

Final-year Fees Free policy parameters

Detailed eligibility and entitlement parameters for final-year Fees Free

The detailed parameters are split into eligibility and entitlement settings:

- **Eligibility** has two aspects:
 - *Provider-based qualification or work-based programme eligibility*, determining which qualifications or programmes a learner could claim Fees Free entitlement for, and
 - *learner eligibility*, determining the specific criteria a learner must meet to be eligible for Fees Free.
- **Entitlement** determines how much an eligible learner, enrolled in an eligible qualification or programme, may receive in Fees Free support.

Table 1. Final-year Fees Free eligibility and entitlement parameters

No. Eligibility and entitlement parameters	
<i>Provider-based qualification or work-based programme eligibility</i>	
1	Qualifications or programmes at Levels 3 and above on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework are eligible. These must be approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) or Universities New Zealand.
2	<i>Provider-based qualifications</i> : Eligible qualifications are TEC-funded and are equal to or greater than 0.5 Equivalent Full-Time Student (EFTS) units. ¹
3	<i>Work-based programmes</i> : Eligible programmes are TEC-funded and comprised of at least 120 credits.
4	The following qualifications or programmes are not eligible for Fees Free: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. school-learning programmes; b. secondary-tertiary programmes; c. certificates of proficiency; d. zero-fee qualifications; e. qualifications funded through the Youth Guarantee, Māori and Pasifika Trades Training or Refugee English Funds; or f. pathway qualifications.
<i>Learner eligibility</i>	
5	Learners enrolled in provider-based qualifications and work-based programmes may be eligible for final-year Fees Free.
6	The first-year Fees Free residency criteria apply to final-year Fees Free without change [see below for detailed criteria]. Learners must meet these requirements at the date that they complete the qualification or programme for which they are seeking final-year Fees Free.
7	Learners are not eligible if, before 1 January 2025, they undertook study and training that was: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. more than 0.5 EFTS units or 60 credits at levels 3 and above on the NZQCF (or overseas equivalent), which can be 0.5 EFTS units or 60 credits in one programme or made up of lots of small qualifications or programmes; and b. Not listed in parameter 8
8	For the purposes of parameter 7, the following must not be included in measures of prior tertiary study or training when determining learner eligibility: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. any tertiary education undertaken while the learner was enrolled in secondary school; b. any credits achieved as part of an industry training programme of fewer than 120 credits that were reported on or after 1 January 2018; c. any zero-fee courses undertaken from 1 January 2023; or

¹ The government uses EFTS units to work out a learner's study load. Every tertiary paper or course has a certain amount of points or credits that represent the amount of study a learner does. These points/credits convert into an EFTS value. Generally, 120 credits convert to 1 EFTS unit (or one year of full-time study).

No.	Eligibility and entitlement parameters
	d. any tertiary study or training that was funded through the Youth Guarantee, Māori and Pasifika Trades Training or Refugee English Funds.
9	Learners who are granted the Training Incentive Allowance for course fees in their final calendar year of an eligible qualification or programme will not be eligible for Fees Free.
Entitlement	
10	Learners entering their final year of study or training on or after 1 January 2025 who have not already benefited from first-year Fees Free and who meet all other eligibility criteria will become eligible for the final-year Fees Free scheme. Therefore, entitlement is only calculated for provider-based courses beginning on or after 1 January 2025 or work-based fees charged for training from 1 January 2025 (including where the overall qualification or programme began earlier).
11	<p>For work-based learners, the final-year Fees Free scheme covers the final 'year' up to 24 months of work-based learning or up to the \$12,000 (including GST) cap (whichever the learner reaches first).</p> <p>In line with the first-year Fees Free scheme, the final-year Fees Free scheme will cover all fees for training and assessment charged to eligible work-based learners and their employers, including fees paid to tertiary education organisations funded from the DQ3-7 fund, or directly to training and assessment providers.</p>
12	<p>For provider-based learners, the final-year Fees Free scheme covers the final 'year' up to 1 EFTS of provider-based study or up to the \$12,000 (including GST) cap (whichever the learner reaches first).</p> <p>In line with first-year Fees Free, the final-year Fees Free scheme will only cover tuition fees, compulsory course costs and student services fees for provider-based learners.</p>
13	There will be a 5-year limit on how far back to go to calculate the total fees for the final 'year' of provider-based study and work-based learning.
14	<p>Entitlement can only be used for the first eligible provider-based qualification or work-based programme a learner completes.</p> <p><i>Clarification:</i></p> <p>A learner will not be eligible for Fees Free if they have already completed a tertiary-level programme or qualification:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> that was undertaken overseas; or that was undertaken in New Zealand, whether or not it was funded by the TEC, and was: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> at level 3 or above on the NZQCF, and equal to or greater than 0.5 EFTS units of provider-based study or comprised of at least 120 credits of work-based training, and not one listed in parameter 4.
15	Entitlement can only be used for one qualification or programme (no carry-over).
16	<p>Learners will have 12 months following completion of their qualification or programme to log in to myIR, confirm eligibility, and apply for entitlement.</p> <p><i>Transitional rule:</i> Learners who meet the eligibility criteria on or before 31 December 2025 can apply for their entitlement on or before 31 December 2026.</p>

Detailed residency requirements for final-year Fees Free²

Below are the detailed citizenship and residency requirements for final-year Fees Free, based on the first-year Fees Free settings. Learners must still meet all other programme and learner eligibility criteria to receive Fees Free entitlement.

Citizenship or residency criteria – provider-based learner

1. For a provider-based learner to be eligible for Fees Free tertiary education, they must be one of the following:
 - a. a New Zealand citizen; or
 - b. a holder of a residence class visa and:
 - i. ordinarily resident in New Zealand and have held a residence class visa for at least three years while living in New Zealand; or
 - ii. a person granted refugee or protected person status, or a family member granted a residence visa with the person granted refugee or protected person status;³ or
 - iii. sponsored into New Zealand by someone in their family who, at the time of sponsorship, was a refugee or protected person; or
 - c. a person granted refugee or protected person status, prior to gaining a residence visa; or
 - d. an immediate family member, without a residence visa and residing in New Zealand, of a person granted refugee or protected person status, as defined as:
 - i. the partner and any child in New Zealand, of a person under paragraph 1(c)
 - ii. the parent and any sibling in New Zealand, of a person under paragraph 1(c) who is a dependent child; or
 - e. a holder of the Christchurch Response (2019) Permanent Resident Visa; or
 - f. a holder of a residence class visa who would have been eligible for the Christchurch Response (2019) Permanent Resident Visa; or
 - g. a holder of a residence class visa who is a family member⁴ of a living person, where that living person is:
 - i. the holder of a Christchurch Response Visa residing in or outside of New Zealand; or
 - ii. a New Zealand citizen residing in or outside of New Zealand, who:
 1. was a resident visa holder under the Immigration Act 2009 on 15 March 2019 and was eligible for a Christchurch Response Visa; or
 2. would have been eligible for a Christchurch Response Visa had they not already been the holder of a permanent resident visa under the Immigration Act 2009 on 15 March 2019; or
 3. would have been eligible for a Christchurch Response Visa had they not already been a New Zealand citizen on 15 March 2019; or
 4. was granted New Zealand citizenship after holding a Christchurch Response Visa; or
 - iii. the holder of a permanent resident visa under the Immigration Act 2009 residing in or outside of New Zealand, who:
 1. was a resident visa holder under the Immigration Act 2009 on 15 March 2019 and was eligible for a Christchurch Response Visa;
 2. would have been eligible for a Christchurch Response Visa had they not already been the holder of a permanent resident visa under the Immigration Act 2009 or on 15 March 2019;
 - iv. is the holder of a resident visa under the Immigration Act 2009 residing in or outside of New Zealand, who held the resident visa on 15 March 2019 and who was eligible for a Christchurch Response Visa; or

² Some of these criteria are based on the Tertiary Education (Domestic Students) Notice 2024. Any changes to the notice will flow through to the relevant citizenship or residency criteria for determining learners' Fees Free eligibility.

³ This includes family members of a person with refugee or protected person status who are granted residency together, with the person who holds refugee or protected person status. This would be a residence visa through the refugee and protection category for people who are granted refugee or protected person status while residing in New Zealand.

⁴ For family members to be eligible, their residence class visa must be granted between 15 March 2019 and 31 December 2024. Family member, for the purpose of paragraph 1(g) is defined as partners, children (both dependent and non-dependent), grandchildren, parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, first cousins (i.e., a child of an aunt or uncle), parents-in-law, siblings-in-law, children-in-law, as well as step-children, step-parents and step-siblings.

- h. a holder of the Afghan Emergency Resettlement Resident Visa.

Citizenship or residency criteria – work-based learner

- 2. For a work-based learner to be eligible for Fees Free tertiary education, they must be one of the following:
 - a. one of the persons specified in paragraphs 1(a), 1(b[ii-iii]), 1(c-h) above; or
 - b. a holder of a residence class visa and ordinarily resident in New Zealand; or
 - c. a person who:
 - i. is working in New Zealand on an Accredited Employer Work Visa; and
 - ii. is working in an occupation that is specified on the Immigration New Zealand Green List or within the scope of a sector agreement;⁵ and
 - iii. is studying a qualification delivered in the work-based mode of delivery; and
 - iv. the qualification has been identified by the appropriate Workforce Development Council as being in the national interest; and
 - v. the qualification has been approved by the Tertiary Education Commission as being in the national interest; and
 - vi. is enrolled in a programme of study or training, or part of a programme of study or training, that is funded by the Tertiary Education Commission.

⁵ The Green List provides a straight to residence and residence pathway to attract migrants into highly skilled, hard to fill positions in global demand. Sector agreements for the care, construction and infrastructure, meat processing, seafood, and the seasonal snow and adventure tourism sectors allow for limited exceptions to the median wage requirement when employing migrant workers, in exchange for ongoing improvements within these sectors.