



4 May 2021

**Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual: Amendment Circular No. 2021-13**

**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 and instruments of delegation on and after their effective dates.

**Note**

Additions to instructions are highlighted for ease of reference. Deletions have not been highlighted.

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](http://www.immigration.govt.nz).

## **Description of changes**

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### **A16.1 General Instructions as to the order of processing visa applications**

Amendments have been made to the general instructions as to the order and manner of processing of visa applications. Applicants who are in and have lodged applications from within New Zealand or a Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT) Zone are given first priority. This includes residence class as well as temporary entry class visas. Applications from a QFT Zone are given first priority as a reflection of the applicants' ability to travel to New Zealand while being exempt from border restrictions.

**Appendix 1 - Amendments to general instructions effective from 27 April 2021**

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## A16.1 General Instructions as to the order of processing visa applications

Under 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 give the following general instructions as to the order and manner of processing of visa applications under Government instructions, effective from 27 April 2021:

### Residence Applications

- a. First priority will be given to:
  - i. Residence class visas either where the applicant is in New Zealand or where the applicant is currently in and has lodged a residence class visa application from within a Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT) Zone. Within this, further prioritisation criteria will apply to applications made under the following categories:
    - o For the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC), priority will be given to applications with job offers where:
      - Applicants have an hourly rate equivalent to or higher than twice the median wage (currently \$51.00 per hour or an annual salary of \$106,080 or more);
      - Applicants hold current occupational registration where registration is required by immigration instructions;
    - o For Residence from Work Category applications (Talent (Accredited Employer), Talent (Arts, Culture and Sport), South Island Contribution, Religious Worker and Long Term Skill Shortage List), priority will be given to:
      - Applications which include a job offer with an hourly rate equivalent to or higher than twice the median wage (currently \$51.00 per hour or an annual salary of \$106,080 or more);
      - Applications which include a job offer which requires occupational registration where occupational registration is required by immigration instructions;
  - ii. Partnership and Dependent Child Family Residence applications;
  - iii. Residence class visa applications under the COVID-19 Support Residence instructions;
  - iv. Applications made under the following instructions:
    - o Variation of travel conditions on a resident visa
    - o Resident visa holders and eligible former resident visa holders applying for a permanent resident visa;
  - v. Applications for a permanent resident visa under the following instructions:
    - o Residence instructions for holders of work visas granted under the Talent (Accredited Employers) work instructions (who meet requirements set out in RW2.1)
    - o Christchurch response (2019)
    - o Global impact visa.
- b. Second Priority will be given to residence class visa applications where the applicant is offshore (other than those that meet criteria for prioritisation above).

### Temporary Entry Class Visa Applications

- c. First priority will be given to the following types and categories of applications for temporary entry class visas in preference to applications under other types and categories:
  - i. Visas applications and variation of condition requests for those invited to apply under the COVID-19 Support Restricted Temporary instructions;
  - ii. Visa applications for victims of domestic violence;
  - 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;
  - iv. Diplomatic visas;
  - v. Visa applications from partners and dependent children of New Zealand citizens and residence class visa holders made under the following instructions:
    - o Visitor visas for partners of New Zealand citizens or residence class visa holders

- Visitor visas for dependent children of New Zealand citizens or residence class holders
  - Visitor visas for Children entering New Zealand for adoption
  - Visitor visas for Children adopted overseas before their New Zealand citizenship is confirmed
  - Visitor visas for culturally arranged marriage
  - Work visas for partners of New Zealand citizens or residence class visa holders;
- vi. All other temporary entry class visa applications where the applicant is in New Zealand.
- vii. All temporary entry class visa applications either where the applicant is in New Zealand or where the applicant is currently in and has lodged a temporary entry class visa application from within a Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT) Zone.
- d. Second priority will be given to all other temporary entry class visas where the applicant is offshore (other than those that meet criteria for prioritisation above).

**All applications**

- 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 visa application when the individual circumstances so warrant that.

**Note:** a "Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT) Zone" is a place from which a person may travel to New Zealand and be exempt from COVID-19 requirements to isolate and quarantine on arrival and, consistent with this, persons subject to immigration requirements impacting travel, entry and stay in New Zealand are exempt from COVID-19 immigration border restrictions.

The previous General Instructions made under section 26(4) of the Immigration Act 2009 are revoked.

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Catriona Robinson  
 (Acting) Deputy Chief Executive  
 Immigration New Zealand

27 April 2021