

First woman graduates from a New Zealand university

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Kate Edger became the first woman in New Zealand to gain a university degree and the first woman in the British Empire to earn a Bachelor of Arts (BA). In 1882 she became the first principal of Nelson College for Girls.

Other pioneering New Zealand woman graduates soon followed. Helen Connon, Canterbury College's first female student, graduated with a BA in 1880 and became the first woman in the Empire to gain an honours degree in 1881. New Zealand's first woman lawyer, Ethel Benjamin, graduated from the University of Otago's law school in 1898.

Stella Henderson achieved unusual academic distinction for a 19th-century woman, gaining a BA with a special focus on political science, a Masters of Arts (MA) with first-class honours in English and Latin, and completing the requirements for a Bachelor of Laws during the 1890s.

Elizabeth Gregory graduated Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in biochemistry at University College, London, in 1932. She received an honorary Doctorate of Laws (LLD) in 1967 – the first New Zealand woman graduate to be so honoured.

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Kate Edger

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Kate Edger (Te Ara biographies)



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