

Immigration Rebalance: International Education Sector

Reconnecting New Zealand

The Government has announced that the borders will be fully reopened by the end of July. This means the opening date for student visa categories has been brought forward from October. The Government has already put in place a border class exception for 5,000 international students, with visa processing underway for this group, which will enable entry to NZ once their visas are granted.

Immigration Rebalance

The Immigration Rebalance has been designed to make it easier to attract and hire high-skilled migrants, while supporting some sectors to transition to more productive and resilient ways of operating, instead of relying on lower-skilled migrant workers. It includes changes to settings for migrant workers and their partners, students, and skilled residence pathways.

The changes to international education include:

Post-study work rights

Changes have been made to post-study work visa settings, which will apply to any student visa applications received on or after 11 May 2022 not covered by transitional arrangements, including student visa applications from people in New Zealand:

- Students will continue to be eligible for post-study work rights if they are studying a bachelor's degree, bachelor honours degree, postgraduate diploma, master's or doctoral degree that they have studied full time in New Zealand for a minimum of 30 weeks. For, students undertaking a qualification at Level 7 and below (excluding bachelor's degrees), they will only be eligible for post-study work rights if the qualification is relevant to an occupation on the Green List. This includes Graduate Diplomas and Diplomas at level 7.
- Post study work rights for non-degree students who have studied for Green List relevant qualifications will only allow the migrant to work in that occupation, though they can switch employers and work for less than the median wage.
- There are 20 roles on the Green List that have direct pathways from Level 7 and below level qualifications. These include: Construction Project Manager; Project Builder; 12 specific engineering roles; Civil Engineering Technician; Electrical Engineering Technician; Secondary School teacher; Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teacher; Automotive Electrician; Diesel Motor Mechanic.
- This change aims to align post-study work rights for non-degree study with skills New Zealand needs. It also addresses some unsustainable post-study working trends seen pre-COVID.
- For most international students eligible for a Post-Study Work Visa, the duration of that work visa will now mirror the time they study in New Zealand, up to a maximum of three years. This change will not apply to Master's and PhD students, who will continue to receive three years' post-study work rights, as long as they have spent 30 weeks in New Zealand undertaking full-time study. This change is about proportionality but also recognises the value to students and employers of experiencing New Zealand education in context.

- International students will no longer be able to apply for a second post-study work visa. This is to reduce the length of time that someone can be working in New Zealand without applying for an Accredited Employer Work Visa, where the employer must first check if a New Zealander is available to do the job.
- Students who have already commenced studying an eligible qualification under current settings, and who have applied for a visa or holds a visa for that specific study, will be considered under the 'old' post-study rules. This includes students who enter New Zealand under the latest border exception for 5,000 students, as long as they meet the educational requirements under the current settings. Students who have started a qualification offshore and who apply for a visa from 11 May will be considered under the new rules.
- No changes have been made to in-study work rights for international students which remains an important part of a New Zealand education for some international students and mitigates some of their exploitation risks.

Living costs

From 31 July 2022, fund requirements will increase:

- From \$15,000 to \$20,000 per annum for prospective tertiary student visa applicants and to \$17,000 for prospective international school students. These amounts will be prorated for shorter lengths of study.
- With the exception of some aviation students, students will need to pay tuition fees for the first year, or first programme of study (whichever is the shorter), and they will have to prove funds for the same period.
- Students transitioning to a post-study work visas from 11 May will need to show funds of \$5,000.
- The funds requirements will be reviewed every three years to ensure that students continue to have reasonable expectations about the cost of living in NZ.

Other information to note:

- Signatories to the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 need to ensure international students have accurate information around pathways to working in New Zealand following their study.

Links to International Education Strategy

The Rebalance changes complement the direction set out in the International Education Strategy.

The ability for international students to stay on after study and work is only a small feature of the benefits of international education in New Zealand. The draft strategy defines New Zealand's 'high-value' offering as providing quality education that helps strengthen the education system, and contributes to research and innovation, and other socio-cultural, economic and diplomatic benefits for New Zealand.

International students will still be welcome to study at non-degree levels in New Zealand at one of our many quality institutions. Many can work while studying. They can also still apply for another visa after their student visa, such as the Accredited Employer Work Visa, if they are eligible – including by being paid median wage or more in most cases.