

2006 ISTANZ survey of Independent Schools re NCEA

NB: Only 14 surveys were returned and processed (mostly representing whole departments)

Subject/faculty	Number of returns	a	b	c	d	e	f	Comments
Economics	1	3	2	2	2	3	2	Jumbo day – no NZQA rep present to answer many issues raised re level 2 and 3 internal assessments – lots of unanswered questions
Media Studies	1	2	2	1	1	3	2	NCEA going well- past issues all dealt with the following year after consultation; resources readily available and easy to use.
Classical Studies	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	Marking of external inconsistent. High ability students penalised in Achieved questions due to rigidity of system
English	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	91308 not offered because of difficulties with marking/exam. The area of unseen text continues to be problematic. Asked for granted a change to standard to be moderated = pleasing as we can get feedback on the internal that gives us most angst in deciding the standard
Social Science	Geog/History History	4 2	3 2	4 2	3	4 3	3 2	Lack of moderated exemplars. Mark schedules too late in coming, and lack substance. History 2.6 contained wording inconsistent with standard (no choice). Geography 3.1 Maori perspectives cant be found for all physical/natural process study areas (myths etc).Geog 2.3 Question required extreme natural events to be discussed as explanation of inequalities in developed nations which is not valid. History-Too much of the marking this year appears to have been trying to fit normal distribution curve, e.g. several changes to marking schedules when it appeared too many were Achieving Merit or Excellent Marking Schedules should be out earlier
Technology	1	2	3	4	4	4	2	3.6 Significant changes in interpretation and way question marked but no change in standard or mark schedule. Needs new title. Many students will not do this standard as it is. Much ongoing interpretation of standards, difficult to 'unpack' and interpret. Assessment still driving curriculum. TKI needs more updated internal resources. Teachers need clearer instructions. Subject becoming too theoretical.

Spanish	1	3	2	4	1	4	2	Topics in exam too narrow- makes exam a lottery Mark schedules must be available earlier for good planning. Tweaking of standards every year leads to too much paper work/changes-accountability gone mad, with no learning gains
Maths	1	1	2	1	1		n / a	*small 2 teacher new school- need for more guidance and awareness of resources and standards already developed for use. Too hard writing all own assessments.
English and Communication skills	1	3	2	n a	n a	n a	n a	* small 2 teacher new school Need for assessment tasks on the web – too time consuming writing own tasks
Visual Arts	1	3	2	1	1	3	1	Earlier exam scheds. As it affects content and delivery the following year Results take too long to get to students
Accounting	1	1	4	1		4	1	Level 3 major focus has changed due to introduction of Internat. Financial Acct Standards. NO resources but has altered around 50% of the course. Professional Accts aren't using it yet. Further late changes of format continue = exceptionally frustrating. Levels One and Two are OK as they haven't been affected very much.
Unknown	3	3 2	3 3	2 2	2 2	4 2	4 2	Mark schedules must come out a lot earlier. SBA compromises scholarship. Schol changes indicate that SBA is wrong, invalid, and norm referenced assessment system is best. Abolish internals – unfair, invalid, inconsistent. Externals work well, although % successes vary considerably, year to year.

Results

Questions	Agree	Mainly agree	Mainly disagree	Disagree
a	3	5	5	1
b	1	8	4	1
c	4	6	0	3
d	4	5	1	1
e	0	3	4	5
f	3	7	1	1

Some conclusions

Overall, results of the survey showed that teachers are more positive about the NCEA and Scholarship process than in previous years. There are still criticisms but it seems that with minor tweaking of standards and marking, there is in general a more constructive approach to changes and consequently better outcomes for teachers and students. As with most surveys there are still a few teachers who are adamantly against NCEA and would prefer a fully externally assessed system, and some subject areas struggling with resources and support.

Resources for Internal assessments

Some subject areas still have poor quality or few online resources available, especially Economics, Spanish and Visual Arts. Accounting has virtually no resources to match changes in the assessment requirements, and Technology requires newer updated resources available on-line. New schools entering the NCEA arena for the first time are finding it difficult to locate basic information on where and what resources are readily available to them. Maths, English and History are more satisfied with resource availability.

Moderation system for Internal Assessments

There seems to be an overall positive response to the internal moderation system. However, particular subjects are still finding aspects of this problematic e.g. Accounting and Technology

Examination of 2005 External Standards

There was a significantly positive response to this question with most subject areas agreeing that the examination provided few surprises and was fair. Issues such as the narrowness of topics presented to students in language examinations, changes in the way answers were marked without prior clarification and tendency towards the subject becoming too theoretical (Technology), and examination questions demanding answers that may not apply to all case studies taught in the subject area (Geography) were noted.

Marking of External Standards

Again most people reported that they were pleased with the way the external standards were marked. Some comments made were about manipulating the marking so results better fitted a normal curve (History) and the rigidity of the mark schedules penalising higher ability students (Classics). Some English departments were not offering some standards until marking details were sorted out, and the variability of results year to year concerned others. Economics teachers are still finding it difficult to clarify the expectations and interpretation of their standards and the consequent impact on student results is an issue.

Timing of the release of mark schedules

There was significant discontent with the very late release of both students' marks and the mark schedules for the external examinations. This seriously affected planning of units of learning for the following year and consequently created more work and revision of courses late in term 1. Teachers found it difficult advising students about requesting a remark of their examination scripts without schedules to guide them.

Changes to Scholarship

Most teachers were very positive about the changes in the examination and marking of scholarship, and the consequent number and quality of awards for students.