



Final-year Fees Free communications pack for TEOs

Supporting your final-year Fees Free communications and engagements

Dated: 5 August 2026

To support tertiary education organisation's (TEO's) communications and engagements with learners about final-year Fees Free, we have developed this communications pack of key messages, FAQs and email templates.

The Tertiary Education Commission will update these messages and email templates when required.

If you have any questions, please contact customerservice@tec.govt.nz with the subject line '[Edumis#] – final-year Fees Free'

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Key messages - updated

Topic	Messages
End of Fees Free	› The Government has confirmed that Fees Free will end on 31 December 2026. › If you complete your provider-based qualification or work-based programme in: • 2026, you can still apply for Fees Free in myIR within 12 months of completing. • 2027 or later, you will not be eligible for Fees Free.
General Fees Free	› Fees Free is available to learners who complete their first eligible provider-based qualification or work-based programme in 2025 or 2026. › Fees Free covers fees for the final year of tertiary study or final two years of work-based learning, up to \$12,000. › Fees Free aims to motivate and reward learners to complete their qualification or programme, and reduces the overall cost of their study and learning. › Fees Free can only be used once. › If you get Fees Free and have a student loan, Inland Revenue will pay it towards your loan balance. If you do not have a student loan, Inland Revenue will pay it into the bank account you provide in your application. › For more information visit Fees Free – Inland Revenue.
Eligibility for Fees Free	› To get Fees Free for your final year of study or work-based learning you must: • complete an eligible provider-based qualification or a work-based programme in 2025 or 2026, and • meet the residency requirements on the day you complete it. › Even if you meet these requirements, you may not be eligible if you have: • previously studied or done work-based learning, or • already received Fees Free, or • used the Training incentive allowance to pay your final year study fees. › If you want to check if you meet the eligibility requirements before you complete your qualification or programme, visit Fees Free – Inland Revenue. › If you're unsure whether your qualification or programme is eligible, we can provide more information.

Topic	Messages
What learners need to do	At enrolment › When you enrol, you need to pay your fees. To help cover this cost you may wish to apply for a student loan. Find out more at Student loan – StudyLink. On completion › When you complete your first eligible provider-based qualification or work-based programme, you need to apply for Fees Free in myIR. › For study or work-based learning completed in the: • 2026 calendar year, you must apply within 12 months of completing your qualification or programme • 2025 calendar year, you have until 31 December 2026 to apply.
Application processing times	› Inland Revenue needs confirmation from us that you have completed your qualification or programme before they can process your application. › The best time for you to apply for Fees Free is after Inland Revenue receives your completion information. › For more information visit Fees Free Processing Times – Inland Revenue.
IRD numbers	› We will ask for your IRD number. This makes it easier to apply for Fees Free after you complete your first eligible provider-based qualification or work-based programme. › You do not need to provide your IRD number if you have already had Fees Free or know your qualification/programme is not eligible.
Shorter qualifications	› Keep in mind that some shorter qualifications (like certificates) that you complete before a degree or diploma may use your Fees Free entitlement. › If you're unsure if your qualification is eligible, we can provide more information.

FAQs for TEOs

Question	Answer
A learner enrolled in 2026 is expecting to receive final-year Fees Free when they complete their provider-based qualification or work-based programme in 2027. What can I say to them?	You can explain that the Government has confirmed that final-year Fees Free ends on 31 December 2026. Eligibility is based on when a learner completes their qualification or programme, not when they enrolled. This means learners who complete in 2027 are not eligible for final-year Fees Free. Suggested response to learners: [Acknowledge the learner's circumstances and feelings.] The Government has confirmed that final-year Fees Free ends on 31 December 2026. Because eligibility is based on the date a learner completes their qualification or programme, learners who complete in 2027 are not eligible for final-year Fees Free, regardless of when they enrolled. We encourage you to talk to us about your financial options. Depending on your circumstances, you may still be able to apply for a student loan or access other targeted support to help with the costs of your study or training.
A learner is considering changing their study or training plans to a shorter qualification or programme that will allow them to complete in 2026 so they can apply for Fees Free. Is this possible?	Maybe. Learners should talk to their TEO about their options before making any changes. Whether a learner can move to a shorter qualification or programme depends on their circumstances and the options their TEO offers. Not all TEOs offer shorter qualifications or exit qualifications. If a learner changes their programme of study and subsequently completes an eligible qualification or programme by 31 December 2026, they will be able to apply for Fees Free, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria. Learners should check the information on ird.govt.nz/fees-free and talk to their TEO to understand how any changes to their study or training could affect their eligibility.
Could changes in learner behaviour as a result of final-year Fees Free affect a TEO's Educational Performance Indicators (EPIs) or future funding?	Some TEOs may be concerned that learners could choose to exit study early with a lower-level qualification to complete their study in 2026 and become eligible for final-year Fees Free. This could result in a one-off change to enrolment patterns, qualification completions, or Educational Performance Indicators (EPIs) that does not reflect normal learner behaviour. TEC considers a range of information when making investment decisions. As part of the investment round process, TEOs have the right to respond to proposed funding decisions and provide context about their performance and results. If a TEO experiences a significant change in its EPIs, enrolments, or qualification completions and can clearly attribute that change to the implementation of final-year Fees Free, it can raise this with TEC during the investment process. Any potential funding impacts can be considered as part of that process.

Website copy - updated

Learners who finish in 2027 or beyond, what the change means for them

Fees Free

Starting tertiary study or work-based learning for the first time? You may be able to get Fees Free if you complete your first eligible qualification or programme in 2025 or 2026.

Fees Free covers the cost of your fees for the final year of study or final two years of work-based learning, up to \$12,000.

When you enrol, you will need to pay your fees. To help you cover this cost, you can apply for a student loan. Find out more [at Student loan – StudyLink](#).

For more information about eligibility and when to apply for Fees Free, visit [Fees Free – Inland Revenue](#).

The Government will end Fees Free for the final year of tertiary study and final two years of work-based learning on 31 December 2026.

If you complete an eligible qualification or programme in 2026, you can apply for Fees Free within 12 months of finishing, up to 31 December 2027.

If you complete your qualification or programme after 31 December 2026, you will not be eligible for Fees Free.

Email templates to communicate Fees Free changes to learners

Learners who finish in 2027 or beyond, what the change means for them

Subject: Information about your final-year Fees Free eligibility

Kia ora [Learner name]

We're contacting you about your eligibility for final-year Fees Free.

The Government has confirmed that final-year Fees Free ends on 31 December 2026. Eligibility is based on when a learner completes their qualification or programme, not when they enrolled.

Because your qualification or work-based programme is expected to be completed in 2027 or beyond, you will not be eligible for final-year Fees Free.

[Acknowledge the learner's circumstances and feelings.]

We encourage you to talk to us about the financial support options that may be available to you. Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to access a student loan or other targeted support to help with the costs of your study or training.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your options, please contact [TEO contact details].

Ngā mihi

[Name]

[Role]

[TEO name]

[Contact details]

Learners who finished in 2025 and still haven't applied for Fees Free**Subject:** Check your eligibility and apply for Fees Free

Kia ora [Learner name]

Congratulations on completing your [qualification or work-based programme] in 2025.

You may be eligible for final-year Fees Free, which can cover up to \$12,000 of fees for the final [year of tertiary study or the final two years of work-based learning].

To receive final-year Fees Free, you must:

- › have completed your first eligible [qualification or work-based programme] in 2025, and
- › meet the residency requirements on the day you completed your qualification or programme.

Some circumstances may affect your eligibility. For example, you may not be eligible if you have previously studied or undertaken work-based learning, already received Fees Free, or used the Training Incentive Allowance to pay your final-year fees.

Important: If you completed your [qualification or work-based programme] in 2025, you must apply for Fees Free by 31 December 2026. This deadline will not be extended, so we encourage you to check your eligibility and apply as soon as possible.

Check your eligibility and apply at ird.govt.nz/fees-free.

If you have any questions about your qualification or programme, please contact us at [TEO contact details].

Ngā mihi

[Name]

[Role]

[TEO name]

[Contact details]
