



22 April 2026

IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND INSTRUCTIONS: Amendment Circular No. 2026-09
AMENDMENTS TO THE IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND OPERATIONAL MANUAL

Introduction

This circular outlines changes to immigration instructions. A copy of the amended instructions is attached.

All immigration officers dealing with immigration applications should read the amendments and operate in accordance with the amended instructions from the effective date.

Note

The amendments described in this circular will be published in the Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual in due course.

Information about these changes is available on our website www.immigration.govt.nz.

Description of changes

W2.2.1 Definition of 'work'

WD3.5 Currency and conditions of Post-study work visas

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BD3.1 Partner and dependent children

BB2.1.5 Conditions of Entrepreneur Work Visas

E3.26.1.25 Varying work conditions for partners of Accredited Employer and Essential Skills work visa holders

Immigration instructions have been updated to clarify when open work visa holders may undertake self-employment.

Further changes allow partners of Business Investor Work Visa and Entrepreneur Work Visa holders to undertake any type of work, including self-employment and employing others.

Appendix 1: Amendments to Temporary Entry instructions effective on and after 20 April 2026

W2.2.1 Definition of 'work'

- a. Work means any activity undertaken for gain or reward, but does not include:
 - i. visits by persons undertaking business activities detailed in V3.5(b);
 - ii. official business in the service of any government, or of any inter-governmental or international organisation that is entitled to any privileges and immunities under the Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Act 1968 (see H2);
 - iii. study or training under a scholarship or other award recognised by the Minister;
 - iv. visits by guests of government (guest of government status is granted by the Visits and Ceremonial Office, Department of Internal Affairs);
 - v. visits by persons who meet the special requirements under V3.55, V3.85, V3.130, V3.140 or V3.150;
 - vi. volunteer work for the Department of Conservation.
- b. 'Gain or reward' includes any payment or benefit that can be valued in terms of money, such as board and lodging, goods (e.g., food or clothing) and services (e.g., transport).

Note: This definition does not require work as an 'employee'. It also covers self-employment.

WD3.5 Currency and conditions of Post-study work visas

- a. Applicants who meet the requirements of WD3.1(a) to (f) are eligible for a post-study work visa with a duration as set out in the table below:

Qualification completed	Full-time study duration in New Zealand	A Post-Study work visa may be granted for:
i. Non-degree level 7 qualification or below	Full duration required to obtain that qualification	The duration that the student spent studying the qualification in New Zealand as determined by the education provider
ii. Level 7 Bachelor's degree or a qualification at level 8	At least 30 weeks	The duration that the student spent studying the qualification in New Zealand as determined by the education provider
iii. Level 9 or 10 qualification (Master's or Doctoral Degree)	At least 30 weeks	3 years
iv. A Bachelor's Degree immediately followed by an Honours or a Postgraduate Diploma (see WD3.1(b)(iii))	At least 30 weeks per individual qualification	The total amount of time they spent studying all qualifications in New Zealand, to a maximum of three years
v. Consecutive qualifications that meet WD3.1(b)(iv)	The initial qualification meets the requirements in WD3.1(a)	The duration that the student spent studying the initial qualification in New Zealand as determined by the education provider
vi. Non-degree level 8 qualification or below that requires occupational registration or affiliate membership and meets the requirements of WD3.5.5	Meets (i) above if the qualification is a non-degree level 7 or below; or meets (ii) above if qualification is a non-degree level 8	1 year (or part thereof) in addition to the time spent studying the qualification in New Zealand, as long as the total duration of the post study work visa is no more than a total of three years

- b. The study duration is determined by the education provider (and confirmed through the offer of place or a confirmation letter) and does not include extra time for repeating failed components.
- c. An immigration officer may request further evidence if they are not satisfied that the actual study duration aligns with the expected length of study for the qualification.
- d. A Post-Study work visa granted on the basis of a Bachelor's degree or a qualification at levels 8 to 10 gained in New Zealand may allow the holder to undertake any work, in any occupation and in any location.
- e. Self-employment is permitted however holders of Post-Study work visas are restricted from employing others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.
- f. A Post-Study work visa granted on the basis of a non-degree qualification at level 7 and below may only allow the holder to work in the occupation related to the qualification as specified in the third column of the Qualifications Eligible for a Post-Study Work Visa (Appendix 13) list.

WF Family stream work instructions

WF2 Partners of New Zealand citizens or residence class visa holders

WF2.1 Instructions on duration and conditions of visa for partners of New Zealand citizens or residence class visa holders

- a. The duration of any visa granted under these instructions is dependent on the time spent living together in a partnership but must not exceed 36 months from:
 - i. the date the first partnership visa was granted if it was granted onshore; or
 - ii. the first date of arrival if the partnership visa was granted offshore.
- b. If the couple has lived together in a partnership for 12 months or more at the time the application is assessed, a work visa may be granted for the length of the couple's intended stay, up to a maximum of 36 months.
- c. If the couple has lived together in a partnership for less than 12 months at the time the application is assessed, then the first visa granted under these instructions must not exceed 12 months' duration. Further visas may be granted upon application for up to a maximum of 36 months from the date the first partnership visa was granted or the first date of arrival if the partnership visa was granted offshore if:
 - i. during the validity of the first visa an application for a residence class visa under Partnership Category is made and the principal applicant wishes to remain in New Zealand pending a decision on their application; or
 - ii. the couple wish to spend more time in New Zealand and an immigration officer is satisfied they are still living together in a genuine and stable partnership.
- d. Despite the requirement that temporary entry applications must be determined in accordance with the instructions in force on the date an application is made (E7.10(a)(ii)), applicants for a visa under these instructions made before 1 October 2024 (and where their application is still undecided on 1 October 2024) may be granted a work visa for up to a maximum of 36 months if the couple has lived together in a partnership for 12 months or more at the time the application is assessed, despite instructions on the date they applied specifying a maximum duration of 24 months.
- e. Any work visas granted under these instructions may be endorsed with conditions that allow the holder to undertake any work in any occupation and any location.
- f. Self-employment is permitted however holders of visas granted under these instructions are restricted from employing others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.

WF3 Work visas for partners of work visa holders

WF3.1 Who is eligible for a work visa

- a. Partners (see [E4.1.20](#)) of people granted work visas allowing a stay in New Zealand of more than six months may apply for, and be granted, a multiple entry work visa under these instructions, unless their partner has been granted a work visa under any one of the following instructions:
 - i. Essential Skills where the employment is paid below \$25.29 per hour, or lower-skilled if the visa application was made before 27 July 2020; or
 - ii. Foreign crew of fishing vessels (see [WJ1](#)); or
 - iii. a Working Holiday Scheme (see [WI2](#)); or
 - iv. Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Work Instructions (see [WH1](#)); or
 - v. Supplementary Seasonal Employer (SSE) Instructions (see [WH3](#)); or
 - vi. Skilled Migrant Category Job Search Instructions (see [WR5](#)); or
 - vii. domestic staff of diplomatic, consular, or official staff (see [WI4](#)); or
 - viii. seasonal workers under Specific Purpose Instructions; or
 - ix. seasonal workers under seasonal AEWV pathways (see [WA1.10\(a\)\(ii\)](#)).
- b. Despite (a) above, the eligibility of partners of Accredited Employer Work Visa holders and Specific Purpose work visa holders under the NOL subcategory (see [WS2.1.1\(o\)](#) – instructions effective 8 September 2025) for work visas are set out at WF3.1.5 below.
- c. Despite (a) above, a partner of the holder of a Migrant Exploitation Protection work visa (MEPV) may be granted a work visa under these instructions only if, as at the time they apply, the partner is in New Zealand on a visa that was granted on the basis of the visa held by the MEPV holder immediately prior to the MEPV holder's current visa. If granted, the visa's duration must be for the same period as the MEPV holder's visa, **will allow the holder to undertake any work in any occupation and location** (without the requirement of full-time employment), and will not include multiple entry travel conditions.
- d. Work visas will be granted for the same period as the work visa held by the applicant's partner subject to the generic requirements at [E4.5](#) being met.
- e. Partners of people granted work to residence visas must meet health and character requirements for residence class visa applications as set out at [A4](#) and [A5](#).
- f. Any work visas granted under these instructions may be endorsed with conditions that allow **the holder to undertake any work in any occupation and location**.
- g. **Self-employment is permitted however holders of visas granted under these instructions are restricted from employing others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.**
- h. Despite the requirement to determine applications for temporary entry in accordance with the instructions in effect at the time an application is made ([E7.10\(a\)\(ii\)](#)), any application for a visa under WF3.1.5 below that was submitted before 2 December and as of 2 December had not been decided, may be granted with a visa endorsed with conditions that allow **the holder to undertake any work in any occupation and location** and do not require full-time employment, despite instructions in effect at the time stating that a work visa may only be granted with employment restriction conditions.

WF4 Work visas for partners of holders of student visas

WF4.1 Who is eligible for a work visa

- a. Unless [WF4.5](#) applies, a person may apply for and be granted a multiple entry work visa if their partner holds:
- i. a student visa to study a level 7 or 8 qualification on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) that is specified either in the Qualifications Eligible for a Post-Study Work Visa list or the Green List ([Appendix 13](#)); or
 - ii. a student visa to study a degree level 9 or 10 qualification on the NZQF; or
 - iii. a student visa for a level 7 or 8 qualification as specified in the previous Long Term Skill Shortage List if the study for this qualification commenced before 7 September 2022.

Note: In order to be eligible for a work visa under (a)(i) and (iii) the qualification undertaken by the student visa holder must be specified on the applicable list at the time the work visa application is submitted.

- b. Work visas will be granted for the same period as the student visa held by the applicant's partner subject to the generic requirements at [E4.5](#) being met.
- c. Any work visas granted under these instructions, may be endorsed with conditions that allow the holder to undertake any work in any occupation and any location.
- d. Self-employment is permitted however holders of visas granted under these instructions are restricted from employing others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.
- e. Applicants must have NZ\$4,200 available for their maintenance during the period of stay in New Zealand.
- f. If, subsequent to any work visa granted under these instructions, the work visa holder's student partner changes their study and the new study no longer meets the requirements under WF4.1(a), the work visa holder will no longer meet the requirements for a work visa under these instructions and may be liable for deportation.

WF4.5 Partners of holders of student visas who are supported by the New Zealand scholarship programme funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- a. Partners of New Zealand scholarship students (see U11), may be granted a work visa valid for the duration of their partner's scholarship unless the scholarship student has been granted a student visa under any one of the following scholarship programmes:
 - i. New Zealand Short Term Training Scholarships; or
 - ii. New Zealand English Language Training for Officials Scholarships.
- b. Applicants must provide a completed work visa application form, fee, immigration levy and meet the generic requirements at E4.5.5.
- c. Applicants under these instructions are not required to produce a job offer.
- d. Any work visas granted under these instructions may be endorsed with conditions that allow the holder to undertake any work in any occupation and any location.
- e. Self-employment is permitted however holders of visas granted under these instructions are restricted from employing others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.
- f. Applicants must have NZ\$4,200 available for their maintenance during the period of stay in New Zealand.
- g. Partners of New Zealand scholarship students (see U11), are not eligible for a temporary entry class visa in the 2 year period following completion of the student's scholarship, unless they have written approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade or Education New Zealand (with the exception of a short-term visitor visa).
- h. Despite (f) above, partners of New Zealand scholarship students who have completed Short Term Training Scholarships or English Language Training for Officials of twelve months or less in duration (see U11), are not eligible for a temporary entry class visa for one year following completion of the student's scholarship, unless they have written approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade or Education New Zealand (with the exception of a short-term visitor visa).

WF5 Work visas for partners of holders of military visas

Partners (see [E4.1.20](#)) of people granted, or deemed to be granted, a military visa (see [M1](#)) may be granted work visas and entry permission for the same period as the military visa is held, or deemed to be held.

- a. Applicants must meet temporary entry class requirements for lodging an application as set out at E4, bona fide requirements as set out at E5, and health and character requirements as set out at [A4.5](#) and [A5.5](#), but are exempt from:
 - i. meeting funds or sponsorship requirements; and
 - ii. meeting onward travel requirements; and
 - iii. providing a job offer.
- b. Applicants must prove to the satisfaction of an immigration officer that:
 - i. they are living together with their partner in a genuine and stable partnership at the time the application is made; and
 - ii. they comply with the minimum requirements for recognition of partnerships (see [E4.5.15](#) and [F2.15](#)); and
 - iii. their partner supports the application.
- c. Evidence of the applicant's relationship to the military visa holder must be provided in the following forms:
 - i. evidence of their relationship with their partner, and
 - ii. evidence that demonstrates they are living together with that partner in a genuine and stable partnership at the time the application is made ([E4.5.35](#) sets out the types of evidence that are required).
- d. Before granting a work visa an immigration officer must be satisfied that the applicant's partner:
 - i. holds a military visa; or
 - ii. is eligible to be granted a military visa; or
 - iii. is deemed to be granted a military visa.
- e. Any work visas granted under these instructions will:
 - i. be endorsed with conditions that allow the holder to undertake any work in any occupation and any location and
 - ii. allow travel to New Zealand on multiple journeys.
- f. Self-employment is permitted however holders of visas granted under these instructions are restricted from employing others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.

WR Work to Residence Instructions

WR2 Talent (Arts, Culture and Sports) work instructions

WR2.1 Who is eligible for a work visa under the Talent (Arts, Culture and Sports) Work Instructions?

- a. To be granted a visa under the Talent (Arts, Culture and Sports) Work Instructions applicants must:
 - i. have exceptional talent in a declared field of art, culture or sport; and
 - ii. be supported by a New Zealand organisation of national repute in their declared field (see [WR2.10](#)); and
 - iii. have an acceptable sponsor (see [E6.5](#)); and
 - iv. be aged 55 years or under (unless [WR2.25.1](#) applies); and
 - v. meet the health and character requirements for Residence set out at [A4](#) and [A5](#); and
 - vi. meet the requirements under Generic Temporary Entry instructions for lodging an application for a temporary entry class visa as set out at [E4](#); and
 - vii. meet the requirements for bona fide applicants as set out at [E5](#); and
 - viii. meet the requirements for lodging an application as set out in [WR2.25](#).
- b. Work visas granted to applicants approved under these instructions will be endorsed with conditions that allow **any work**.
- c. **Self-employment is permitted however holders of visas granted under these instructions are restricted from employing others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.**

BD3.1 Partner and dependent children

- a. An application for a Business Investor work visa may include the partner (see [E4.1.20](#)) and dependent children (see [E4.1.10](#)) of the principal applicant.
- b. Any partner or dependent children included in the application must meet health and character requirements for residence as set out at [A4](#) and [A5](#).
- c. Any partner or dependent children accompanying them must also meet all requirements under Generic Temporary Entry Instructions.
- d. A partner included in the application for a Business Investor work visa who meets the requirements at [E4.5.5](#) may be granted a work visa for the same period as the work visa granted to the principal applicant, endorsed with conditions that allow **the holder to undertake any work in any occupation and location** in New Zealand.
- e. **Self-employment is permitted and holders of visas granted under these instructions may employ others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.**
- f. Dependent children included in the application for a Business Investor work visa who meet the requirements at [E4.5.1](#) may be granted either a student visa or visitor visa, as is appropriate for their needs, for the same duration as the principal applicant.
- g. The visa granted to a partner and/or dependent children will expire at the end of the Establishment stage, if the Business Investor work visa holder does not meet the requirements in [BD6.1](#).
- h. The visa granted to a partner and/or dependent children will be valid for the balance of the 4-year period if the Business Investor work visa holder meets the requirements in [BD6.1](#).

BB2.1 Entrepreneur Work Visas

- a. Applications under the Entrepreneur Work Instructions must be made on or before 25 August 2025, unless BB4.10 applies.

Note:

Under BB4.10, a further Entrepreneur Work Visa may be granted if the applicant either holds an Entrepreneur Work Visa (initial or balance) or had an Entrepreneur Work Visa application that was accepted for processing before 25 August 2025.

To be granted an Entrepreneur Work Visa (or Renewal) applicants must meet the requirements as set out in [BB4.10](#).

- b. The Entrepreneur Work Visa is a category of temporary entry class visa with conditions that allow self-employment in New Zealand. Applicants for an Entrepreneur Work Visa may be approved, if they meet the requirements of [BB3.1](#).
- c. Applicants and any partner or dependent child/ren accompanying them must meet health and character requirements for residence as set out at [A4](#) and [A5](#).
- d. Applicants and any partner or dependent child/ren accompanying them must also meet all requirements under Generic Temporary Entry Instructions.

BB2.1.1 Currency of Entrepreneur Work Visas

- a. An Entrepreneur Work Visa may be granted for a total period of up to 3 years, encompassing an Entrepreneur Start-Up stage and Entrepreneur Balance stage. Only one fee and one immigration levy will be charged for an Entrepreneur Work Visa.
- b. The Entrepreneur Start-Up stage is the first 12 months of the Entrepreneur Work Visa (though a business immigration specialist may extend the Entrepreneur Start-Up stage under [BB4.5.5](#)). During the Entrepreneur Start-Up stage, the holder of the Entrepreneur Work Visa is expected to establish and commence the operation of an agreed business in New Zealand.
- c. If the holder does not meet the requirements in [BB4.5\(a\)](#) during the Entrepreneur Start-Up stage, the visa expires at the end of the Entrepreneur Start-Up stage.
- d. If the holder does meet the requirements in [BB4.5\(a\)](#), the visa will be valid for the balance of the 3 year period. This is the Balance stage of the Entrepreneur Work Visa.
- e. A further Entrepreneur Work Visa (also known as a Renewal) may be granted beyond the 3 year period, if the conditions at [BB4.10](#) are met, the application is approved by a business immigration specialist, and the prescribed fee is paid.

BB2.1.5 Conditions of Entrepreneur Work Visas

- a. The conditions specified on an Entrepreneur Work Visa will include the following conditions relating to work:
 - i. As: Self-employed
 - ii. For: (Business type and trading name of business)
 - iii. At: (Location of business)
- b. The travel conditions on the visa will give permission to travel to New Zealand for multiple journeys.
- c. Entrepreneur Work Visas and any other temporary visas granted to the holder of an Entrepreneur Work Visa's partner or dependent child/ren are subject to the condition that the holder must not apply for and be granted welfare assistance under the Social Security Act 2018 while in New Zealand during the currency of their Entrepreneur Work Visas or any visa gained through their relationship with a holder of an Entrepreneur Work Visa. Entrepreneur Work Visas or any visa gained through their relationship with a holder of an Entrepreneur Work Visa.
- d. A partner included in the application for a Entrepreneur work visa who meets the requirements at [E4.5.5](#) may be granted a work visa for the same period as the work visa granted to the principal applicant, endorsed with conditions that allow work in any occupation and location in New Zealand.
- e. Self-employment is permitted and holders of visas granted under these instructions may employ others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate.

E3.26.1.25 Varying work visa conditions for partners of Accredited Employer and Essential Skills work visa holders

- a. Holders of a work visa granted under WF3.1.5 (Partners of Accredited Employer and Essential Skills work visa holders) may apply for a variation of conditions to remove conditions on their work visa which state that they must:
 - i. work for an employer accredited under the AEWV scheme; and
 - o in a role paid at or above the median wage; or
 - o in a role earning the relevant wage threshold if a sector agreement is in place for that role; and
 - ii. not work in a role covered by a capped sector agreement
- b. Variation of conditions may be granted to allow the holder to undertake any work, in any occupation and location in New Zealand.
- c. Self-employment is permitted however holders of visas granted under these instructions are restricted from employing others, whether directly, or indirectly via a business they operate as an owner.
- d. In order to be granted a variation of conditions under (a) above, the applicant's supporting partner must earn at least \$28.00 per hour (80 percent of the median wage).