and simple just doesn't work. In the past, we've had students sent home because the host country found that they weren't adapting well to their new country, and doing correspondence was a huge part of this. Think strongly about what you want to achieve with your exchange year, and whether putting that all in jeopardy by doing correspondence is worth it.

Exchanges truly are the experience of a lifetime – as the saying goes, it's not a year in your life, it's your life in a year. You will learn so much over the course of your exchange that you just wouldn't be able to learn in a classroom.

We don't want to put you off, quite the opposite, we want your exchange to be a fantastic experience that will allow you to experience a new culture and have the trip of a lifetime!

If you have any questions please get in touch:

Call: 0800 600 300

Email: info-newzealand@afs.org