



17 April 2020

Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual: Amendment Circular No. 2020-17

To: All Manual Holders

AMENDMENTS TO THE IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND OPERATIONAL MANUAL

Introduction

This circular outlines changes to the Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual. A copy of the changes is attached.

All immigration officers dealing with immigration applications should read the amendments and operate in accordance with the amended instructions on and after their effective dates.

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.

Summary of contents

This amendment circular details changes to Immigration New Zealand's Operational Manual, and contains the following:

- The description of changes section contains a summary of the changes to operational instructions.
- Appendix 1 contains amended operational instructions effective on and after 16 April 2020.

Additions to the instructions are highlighted for ease of reference.

Description of changes

Implementing the New Zealand Government response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

A16.1 General Instructions as to the order and manner of processing residence applications

The Deputy Chief Executive – Immigration has made new general instructions to immigration officers on the order of visa processing. These instructions are in response to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 response and the limited capacity of Immigration New Zealand to assess visa applications under current circumstances.

Appendix 1 contains amended operational instructions effective on and after 16 April 2020. Additions to the instructions have been highlighted for ease of reference.

Appendix 1 - Amendments to General and Operational instructions effective on and after 16 April 2020

A16.1 General Instructions as to the order and manner of processing residence applications

Pursuant to section 26(4) of the Immigration Act 2009 and acting under delegated authority from the Chief Executive of the Ministry of the Business, Innovation, and Employment, I hereby give the following general instructions as to the order of processing of visa applications under Government immigration instructions, effective from 16 April 2020:

- a. First priority will be given to the following applications for visas (and requests to vary conditions of an existing visa) in preference to applications or requests from other applicants:
 - i. Visas (and variations of condition requests) for critical workers to support the Government response to COVID-19:
 - o Work and visitor visas (and variations of conditions) for essential health workers (onshore and offshore)
 - o Work visas (and variations of conditions requests) for designated workers in essential sectors (onshore)
 - o Work visas (and variations of conditions) for designated essential workers (offshore)
 - o Work visas (and variations of conditions) for workers in essential roles (onshore)
 - ii. Visa applications (and requests to vary conditions of an existing visa) where there is an urgent humanitarian need:
 - o Visa applications for victims of domestic violence
 - o Visitor visas (and variations of conditions) for the following exceptions to the restriction on entry permission: humanitarian cases; Tongan and Samoan citizens making essential travel; immediate family of New Zealand citizens and residents travelling with their New Zealand citizen or resident family member; immediate family of temporary visa holders who normally live in New Zealand;
 - o Residence class visas for Australian citizens and permanent residents who normally live in NZ.
 - iii. Applications to travel under the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) travel card programme made by people who are not New Zealand citizens or residence class visa holders.
- b. Second priority will be given to visa applications (and requests to vary conditions of an existing visa) from applicants whose ability to meet the requirements to be granted a visa is unlikely to have been affected by the measures in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19:
 - i. Student visa for full fee paying students
 - ii. Work and visitor visas based on partnership to a New Zealand citizen or resident
 - iii. Work and visitor visas on partnership to a work or student visa holder
 - iv. Student and visitor visas for the dependent children of work or student visa holders
 - v. Visitor visas for the dependent children of New Zealand citizens or residents
 - vi. Work visas under Post-Study work instructions
 - vii. Diplomatic visa
 - viii. Military visas
- c. Third priority will be given to the following types and categories of applications for visas:
 - i. Essential skills work visas for workers not designated as essential or working in an essential sector or essential role
 - ii. All other work visas (onshore)
 - iii. All other student visas (onshore)
 - iv. All other variation of conditions requests (onshore and offshore)
 - v. Work visa applications for asylum seekers
 - vi. Permanent resident visas
 - vii. Second or subsequent resident visas
- d. Fourth priority will be given to the following types and categories of applications for visas and electronic travel authority:
 - i. All other temporary entry class visas
 - ii. All transit visas
 - iii. All other residence class visas
 - iv. New Zealand Electronic Travel Authority (NZeTA) requests
- e. Within the priorities set out above, applications should generally be processed in lodgement date order.
- f. These instructions do not prevent immigration officers according urgency to the processing of any particular residence class visa application when the individual circumstances so warrant that.
- g. The previous General Instructions made pursuant to section 26(4) of the Immigration Act 2009 are revoked.