MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT
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IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND INSTRUCTIONS: Amendment Circular No. 2026-12

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

WA4.10 Determining an Accredited Employer work visa

WA4.12 English Language Requirements

Changes have been made to immigration instructions extending Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) English language requirements to visa applications for skill level 3 occupations. AEWV holders with visas expiring on or before 1 December 2026 who are applying for an AEWV for a skill level 3 role, or applicants who met the minimum standard of English in a previous AEWV application are exempt from this requirement.

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

WA4.10 Determining an Accredited Employer work visa

a. An immigration officer may grant an Accredited Employer work visa if they are satisfied that the applicant:
   i. meets the generic work visa requirements for applicants at W2.10.1; and
   ii. holds an offer of employment that meets the requirements at WA4.10.1; and
   iii. is suitably qualified by training and experience to do the job they have been offered, as set out at WA4.10.5 and meet the minimum skills threshold as set out at WA4.10.6; and
   iv. has not exceeded a maximum continuous stay period as set out at WA4.11.1; and
   v. has a job token that has not been used to approve another Accredited Employer work visa application, unless that work visa has been varied to allow the visa holder to work for a different employer or the job token has been reused as set out at WA4.10.20; and
   vi. meets a minimum standard of English language at WA4.12 for roles assessed at the Job Check as ANZSCO or NOL skill level 3, 4 or 5, unless the application is for a Global Workforce Seasonal Visa or a Peak Seasonal Visa.

b. If there is information that indicates the employer may no longer meet the requirements of their accreditation, an immigration officer may postpone making a decision on the application until the employer is determined to meet the requirements, or until the employer's accreditation is revoked (WA2.55).

c. If the employer's accreditation is suspended, an immigration officer may postpone making a decision on the application until the suspension ends.

d. If the employer's accreditation expires or is revoked, an immigration officer may decline the application.

e. Applicants who hold a work visa with remuneration as a condition of that visa, may be required to provide evidence of their remuneration payment, such as an Inland Revenue income summary and bank statements.

f. If the application is for a Global Workforce Seasonal Visa or a Peak Seasonal Visa, an immigration officer must be satisfied that the applicant meets:
   i. the requirements for an Accredited Employer work visa set out at WA4.10(a) to (e) above; and
   ii. any requirements that are specific to the relevant seasonal visa applied for, including any specific requirements for:
      - employment offered (WA4.10.1); and
      - the applicant to be suitably qualified (WA4.10.5) where relevant; and
      - the minimum skills threshold (WA4.10.6); and
      - the maximum continuous stay period (WA4.11.2); and
      - health and character (WA4.13.1); and
      - medical insurance (WA4.13.2) where relevant.

WA4.10.1 Requirements for the employment offered

a. The offer of employment must be genuine (refer to WA3.30.1) and evidence provided with the application must include the following information:
   i. name of the employer; and
   ii. name of the person to whom the job is offered; and
   iii. details of the job including:
      - the job title or designation; and
      - the location of employment; and
      - the type of work, duties and responsibilities involved; and
      - details of pay and conditions of employment; and
      - the hours of work; and
      - the duration of the job.

b. The offer of employment must be from an accredited employer (as defined at WA2.60.1).

c. The following details of the employment offered must be the same as those approved as part of the Job Check application:
   i. the location of the job; and
   ii. the occupation; and
   iii. the hours of work (the minimum guaranteed hours of work must not be less, and the maximum hours must not be more, than those approved as part of the Job Check application); and
   iv. the remuneration (the remuneration must be within the range approved as part of the Job Check application unless an exception under WA4.10.3 below applies); and
   v. the direct employer (as defined at WA2.60.5).

d. All other terms and conditions of the employment offered (for example leave entitlements, notice periods and absence of a trial provision) must be the same as, or more favourable to the applicant than, those declared or provided (if applicable) as part of the Job Check application.

e. The employment must continue to meet all other requirements for acceptable employment as specified at WA3.15.5 and WA3.15.10, in effect at the time the Accredited Employer work visa application is made.

f. INZ will decline an application for a work visa where it considers that the employment was offered as a result of payment made or promised by the applicant (or their agent) to the employer (or their agent) in exchange for securing that offer of employment.

g. When assessing whether the employment offered meets the requirements at (d) and (f) above:
   i. an immigration officer may accept the declaration or other information provided in the Job Check application; and
   ii. an immigration officer may request and review further evidence if they are not satisfied that these requirements are met; and
   iii. despite the requirement to determine applications for temporary entry in accordance with the instructions in effect at the time the application is made (E7.10(a)(ii)), an Accredited Employer work visa application may be determined in accordance with the instructions at (g)(I) and (ii) above if the application was made before 20 November 2024 and has not been decided.

h. Despite WA4.10.1(d), an immigration officer may approve an application where the duration of employment offered differs from the length of employment declared or provided (if applicable) in the Job Check application, if the application is for a Global Workforce Seasonal Visa or a Peak Seasonal Visa.

i. The offer of employment must cover at least one season of employment for the first season if the application is for a Global Workforce Seasonal Visa.

j. An immigration officer must be satisfied that the employment offered is genuinely seasonal if the application is for a Global Workforce Seasonal Visa or a Peak Seasonal Visa.

k. When determining whether the employment offered is genuinely seasonal, an immigration officer may consider whether the period of employment offered is for the part of the year during peak activity for the industry.

l. When determining whether the offer of employment is genuine (see WA4.10.1(a) and WA3.30.1), an immigration officer may request and review further information such as (but not limited to) evidence showing how long the job offer is open.

WA4.10.3 When the remuneration in the job offer may differ from the remuneration approved in the Job Check

Despite WA4.10.1(c)(iv), an immigration officer may approve an application when the remuneration in the employment offered is not the same as the Job Check application if the remuneration in the employment offered is:

a. less than the remuneration approved at Job Check stage and:
   i. the Job Check was submitted on or before 9 March 2025; and
   ii. the remuneration offered is not less than the New Zealand market rate for that occupation as required by WA3.15.5(b); or

b. more than the remuneration approved at Job Check stage because the current minimum wage is higher than the rate advertised at the time of the Job Check; or

c. more than the remuneration approved at the Job Check stage and the applicant is re-using a Job Check number as described in WA4.10.20.

WA4.10.5 Determining whether an applicant is suitably qualified to do the job they have been offered.

a. An applicant is suitably qualified to do the job they have been offered if they have the qualifications, work experience, skills and other specifications that were listed by the employer, in the Job Check application, as the minimum requirements for the job.

b. If the employment offered is for an occupation that is on the Green List, an applicant is suitably qualified if:
   i. they meet (a) above; or
   ii. they meet the current requirements on the list for that occupation (Appendix 13).

c. If the application is for a Global Workforce Seasonal Visa, an applicant is suitably qualified if they meet WA4.10.6(b) below.

d. Despite W2.10.1(b)(i), an immigration officer may accept that an applicant has the minimum qualifications, work experience, skills or other specifications required for the job, without the applicant providing evidence of those specifications, where:
   i. an immigration officer has already assessed and accepted them as part of a previous application; or
   ii. the applicant holds evidence of full or provisional occupational registration for the job they have been offered, where the specifications were required to obtain that registration.

WA4.10.6 Determining whether an applicant meets the minimum skills threshold

a. An applicant who is applying for a regular AEWV meets the minimum skills threshold if an immigration officer is satisfied that they:
   i. can demonstrate two years or more of relevant work experience with sufficient evidence from a third party; or
   ii. have a relevant qualification at Level 4 or higher on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF).

b. An applicant who is applying for a Global Workforce Seasonal Visa meets the minimum skills threshold if an immigration officer is satisfied that they can demonstrate three seasons or more of relevant work experience which was gained in the six years immediately before the date the application is made.

c. An applicant who is applying for a Peak Seasonal Visa meets the minimum skills threshold if an immigration officer is satisfied that they can demonstrate one season or more of relevant work experience which was gained in the three years immediately before the date the application is made.

d. For the purposes of WA4.10.6(b) and (c), a season of relevant work experience refers to time spent across one or multiple years to equal a full period of the season duration for the industry.

e. Despite the requirement to determine applications for temporary entry in accordance with the instructions in effect at the time the application is made (E7.10(a)(ii)), an AEWV application submitted but undecided as at 9 March 2025 should be assessed in accordance with WA4.10.6(a)(i) above, rather than the instruction that was in effect when the application was made.

f. A qualification or work experience can be considered to be relevant if it is in the same field or industry as the job offered.

g. Qualifications that are Bachelor's degrees or higher can be considered relevant to any employment offered.

h. Evidence of relevant work experience from a third party may include, but is not limited to:
   i. letters of reference from an employer; or
   ii. certificates of employment; or
   iii. payslips; or
   iv. tax certificates.

Note: For the avoidance of doubt, a curriculum vitae is not sufficient unless it is provided with supporting documentation not written by the applicant that satisfies an immigration officer.

i. Evidence of a qualification at Level 4 or higher on the NZQCF must include:
   i. a copy of the qualification certificate awarded to the applicant specifying the qualification type and awarding institution; and
   ii. an NZQA assessment (International Qualification Assessment (IQA)) provided with the application, if the qualification was gained outside of New Zealand and is not a Level 7 Bachelor's degree or higher.

j. Despite WA4.10.6(a), (b), and (c) an applicant can be considered to meet the minimum skills threshold if:
   i. the employment offered is for an occupation that is on the Green List and they meet the current requirements on the list for that occupation (Appendix 13); or
   ii. the employment offered has a proposed remuneration of twice the median wage ($67.12) or higher.

k. An immigration officer may accept that the applicant meets the minimum skills threshold, without the applicant providing evidence, where:
   i. an immigration officer has already assessed and accepted them as part of a previous application; or
   ii. the applicant holds evidence of full or provisional occupational registration for the job they have been offered, where the specifications were required to obtain that registration.

l. An applicant is exempt from meeting the minimum skills threshold if an immigration officer is satisfied that:
   i. the applicant holds a valid Accredited Employer work visa in a tourism and hospitality occupation listed under appendix 14 that expires on or before 31 March 2025 and is applying for a further visa for the same role; or
   ii. the applicant holds a valid Accredited Employer work visa under the care workforce sector agreement (see Appendix 14) that was granted between 4 July 2022 and 23 November 2023 (inclusive) in a role that was paid at least $26.16 per hour and is applying for a further one-year duration visa for the same role.

Note: For the purpose of the instructions under (l)(i) and (l)(ii) directly above, employment in the 'same role' allows for employment with a different employer and/or in a different location.

WA4.10.15 Requirements for dependents of Accredited Employer work visa holders

See also Immigration Act 2009 s 49(1)(b)

a. Accredited Employer work visa holders who wish to support their partner's visa application must meet the requirements specified in:
   i. WF3.1.5 for a special work visa, or
   ii. V3.10.1 for a visitor visa.

b. Accredited Employer work visa holders who wish to support their dependent child's visa application must meet the requirements specified in:
   i. U8.20.2 for a student visa, or
   ii. V3.10.1 for a visitor visa.

c. Accredited Employer work visa holders who wish to support their dependent child's visitor or student visa application must meet the minimum income threshold. The visa holder's dependent child will be assessed against criteria set out in U8.20.6 or V3.10.10.

d. Parents holding Accredited Employer work visas may be liable for deportation if the dependent child's visa application is declined under these instructions and the dependent child becomes unlawful.

e. It will be a condition of the dependent child's visa and the parent/s visa(s) that the parent/s must maintain the minimum income threshold for the duration of their dependent child's visa. If the threshold is not maintained the parent/s and child may be liable for deportation.

f. Global Workforce Seasonal Visa and Peak Seasonal Visa holders are not eligible to support an application for their partner or dependent child.

Notes:
- Where both parents hold Accredited Employer work visas (or Accredited Employer and Essential Skills work visas), their incomes may be combined to meet the minimum income threshold.
- The minimum income threshold excludes employment-related allowances (for example tool or uniform allowances) and must be calculated on the basis of no more than 40 hours' work per week

WA4.10.20 Subsequent applications re-using a job token

a. A subsequent application for an Accredited Employer work visa (AEWV) from an AEWV holder can be granted if it is made on the basis of the job token they most recently used (whether the job token was used for an AEWV application or for a Job Change application) and if the application for the AEWV the applicant currently holds was made on or before 9 March 2025.

b. Despite (a), a subsequent application for an AEWV made on the basis of the most recently used Job Check number cannot be granted where the application for the AEWV the applicant currently holds was for one of the following occupations and where the rate of pay was below $29.66:

   i. Meat process worker (831311)
   ii. Seafood process worker (831313)
   iii. Snowsport Instructor (452314)
   iv. Mountain or Glacier Guide (452214)
   v. Snow Groomer (721999)
   vi. Outdoor Adventure Instructor (452215)
   vii. Outdoor Adventure Guides nec (452299)
   viii. Whitewater Rafting Guide (452217)
   ix. Parachute Rigger (399999)
   x. Ski Technician (399999)
   xi. Snow Maker (712999)

c. A subsequent Accredited Employer work visa may only be granted under these instructions if the offer of employment is made by an accredited employer and the following details of the employment offered in the current application are the same as the conditions of employment upon which the applicant's current Accredited Employer work visa was based:

   i. the location of the job; and
   ii. the occupation; and
   iii. the remuneration (the remuneration must be no less than the remuneration specified in the conditions); and
   iv. the direct employer (as defined at WA2.60.5).

d. 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)), the requirements at (a) to (c) above apply to any subsequent AEWV application that was submitted on or before 9 March 2025 and not decided by that date.

Note: For the avoidance of doubt, a subsequent application for an Accredited Employer work visa with a re-used job token must meet the requirements at WA4.10 in effect at the time the application is made.

WA4.12 English Language Requirements

WA4.12.1 Minimum standard of English language for Accredited Employer work visa

a. Applicants for a regular Accredited Employer work visa, where their employment has been assessed at the Job Check as ANZSCO or NOL skill level 3, 4 or 5 (including roles treated at skill level 3 under WA3.16 (d)), are considered to meet the minimum standard of English if they provide acceptable English language test results no more than two years old at the time the application is lodged, as set out at WA4.12.5, obtained by sitting the test in person at a test centre (tests taken remotely outside of a test centre, including 'at home' tests, are not acceptable).

b. Other evidence that an applicant meets the minimum standard of English is:

   i. citizenship of Canada, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom or the United States of America, provided the applicant has spent at least five years in work or education in one or more of those countries or Australia or New Zealand; or

   ii. a qualification comparable to a New Zealand level 7 bachelor's degree and gained in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom or the United States of America as a result of study undertaken for at least two academic years in one or more of those countries; or

   iii. a qualification comparable to a New Zealand qualification at level 8 or above and gained in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom or the United States of America as a result of study undertaken for at least one academic year in one or more of those countries.

c. In any case, an immigration officer may require an applicant to provide an English language test result in terms of paragraph WA4.12.1(a). In such cases, the English language test result will be used to determine whether the applicant meets the minimum standard of English.

d. Accredited Employer work visa applications for a role assessed at the Job Check as ANZSCO or NOL skill level 3, 4 or 5 must be declined if the applicant has not met the minimum standard of English.

e. Despite WA4.12.1 (a) and (d), an applicant is exempted from meeting the minimum standard of English where they:

   i. have been assessed as meeting the minimum standard of English as part of a previous AEWV application; or

   ii. hold an AEWV expiring on or before 1 December 2026 and are applying for a subsequent AEWV with an occupation at skill level 3 on the ANZSCO or NOL before that expiry date.

Note: For the avoidance of doubt, applicants who are applying for a Global Workforce Seasonal Visa or a Peak Seasonal Visa are not required to meet the minimum standard of English.

WA4.12.5 Acceptable English language test results

The following English language test results are acceptable:

Test	Minimum score required
International English Language Testing System (IELTS) - General or Academic Module	Overall score of 4 or more
Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-based Test (TOEFL iBT)	Overall score of 31 or more
Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic)	Overall score of 29 or more
B2 First (First Certificate in English) (formerly Cambridge English: First (FCE)) or B2 First for Schools (First Certificate in English) (formerly Cambridge English: First (FCE) for Schools)	Overall score of 142 or more
Occupational English Test (OET)	Grade D or higher in all four skills (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking)*

*A score of Grade D or higher in all four skills is required for the OET as there is no overall grade for this test.