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**Analysis of NCEA results highlights arbitrary nature of exam results**

An analysis, by Auckland's MacLeans College, of three years of NCEA results shows its faults not to be teething problems but endemic to the system.

MacLeans College principal Byron Bentley said after that three years of NCEA Level 1 and two years of Level 2 the variations in failure rates were still unacceptably large:

- In 2004, Level 1 failure rates for the External Achievement Standards ranged from 74.5 percent to 3.1 percent.
- In 2004, Level 2 failure rates for the External Achievement Standards ranged from 74.6 percent to 17.9 percent.
- There was little consistency in the distribution of Excellence and Not Achieved grades from 2002 to 2004 for the same Achievement Standards across a range of subjects.

Wide variation occurred in nearly every subject with little pattern between subject or year to account for it.

In the high stakes Level 3 qualification introduced for the first time in 2004, the analysis also highlighted a large variation in failure rates:

- The failure rate ranged from 86.6 percent to 10.6 percent.
- In 19 of the 85 standards over 60 percent of the students failed, but in 16 other Standards the failure rate was less than 30 percent.

Mr Bentley said the year a student sat NCEA and the selection of subjects could determine a student's chances of success, including university entrance.

"The analysis shows that the excuse that the unfairness to students of this inconsistent, arbitrary system is just 'teething problems' does not stack up when weighed against the evidence."

The Level 1 and 2 results should have stabilised by now if the standards-based model was a viable one, he said.

"The NCEA system was untried, unproven and untested with a lack of credible research when implemented, and the shambles that the experts forecast has occurred. Unfairness to students is the result, matched by the debilitating effects of this on students, their parents and their hard-working and conscientious teachers. Drastic surgery is needed on the NCEA," Mr Bentley said.

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