

Macleans College

Accounting enrolments soar as learning is linked with future careers



Macleans College has ignited an excitement for accounting amongst its students, causing enrolments in Year 11 Accounting to skyrocket by 60 per cent between 2020 and 2023.
Photo credit: Macleans College

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**MRS COLLEEN GUTHRIE,
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT -
ACCOUNTING AT MACLEANS
COLLEGE**

Battered by a bad press and with its future being reshaped by the increasing use of artificial intelligence, the accounting industry appeared to have lost its lustre in recent years. It also didn't help that accountants are often stereotyped as uncool bean counters, with tedious work and gruelling hours.

But Macleans College has ignited an excitement for accounting amongst its students by connecting them with young accounting professionals and potential role models who show how the subject can lead to varied career opportunities.

“Our Year 10 students learn that accounting is cool, accountants are not just number crunchers, and they hear that directly from professionals,” said Mrs Colleen Guthrie, Head of Department - Accounting at Macleans College.

This has resulted in a surge in interest - enrolments in Year 11 Accounting skyrocketed by 60 per cent between 2020 and 2023. Corresponding upticks in enrolments for Year 12 and Year 13 Accounting have been noted over the same period.

“Four years ago, we had 75 students taking Year 11 Accounting. That increased to 120 in 2023 and is projected to stay at this level in 2024,” Mrs Guthrie cited.

Accounting students learn a range of skills including financial analysis, analytical and strategic thinking, risk management, problem solving, communications and report writing, enabling graduates to work as forensic accountants, cybersecurity analysts, financial advisers, management consultants, environmental accountants, business advisors and financial investigators.

Macleans College's approach to link the study of accounting to rewarding careers is supported by its collaboration with Chartered Accountants Australia and

New Zealand (CA ANZ), a 136,000-strong body for professional chartered accountants in Australia and New Zealand. Their collaboration is one of many ways that the school is working to achieve the National Education and Learning Priority 7 – “Collaborate with industries and employers to ensure learners/ākonga have the skills, knowledge and pathways to succeed in work.”

The Careers Engagement team from CA ANZ, including a CA student representative, presents to Year 10 students at Macleans College about the various career opportunities for accounting graduates and how to get into them should they decide to pursue this pathway.

CA ANZ also takes part in “Careers Night,” an annual event organised by Macleans College so students, especially those from Year 11 to Year 13, can meet representatives from a range of industries.

Robyn Nicholl, Head of Careers Engagement at CA ANZ, said the engagements at Macleans College were part of its outreach in more than 80 secondary schools throughout New Zealand.

“Our outreach seeks to bust myths, boost the perception of accounting, and develop our next generation of accountants,” Ms Nicholl explained.

“We also want to connect the students with our Chartered Accountants and CA student representatives as potential role models and show that accounting is more than numbers.”

Kjirsti Marundan, a CA student representative, said she often emphasised to students that while they don’t need to be super smart in maths to be an accountant, studying for an accounting degree at university entails commitment and hard work.

“This is important to communicate because in high school, the accounting you are exposed to is ledgers and the preparation of financial statements to build foundational knowledge,” said Ms Marundan, who plans



Year 10 students at Macleans College learn about the varied career opportunities for accounting graduates from a representative from Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ).
Photo credit: Macleans College

to work at PWC as a private business tax advisory graduate after completing an accounting and finance degree from the University of Auckland.

Careers cards developed by CA ANZ show that accounting graduates have a good earning potential. They can work in multinational companies, banks, government departments or not-for-profit organisations to uncover the environmental impact of business decisions, fight crime, help businesses grow, and guide government organisations to use tax dollars wisely.

The growth in accounting enrolments show that Macleans College’s approach to link subject-based education to careers is a success.

“We have enabled our students to connect what they learn in class with their aspirations, and that has helped bring the subject to life,” Mrs Guthrie said.

For more
information

<https://ncea.education.govt.nz/pathways>

