K12 ACADEMICS — INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES

Studying in New Zealand

A guide for international students & families — how New Zealand's higher education works, the Fee Paying Student Visa, tuition, English study, work rights, and the post-study work visa.

K12 ACADEMICS

Find Your Community

2026 EDITION

ABOUT K12 ACADEMICS

The world's largest education resource.

Online since 2004, K12 Academics has helped millions of families, students and educators **find the right school, college, camp, business and program in their community** — for every kind of learner.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING, HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, STRONG POST-STUDY WORK

New Zealand offers **eight quality universities, all-English teaching, an outstanding quality of life, and generous post-study work rights** — in a safe, welcoming country. Students apply **online for the Fee Paying Student Visa** through Immigration New Zealand. Graduates can stay and work for **up to three years**, a genuine pathway toward residency. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. New Zealand's rules changed recently (online-only applications from Aug 2025; 25-hour work rights from Nov 2025), tuition, and funds vary. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with Immigration New Zealand (INZ) and your provider**.

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STEP 01 OF 10

Understand Why Students Choose New Zealand

WHAT TO KNOW

New Zealand offers **eight quality universities, all-English teaching, an exceptional quality of life and natural setting, a safe and welcoming society, and strong post-study work rights** — with a high (~91%) visa-approval rate.

BY THE NUMBERS

8 quality universities	Quality of life	Post-study work
all English	safe & scenic	up to 3 years

HOW TO HELP

Weigh New Zealand's **quality, lifestyle, and post-study work rights** against tuition and distance — for English-speaking students who value quality of life, it's a top destination.

GOOD TO KNOW

All eight New Zealand universities are **internationally ranked**, and the country's post-study work rights are among the more generous.

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STEP 02 OF 10

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

New Zealand has **eight universities**: **Auckland** (the largest and highest-ranked), **Otago, Canterbury, Victoria (Wellington), Waikato, Massey, Lincoln, and AUT**, plus polytechnics and private training establishments. All are **NZQA-quality-assured**; degrees are globally recognized.

BY THE NUMBERS

8 universities	+ polytechnics	NZQA
Auckland the largest	& PTEs	quality-assured

HOW TO HELP

Choose among New Zealand's **eight universities** (or a polytechnic), confirming the provider is **NZQA-approved** — a requirement for the student visa.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your provider must be **NZQA-approved** for a Fee Paying Student Visa — all eight universities qualify.

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STEP 03 OF 10

Get the Fee Paying Student Visa

WHAT TO KNOW

The main visa is the **Fee Paying Student Visa**, for full-time study (up to 4 years) at an approved provider. Since **August 2025 all applications are online** (via Immigration Online). You need an **offer of place**, proof of funds, health and character requirements, and insurance. Processing is typically **3–7 weeks**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Fee Paying Student Visa	Online only	Offer of place
the main one	since Aug 2025	+ funds & insurance

HOW TO HELP

Apply **online** for the Fee Paying Student Visa with your **offer of place**, funds proof, insurance, and health/character documents — processing runs about 3–7 weeks.

WATCH OUT

As of **August 2025, paper applications aren't accepted** — apply online via Immigration Online.

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STEP 04 OF 10

Apply to Universities

WHAT TO KNOW

Apply **directly to universities** for their intakes (typically **February/March and July**). You'll provide transcripts, English proof, and program-specific documents, and receive an **offer of place** — the anchor document for your visa.

BY THE NUMBERS

Apply directly	Offer of place	English proof
Feb/March & July intakes	the visa anchor	IELTS etc.

HOW TO HELP

Apply **directly to your chosen universities** for the February or July intake, with transcripts and English proof, to secure your **offer of place**.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **offer of place** is the anchor for your visa — apply several months ahead of your intake.

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STEP 05 OF 10

Plan for Tuition & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

Tuition is roughly **NZ$22,000–35,000/year (undergraduate)** and **NZ$26,000–45,000 (postgraduate)**, higher for MBA/medicine (PhD students often pay **domestic rates**). New Zealand government and university scholarships help.

BY THE NUMBERS

Undergrad	Postgrad	PhD
~NZ$22k–35k/yr	~NZ$26k–45k/yr	often domestic rates

HOW TO HELP

Budget tuition (undergrad ~NZ$22k–35k) plus living costs, and pursue New Zealand government and university scholarships — note PhD students often pay **domestic fee rates**.

GOOD TO KNOW

PhD students often qualify for domestic tuition rates — a major saving for doctoral study.

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STEP 06 OF 10

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

You must prove **NZ$20,000 per year for living costs (about NZ$1,667/month)**, plus **full tuition (or evidence it's paid)** and a return travel allowance (~NZ$2,000). **Comprehensive medical and travel insurance is a mandatory visa condition** (~NZ$600–900/year).

BY THE NUMBERS

Living funds	+ tuition	Insurance
NZ$20,000/year	paid or proven	mandatory (~NZ$600–900/yr)

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of NZ$20,000/year living costs plus tuition** and a travel allowance, and arrange **comprehensive insurance** — a required visa condition.

WATCH OUT

Insurance is a mandatory visa condition for the whole stay — arrange it before applying.

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STEP 07 OF 10

Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

Teaching is **in English**, so you prove English proficiency — typically **IELTS 6.0–6.5** (or equivalent) for undergraduate, higher for some postgraduate programs — unless exempt via prior English-medium study.

BY THE NUMBERS

English	Higher	Or exempt
IELTS 6.0–6.5	for some postgrad	prior English study

HOW TO HELP

Prove **English proficiency** (IELTS 6.0–6.5 or equivalent, higher for some postgrad), or qualify for an exemption via prior English-medium study.

GOOD TO KNOW

English requirements are **higher for some postgraduate programs** — check your specific program's threshold.

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STEP 08 OF 10

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After your visa, arrange **accommodation (halls, homestay, or shared flats — from ~NZ$140/week shared), banking, and a SIM**. Living costs vary by city (Auckland is priciest; Otago/Canterbury cheaper). Confirm your **insurance and enrolment** on arrival.

BY THE NUMBERS

Accommodation	From ~NZ$140/wk	Banking + SIM
halls, homestay, flats	shared	set up

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin — **accommodation, banking, SIM, insurance, enrolment** — and choose your city with cost in mind (Auckland is priciest).

GOOD TO KNOW

Living costs vary by city — **Auckland is the most expensive**; Otago and Canterbury offer similar quality at lower cost.

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STEP 09 OF 10

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

From **3 November 2025**, eligible students may work **up to 25 hours per week during term** (up from 20) and **full-time during scheduled breaks**. Master's-by-research and PhD students may work **unlimited hours**. Note: existing 20-hour visas need a **variation of conditions** for the extra hours.

BY THE NUMBERS

Work	Full-time	Research/PhD
up to 25 hrs/week (Nov 2025)	in breaks	unlimited

HOW TO HELP

Work **up to 25 hours/week during term** (full-time in breaks) under the new rules — but if your visa says 20 hours, apply to INZ for a **variation of conditions** for the extra 5.

WATCH OUT

The extra 5 hours **isn't added automatically** to existing 20-hour visas — you must apply for a variation.

10 STEP 10 OF 10

Thrive & Work After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

Degree-level graduates (NZQF Level 7 or higher) can apply for an **open Post-Study Work Visa of up to three years**, letting you work for any employer — and it can be a **stepping stone toward residency**. New Zealand actively welcomes skilled graduates.

BY THE NUMBERS

Post-Study Work Visa	Any employer	Residency
up to 3 years (open)	no sponsor needed	a pathway

HOW TO HELP

Plan for the **open Post-Study Work Visa (up to 3 years)** after a degree-level qualification, build experience with any employer, and explore the pathway toward **residency**.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **Post-Study Work Visa (up to 3 years)** is open (any employer) and a genuine **route toward residency** — a major draw.

QUICK REFERENCE

Studying in New Zealand: The Essentials

A snapshot — rules changed recently, so confirm everything with Immigration New Zealand (INZ) and your provider.

The system

Eight universities (Auckland, Otago, Canterbury, Victoria/Wellington, Waikato, Massey, Lincoln, AUT) plus polytechnics and PTEs; all NZQA-quality-assured; globally recognized degrees.

The visa

The Fee Paying Student Visa (full-time, up to 4 years) is applied for online (paper applications ended August 2025); you need an offer of place, funds, insurance, and health/character clearance.

Tuition

Undergrad ~NZ$22k–35k/year, postgrad ~NZ$26k–45k (PhD often domestic rates); New Zealand government and university scholarships help.

Money & language

Prove NZ$20,000/year living plus tuition and a travel allowance; comprehensive insurance is a mandatory condition; English (IELTS 6.0–6.5, higher for some postgrad).

Work & after

From Nov 2025, work up to 25 hrs/week in term (full-time in breaks; research/PhD unlimited); an open Post-Study Work Visa (up to 3 years) supports staying, toward residency.

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