



22 April 2026

IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND INSTRUCTIONS: Amendment Circular No. 2026-10
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

SR7.1 Transport Sector: Work to Residence objective

SR7.10 Acceptable employment in a Transport Sector role

SR7.15 Skilled Residence: Transport Sector Work to Residence requirements for 24 months of work in New Zealand

Minor amendments have been made to the Transport Sector Work to Residence immigration instructions to clarify transitional provisions for bus and truck driver occupations which were removed from the list of Transport Sector occupations on 7 April 2024.

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

SR7.1 Transport Sector: Work to Residence objective

SR7.1 Objective

- a. The objective of the Transport Sector: Work to Residence sub-category is to provide for the grant of resident visas to people who have worked in New Zealand for at least 24 months in one of the following transport occupations:
 - Ship's Master
 - Deckhand.
- b. It also continues to provide a residence pathway for people who have worked in occupations that have since been removed from the list of Transport Sector occupations as set out in SR7.10 with an expectation of obtaining residence through this pathway.

SR7.10 Acceptable employment in a Transport Sector role

- a. Acceptable employment in a Transport Sector occupation is employment where the immigration officer is satisfied that:
- the principal applicant holds current employment or an offer of employment for one of the following occupations and meets the requirements for that occupation as specified in the table below:

Transport Sector occupation and ANZSCO code	Transport Sector Requirements
Ship's Master (231213)	Must be paid at the least the median wage (\$35.00), and either hold: - the Skipper Restricted Limits Certificate of Competency (CoC) with 500GT or 3000GT endorsement; or - a Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) Certificate of Competency (CoC) that entitles the holder to perform the duties of a Ship's Master on a vessel that is 500 gross tonnes or more (as recognised by Maritime New Zealand).
Deck Hand (899211)	Must be paid at the least the median wage (\$35.00), and either hold a: - Qualified Deck Crew Certificate of Proficiency (CoP); or - Deck Watch Rating (DWR) Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) that entitles the holder to perform the duties of Deck Hand (as recognised by Maritime New Zealand).

Notes:

-The median wage rate of \$35.00 for SR7.10 reflects the June 2025 quarter publication of median wage data by Statistics New Zealand.

-The licencing and qualifications requirements specified above are not required to begin accruing the required 24 months of work in New Zealand (see [SR7.15](#)).

- the employment or offer of employment is with an employer who is accredited at the time of the application (whose accreditation is not suspended); and
 - the employment is full-time (employment is full-time if it amounts to at least 30 guaranteed hours per week for every week worked); and
 - the employment is permanent or for a fixed term of at least 12 months from when the application is made; and
 - the employment is genuine and is not offered as a result of payment (see [SR2.1.5](#)).
- b. Despite (a)(i) above, acceptable employment also includes current employment in an acceptable occupation that was previously listed above, and the applicant has completed 24 months of work in New Zealand in that occupation **or occupations in accordance with** [SR7.15\(i\)](#).
- c. For roles that do not require occupational registration, an immigration officer may be required to assess whether the employment is substantially consistent with the ANZSCO 'Occupation' (6-digit) level description for that occupation and with the tasks listed at the ANZSCO 'Unit Group' (4-digit) level description for that occupational group, excluding any tasks which are not relevant to the 'Occupation' description (see [SR5.10](#)).

Note: To be considered a substantial match to an occupation, the tasks that are relevant to the applicant's employment must comprise most of that role.

SR7.15 Skilled Residence: Transport Sector Work to Residence requirements for 24 months of work in New Zealand

- a. Applicants must have worked for at least 24 months in New Zealand in a Transport Sector occupation or occupations, on and after 29 September 2021.
- b. To be considered as having worked in a Transport Sector occupation or occupations, applicants must have met the requirements for their occupation or occupations for the duration of the 24 month period as specified in the following table:

Transport Sector occupation and ANZSCO code	Transport Sector work in New Zealand requirements
Ship's Master (231213)	Be employed as a Ship's Master paid at the least the median wage (SR7.15(m)).
Deck Hand (899211)	Be employed as a Deck Hand and paid at the least the median wage (SR7.15(m)).

Note: The 24 months of work in New Zealand can be made up of different types of work within the Transport Sector occupations, for example 6 months in a Deckhand role and 18 months as a Ship's Master.

- c. For the 24 months of work in New Zealand, applicants must have been working full-time (at least 30 hours per week) in a Transport Sector occupation listed under SR7.10(a)(i), and have held one of the following visas:
 - i. any work visa; or
 - ii. a critical purpose visitor visa with work conditions; or
 - iii. an interim visa granted while the applicant held a work visa or a critical purpose visitor visa with work conditions and had applied for a further work visa.
- d. The 24 months of work must be gained during the 30 month period immediately before the date the residence application is made.
- e. The 24 month period will start to be counted when the applicant's remuneration is at the rate specified in (k) below (provided they hold a visa described (c) above).
- f. The 24 month period (while earning the specified hourly rate) will stop being counted if:
 - i. the applicant ceases to hold one of the visas listed in (c) above; or
 - ii. the applicant changes employment and their new income is below the rate specified in (b) above; or
 - iii. the applicant's remuneration decreases, and the new rate is below the rate specified in (b) above.
- g. For the avoidance of doubt, work experience for Transport Sector will continue being counted if the specified hourly wage rate in immigration instructions increases as long as the applicant's income does not decrease below the hourly rate that applied when their visa was granted and they have not changed employment.

Note: For SR7.15 (g), for example, a Deck Hand must be paid an hourly rate of \$35.00. An applicant can start counting work experience from 25 October 2022 if they earn \$27.76 an hour (the wage rate in effect at the time). When the wage requirement increased to \$29.66 an hour on 27 February 2023, they can keep counting their work if they are still in the same job earning \$27.76 an hour.

- h. For the purposes of these instructions, any leave consistent with section 16 of the Holidays Act 2003 (including parental leave and ACC leave) taken during a period of work in New Zealand in a Transport sector role can be counted.
- i. Where an occupation is removed from the Transport sector occupation list for acceptable employment under SR7.10(a)(i), the applicant may count work in New Zealand in that occupation towards the 24 months required (under SR7.15(a)) after the date the occupation was removed from the list if the applicant meets the requirements for their occupation for the duration of that work ((see SR7.15(l)) and had:
 - i. started to count work before the date the occupation was removed from the list (see (e) above); or
 - ii. applied for an AEWV to work in that occupation on or before 6 April 2024; or
 - iii. held a non-AEWV work visa (or had applied for a non-AEWV visa that was subsequently granted); and
 - o on or before 6 April 2024, had an offer of employment or a signed employment agreement to work in that occupation; and
 - o started work (in that occupation) within four weeks of signing the employment agreement or being granted the visa.
- j. For the avoidance of doubt, where (i) above applies, provisions set out in SR7.15(c)-(h) also apply.
- k. If an applicant has worked in New Zealand for at least 24 months in the last 30 month period but has not maintained a role in a Transport Sector occupation (see SR7.10(a)(i) or covered by SR7.15(i)) for the full 24

months, they can still be considered for the grant of residence **under one or more of the following categories** if they meet the acceptable work in New Zealand requirements for that category or categories:

- i. the Green List Work to Residence visa ([SR5.15](#));
- ii. the Care Workforce Work to Residence visa ([SR6.15](#)); or
- iii. work in New Zealand earning at least twice the median wage ([SR5.20](#)).

l. For the purpose of these instructions, occupations that have been removed from the Transport Sector occupations list that may still be considered as per SR7.10(b) and SR7.15(i) are captured in the table below:

Transport Sector occupation and ANZSCO code	Transport Sector work in New Zealand requirements
Bus Driver (731211)	Be paid at least \$28 per hour and have employment: - with an employer who has signed the Waka Kotahi (New Zealand Transport Authority) 'All Parties Memorandum of Understanding on Improving Driver Terms and Conditions' for the region they are working in; or - as a school bus driver on a Ministry of Education-funded school bus service (list of operators provided by Ministry of Education); or - as a school bus driver on a service directly contracted to a school.
Truck Driver (733111), Aircraft Refueller (733112), Furniture Removalist (733113), Tanker Driver (733114), Tow Truck Driver (733115)	Be employed to drive class four or five vehicles and paid at the least the median wage (SR7.15(m)); and Hold either a New Zealand or overseas equivalent class four or five drivers' licence.

Note:

- The 24 months of work in New Zealand does not have to be gained consecutively and can be totalled by combining different periods, for example two 12-month periods with a gap of six months in between. Additionally, it can be made up of different types of work in New Zealand, for example 18 months in an eligible Transport sector role and six months in a role paid twice the median wage.

m. The median wage in effect for the Transport Sector Work to Residence across time is:

Date range	Median wage
19 July 2021 – 23 October 2022	\$27.00
24 October 2022 – 26 February 2023	\$27.76
27 February 2023 – 27 February 2024	\$29.66
28 February 2024 - 17 August 2025	\$31.61
18 August 2025 to 8 March 2026	\$33.56
From 09 March 2026	\$35.00

Note: The median wage rate of \$35.00 (from 9 March 2026) for SR7.15 reflects the June 2025 quarter publication of median wage data by Statistics New Zealand.