



Final-year Fees Free key messages

for tertiary education organisations

Supporting your final-year Fees Free communications and engagements

Dated: 26 August 2025

You can use these key messages about final-year Fees Free in your communications and engagements with learners. The Tertiary Education Commission will update these messages when required.

Key messages from 6 October 2025

Topic	Messages
Fees Free	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Fees Free is available for learners who complete their first eligible qualification or programme.› Fees Free covers fees for the final year of study or final two years of work-based learning, up to \$12,000.› Fees Free aims to motivate and reward learners for completing their qualification or programme, and reduce the overall cost of their study and learning.› Fees Free can only be used once.› If you get Fees Free and you have a student loan, the payment will reduce your loan balance. If you do not have a student loan, it will be paid to the bank account you provide in your application.› For more information visit Fees Free – Inland Revenue (ird.govt.nz/fees-free).
Eligibility for Fees Free	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› To get Fees Free for your final year of study or work-based learning you must:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• complete an eligible qualification or a programme, and• meet the residency requirements on the day you complete it.› Even if you meet these, you may not be able to get Fees Free if you have:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• previously studied or done work-based learning, or• already had Fees Free, or• used the Training incentive allowance to pay your final year study fees.

Topic	Messages
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › If you would like to check if you meet any of the eligibility requirements before you complete your qualification or programme, visit Fees Free – Inland Revenue. › If you're unsure about your qualification or programme eligibility, we can provide you with more information.
What learners need to do	<p>At enrolment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › When you enrol for your study or work-based learning you will 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. <p>On completion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › When you complete your first eligible qualification or programme, you will need to apply for Fees Free. › You must apply within one year of completing your qualification or programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For study or work-based learning completed in the 2025 calendar year, you have until 31 December 2026 to apply. › You will be able to do this in myIR from 15 January 2026.
Application processing times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Inland Revenue need 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. Talk to us or find out more at ird.govt.nz/fees-free-processing-times (from 6 October 2025). › For more information visit Fees Free Processing Times – Inland Revenue (from 6 October 2025).
IRD numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › We will request your IRD number. This will make it easier to apply for Fees Free after you complete your first eligible qualification or programme. › You do not need to provide your IRD number if you have already had Fees Free or you know your qualification/programme is not eligible for Fees Free.
Shorter qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Keep in mind that some shorter qualifications (like certificates) you complete before a degree or diploma may use your Fees Free entitlement. If you're unsure about your qualification eligibility, we can provide you with more information.