

Unique identifiers

A unique identifier is defined as an identifier, other than a person's name, that uniquely identifies that person. Special care should be taken when collecting, using or sharing unique identifiers.



Relevant information privacy principle

The Privacy Act sets out rules for the creation, use and protection of unique identifiers.

The relevant Information Privacy Principle (IPP) is:

Principle 13: Unique Identifiers

An education provider may assign a unique identifier to a learner for use in its operations only if that identifier is necessary to enable the education provider to carry out its functions.

An education provider must take steps to ensure that:

- a unique identifier is assigned only to a person whose identity is clearly established
- **and**
- the risk of misuse of a unique identifier is minimised.

Common unique identifiers in education sector

Common unique identifiers include:

- National Student Number (NSN).
- National Health Index (NHI).



- Social Welfare Number (SWN).
- Inland Revenue Number (IR Number).

A person cannot be requested to provide a unique identifier assigned to them unless that disclosure is for one of the purposes for which the unique identifier was assigned or is directly related to one of those purposes.

For example, an education provider cannot request the IR Number of a learner or their parents (unless the learner or parent is employed by the education provider). However, where a school employs a counsellor or nurse it may be appropriate to request the learner's NHI so that health and disability support information collected are attached to the correct learner in relevant health databases.

National Student Number (NSN)

The National Student Number (NSN) is a unique identifier given to every learner as a digital identity. Assignment and use of NSNs is governed by Education and Training Act 2020.

For more information about the NSN, and who is authorised to use the NSN for specified purposes, see:

- [About National Student Numbers - Ministry of Education](#).
- [Education \(National Student Numbers\) Notice \(No. 2\) 2024 - New Zealand Gazette](#).

From a Privacy Act perspective, the NSN is personal information about a learner and may help to identify a learner. For example, removing a learner's name and replacing it with their NSN, will not mean the learner is not identifiable – the information will still be attributable to an individual. Other information contained in the document (for example, information contained in a learning support register) may also be sufficient to identify them.

