



Bulletin – Tertiary Provider Bulletin

9th April, 2020

COVID-19 Update

This bulletin provides updates on:

- Pastoral care
- Student visa changes to support essential services
- International student travel
- Trades Academy funding
- PTEs and student fees
- English language proficiency online testing
- Reporting and compliance
- Amendment to funding conditions on certified copy

Pastoral Care

- The lack of social community during the lockdown will be very significant for some students, leading them to feelings of loneliness, isolation, anxiety, depression or stress.
- Providers can help by staying in touch with students on a regular basis, advising where they can seek help and who they can talk to about any barriers to learning.
- We know that three main factors impact on their wellbeing: social isolation, financial constraints, and their academic programme.
- Providers should ensure students understand any programme changes (eg moving to online delivery or changes to assessment timelines) and who to talk to about any questions or choices they might need to make.
- For Student Allowances and Living Cost payments students can be referred to StudyLink's website <https://www.studylink.govt.nz/>.
- For help with essential services and basic needs: <https://covid19.govt.nz/individuals-and-households/home/help-accessing-essential-goods/>



- For help with feelings of isolation or stress: www.mentalhealth.org.nz, www.hpa.org.nz, and a new resource launched this week <https://www.allright.org.nz/campaigns/getting-through-together>.

Student visa changes to support essential services

Changes have been made to relax visa restrictions for some visa holders to work in essential services to support New Zealand's response to COVID-19. Students currently employed by supermarkets and the healthcare sector will be able to work for more than 20 hours per week in certain circumstances, explained below.

Where this applies the student needs to discuss their plans with their education provider as they must still meet the study requirements of their student visa.

Supermarkets

If the student was an employee at a supermarket on 23 March 2020, they may work more than 20 hours per week from 25 March to 25 April 2020 (inclusive).

This applies to supermarkets operated by Woolworths (Countdown, Super Value and Fresh Choice) and Foodstuffs Limited – (New World, Pak n Save and Four Square).

Healthcare sector

If the student was employed in an essential health worker role (including aged residential care) on 3 April 2020, they can work more than 20 hours per week for the period 3 April to 3 July 2020.

For more information visit Immigration New Zealand

International student travel

As the Government is working to safely repatriate foreign nationals, international students can now choose to leave New Zealand on scheduled commercial or foreign-government assisted charter flights. To do so they must have a confirmed international booking and travel to either Auckland or Christchurch airports by private vehicle, public transport or a single domestic flight.

Educational providers must ensure students and their parents are fully informed of the risks associated with international travel right now and have in place:

- a transfer of care plan for students under 18 that is agreed to in writing (digitally) by the student's parent or legal guardian.
- appropriate and safe supervision for students under 18 to ensure their wellbeing is maintained during their transfer of care.

See: [FAQs for signatories – students on commercial or repatriation flights](#)

If you need students to be met off domestic flights at Auckland or Christchurch airports, and/or support with accommodation, chaperoning, or transfers, please contact:

- Auckland: Debbie McGregor, email dandmmarketing@outlook.com M: 027 415 0425
- Christchurch: Tina Hartung, email TinaHartung1@icloud.com M: 021 350 936

Please include in your email: student name and mobile number, education provider key contact name and mobile, and details of the support required (chaperoning/accommodation/transfers – please specify)

Trades Academy funding

- Funding paid to Trades Academy Lead Providers will continue in 2020 and will not be recovered due to under-delivery in 2020. This applies to funding for both tertiary education organisations (TEOs) and school Lead Providers.
- For TEOs that are a delivery partner of a Trades Academy, funding for 2020 will depend on the specific agreement or MOU you have with your Lead Provider (TEO or school). As stated above, all Lead Providers will continue to be funded in full based on existing financial commitments for 2020.
- We recommend you contact your [Trades Academy Lead Provider](#) to confirm your ongoing funding arrangements for 2020.
- The Ministry (with support from TEC) is in regular contact with all Trades Academy Lead Providers. The initial information update provided to all Lead Providers and schools when we moved to alert Level 4 is available on the [Youth Guarantee website](#). Youth Guarantee website
- We are continuing to work with all Lead Providers to find out how they and their delivery partners are placed to move to online learning, what alternative learning arrangements they can put in place in time for the start of Term Two, and to make preparations in the event of a longer term disruption to practical courses

Private training establishments (PTEs) and student fees

- All PTEs must have ceased face-to-face delivery.
- A PTE that uses a standard trust:
 - can continue to draw down tuition fees as usual if it is continuing to deliver its course using online or alternative arrangements
 - must stop drawdowns of tuition fees if it has temporarily paused delivery
 - must stop drawdowns of tuition fees for any students whose enrolment has been put on hold
 - must ensure accommodation payments and living expenses in trust continue.
- A PTE that uses a static trust:
 - must ensure that enough money is held in trust at all times to cover the maximum liability amount
 - is allowed to request drawdowns from its trustee more often than usual.
- If a student withdraws, PTEs may need to consider a wider range of factors than usual in determining whether or not they should provide a refund, and/or the amount of the refund. PTEs may wish to explore other options with the student, such as putting their studies on hold or changing to a different course.

Further information and guidance is available [on the NZQA website](#).

Addressing students' concerns about course changes

NZQA has released [new guidance](#) for TEOs about how to respond when a student for whatever reason is not willing or able to engage in their course in its new delivery format.

The new guidance includes:

- a recommendation to be responsive to students' concerns, and flexible where appropriate
- a reminder about contractual obligations and the external avenues available to students to seek remedy.

For PTEs, this should be read alongside the information [previously published](#) about student fees.

Agencies recognise that many TEOs are working hard on important decisions about how to adapt in these difficult circumstances. We appreciate your efforts to minimise disruption and meet needs of your students.

English language entry requirements for international students – acceptance of online tests of English language proficiency

Education providers are responsible for ensuring the international students they enrol have the NZQA-required level of English language proficiency for their intended study level. One option is to require the student to have passed the relevant level of one of the internationally recognised proficiency tests listed in [the Table appended to Rule 18](#) of the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, many English language proficiency testing centres are closed until official restrictions are lifted. We understand many of the listed test providers have moved to offer online testing.

NZQA position on the acceptance of online English language proficiency tests

NZQA emphasises that the requirements set out in Rule 18 continue to stand. However, in recognition of the limitations caused by the COVID-19 restrictions, NZQA considers that until face-to-face testing resumes, the online form of the tests listed in [Table to Rule 18](#) can be accepted by providers as sufficient proof of English language proficiency for international students in New Zealand who wish to change programmes or providers.

More detailed information can be found [on the NZQA website](#).

Reporting and compliance

- We are working to balance the need to reduce pressure on education providers with the need to collect key information that can help support the Government's response to COVID-19.
- We may need to ask you for further ad-hoc information over the next few months, and appreciate your continued willingness to respond to these requests.

Amendment to funding conditions on certified copy

As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, most learners are unable to obtain certified copies of documents in the usual way. The TEC is temporarily amending funding conditions to provide an alternative way to verify a learner's identity and will be advising TEOs directly. The TEC website will be updated from 14 April.

Things change quickly so stay up to date:

For answers to questions about Student Allowance and Living Cost payments refer to StudyLink's website <https://www.studylink.govt.nz/>.

For health advice, refer to the Ministry of Health's website

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

For official Government information about COVID-19 (novel coronavirus), including health advice and travel restrictions visit the All-of-Government website <https://www.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/>

For more advice for students, visit the Ministry of Education website <http://www.education.govt.nz/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-3/>