

Subject: INZ update
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To: Undisclosed recipients.;

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Immigration New Zealand is preparing operationally to move in to Alert Level 3 next week on Tuesday 28 April.

As of today we have received 4,545 expressions of interest (EOI) from people who believe they meet [exceptions to the border closure](#). Of the 4,356 EOIs decided so far, 883 meet the criteria and have been invited to apply for a visa.

Please note the following information has also been provided to employers.

Alert Level 3 impact on INZ

Staff will continue to work out of our head office in Wellington or remotely, focusing processing efforts on urgent COVID-19 related applications including applications from individuals who have a critical purpose for coming to New Zealand. We are currently working through the logistics of some staff working on additional visa processing for categories that have been prioritised at our New Zealand offices during Alert Level 3.

INZ is also prioritising the processing of some visa categories for applicants who are already in New Zealand, including temporary visa applications for Victims of Family Violence, partnership category temporary visas (including reassessments), full fee paying student visas, and post-study work visas. More information about visa processing priorities can be found [on our website](#).

Essential services – short term variation of conditions request form online

[From 16 April](#), employers or advisers who are acting on behalf of an employer can request a variation for a short period. This is to help businesses continue essential services and allow temporary migrants and international students to further assist with our essential services during the COVID-19 response.

- Advisers who are acting on behalf of an employer may complete the request form. The adviser details can be recorded in the additional details section of the form.
- It is really important that advisers ensure that employers read and understand the declaration included in the form as it relates to the employers operations during alert level 4 and employment standards.
- If an immigration adviser is representing a migrant (in addition to the employer) the adviser details can also be recorded in the spreadsheet for employee details.
- If an adviser is representing the migrant and not the employer the form must be completed by the employer. The adviser details can be recorded against the migrant in the employee detail spreadsheet that the employer will be completing.

[Request a variation of conditions for essential workers](#)

Medical care for unlawful migrants

It is imperative that anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should contact Healthline for free on 0800 358 5453 or their doctor immediately. Immigration status will not impact on people's ability to receive health care. People unlawfully in New Zealand should seek medical advice if they are unwell. They can rest assured that their treatment will be in complete confidence and their information will not be passed on to other agencies.

Visa processing FAQ

As mentioned in an email we sent to you last week, INZ is focusing on processing applications that are a priority and can be processed within current operational constraints. The assessment of these applications or requests may take longer than usual. Along with applications for those who meet exceptions to the border closure, the visa types we are currently processing are:

- Temporary visa applications for Victims of Domestic Violence
- Partnership category temporary visas (including reassessments)
- Full Fee Paying student visas
- Post Study work visas

I have an application in one of the categories being prioritised. How do I request my application to be processed?

Applicants in this situation do not need to contact Immigration New Zealand. Applications in these categories will be allocated to an Immigration Officer as soon as practicable. Applicants will only be contacted if further information is required or once a decision on your application has been made.

I have an application in one of the categories being prioritised. How long will it take for my application to be processed?

Due to Immigration New Zealand's limited visa processing capacity, the assessment of these applications may take longer than usual. As such, we are unable to provide you with an indicative timeframe and request your patience and understanding in the current processing environment.

I have an application in one of the categories being prioritised. Can you expedite my visa application?

Applications will generally be processed in date order and will be allocated to an available Immigration Officer as soon as it is practicable to do so.

I have an application in one of the categories being prioritised. Will my family's dependent visa applications also be progressed?

Yes. If you have family who have applied for visas dependent on your application, their applications will also be processed.

My application is not in one of the categories being prioritised. When will Immigration New Zealand start processing other applications?

Due to our limited processing capacity during COVID-19, INZ will not be processing application types outside of this list at this time. INZ will be regularly reviewing our processing priorities and any changes will be updated on our website.

My application is not in one of the categories being prioritised. Can I change my current application type to one of the application types listed?

If you believe you meet the criteria to be granted a visa under one of the listed categories and are currently on a visa type that allows you to submit a new application online, you are welcome to do so. Applications will generally be processed in date order.

I have applied for a General Visitor Visa on the basis of my partnership to a NZ citizen / resident / temporary Visa Holder. Will my application be progressed?

No. Only applications relating to COVID-19 and the application types listed above are currently being progressed.

My partnership visa application relies on my partner's application being completed first. Will my partner's application be completed even if it is not in one of the above categories so my application can be processed?

No. Only applications relating to COVID-19 and application types listed above are currently being progressed.

What happens to me if my current application is declined and I cannot leave the country?

INZ is sympathetic to individuals who are impacted by the current travel restrictions in place around the world and applicants' individual circumstances will be taken in to account during the assessment of an application.

Why is INZ progressing only certain application types only?

The health and safety of INZ staff is our top priority. With all INZ offices currently closed and limited processing capacity, we need to focus our available resources on COVID-19 related applications. Alongside this, we now have the capacity to prioritise some other applications where the applicant's eligibility is unlikely to have been significantly impacted by COVID-19.

I submitted a paper application for one of these categories recently, but INZ offices have closed. Will INZ be able to progress it?

Paper based applications are currently unable to be processed due to INZ offices being closed. INZ is currently looking at options to assist applicants who submitted paper-based applications.

My previous application in one of these categories was declined and I have submitted a reconsideration application. Will it be progressed?

Paper based applications are currently unable to be progressed due to INZ offices being closed. INZ is currently looking at options to assist applicants who submitted paper-based applications.

Will work visas for asylum claimants be processed under the new prioritisation framework?

Under the [Epidemic Management Notice](#) (which took effect on 2 April 2020 in relation to immigration matters), asylum claimants with expiring visas had their visas extended until 25 September 2020. Work visas for asylum claimants are paper based and these applications will begin to be processed when staff are able to resume working from Immigration New Zealand offices.

Are some residence applications still being prioritised?

No. Only applications relating to the Government's COVID-19 response (such as applications for essential health workers or other essential services and applications for critical humanitarian reasons) and application types listed above are currently being progressed.

What are general instructions and why have these been issued now?

The Deputy Chief Executive - Immigration is able to direct immigration officers what order to process visas in. They do this by issuing general instructions to immigration officers. This allows Immigration New Zealand to prioritise visas consistently.

Varying conditions for essential workers FAQ

Why has this decision been made to create a variation of conditions (VOC) process for exceptional cases?

The Variation of Conditions process will provide certainty to essential workers or suppliers of essential goods by enabling them to retain staff in redeployment of duties where the need arises. It will also allow students currently employed by an essential service or supplier of essential goods to work full time. The Variation of Conditions will be valid while New Zealand is at Alert Level 3 or 4, and for a period of 6 weeks after.

What employers are eligible to request a VOC for their employees?

Businesses that are currently operating during Level 4 lockdown as an essential service are eligible to request a VOC for their employees.

What variations can be made to a work visa?

Workers can have their visa conditions varied to work in any occupation for their current employer (as stated on their existing visa) or workers can change employers but must work in the same occupation as stated on their existing visa.

Can I vary the region on my work visa?

No. Variation of Conditions to change regions of employer will not be considered under these instructions due to public health considerations.

What types of work visas can be varied?

Work visas which specify an occupation and employer may be varied.

I am on a Student visa – is this applicable to me?

Student visa holders (who were already employed on 16 April) can increase the hours they can work for their current employer operating during Level 4 lockdown.

I am currently on an interim visa – can I apply for a Variation of Conditions under this specific category?

No, the variation of conditions is not available to people on interim visas at this stage.

I have a work visa but haven't arrived in New Zealand. Can I apply for a VOC?

No, the VOC is for visa holders already in New Zealand who are employed by essential service businesses.

I am currently working for an essential employer as admin staff. Can I work in a different role for the same employer?

Yes, your employer can make a request for a Variation of Conditions via the INZ website. The form is available at www.immigration.govt.nz/formshelp/request-vary-conditions-for-essential-services

Do I have to pay a fee?

There is no fee for a Variation of Conditions under this special category. However, if you apply for a Variation of Conditions outside of this specific criteria, you may have to pay a fee.

Do I need to complete a form?

There is an online form that your employer will need to complete. See www.immigration.govt.nz/formshelp/request-vary-conditions-for-essential-services.

What documents do I need to provide?

The documents that your employer completes and submits to Immigration New Zealand are sufficient. You do not need to provide anything additional. Your employer must get your agreement to the Variation of Conditions before they submit the request.

How long will the Variation of Conditions last for?

The Variation of Conditions will be valid until six weeks after we return to Alert Level 2.

How will I be notified of the decision?

We will email you individually to inform you of changes to your visa status.

Can I change employer as my current employer has no work for me?

Work visa holders can perform their current role in a different workplace in the same region to help essential businesses keep operating while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4 and six weeks after that.

International students with visas that allow work may already work for any employer for up to 20 hours a week. This will not change.

Can I get my request for a Variation of Conditions reconsidered if it is declined?

No, there is no right of reconsideration or appeal for this request.

How long will it take to process my request for a Variation of Conditions?

We will endeavour to inform you within seven days. However requests will be prioritised to support the areas of greatest need (for example in health and aged care sectors).

What if I want to change employers permanently?

At the end of this specific Variation of Conditions, you will need to apply for a new visa or variation of conditions to permanently change your employer.

I have a Student Visa limited to 20 hours working per week. Can I now work full time for the same employer?

Your employer will need to request for a Variation of Conditions via the INZ website.

The form is available at www.immigration.govt.nz/formshelp/request-vary-conditions-for-essential-services

INZ will take off the restrictions on hours of work, if all requirements are met.

This will allow you to be employed by an essential business to enable full time employment in any occupation for that same employer.

At the end of the VOC do the conditions revert back to the original visa?

Yes, the Variation of Conditions is only for a specified period (until six weeks after the date New Zealand returns to Alert Level 2).

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