



13 May 2020

Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual: Amendment Circular No. 2020-18

To: All Manual Holders

AMENDMENTS TO THE IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND OPERATIONAL MANUAL

Introduction

This circular outlines changes to the Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual. A copy of the changes is attached.

All immigration officers dealing with immigration applications should read the amendments and operate in accordance with the amended instructions on and after their effective dates.

Note

The amendments described in this circular will be published in the Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual in due course.

Information about these changes is available on our website www.immigration.govt.nz.

Summary of contents

This amendment circular details changes to Immigration New Zealand's Operational Manual, and contains the following:

- The description of changes section contains a summary of the changes to operational instructions.
- Appendix 1 contains amended operational instructions effective on and after 13 May 2020.

Additions to the instructions are highlighted for ease of reference.

Description of changes

Order and manner of processing visa applications

A16.1 General Instructions as to the order and manner of processing visa applications

As a result of relaxed restrictions under COVID-19 Alert Level 2 and improvements in processing capacity across INZ, the Deputy Chief Executive – Immigration has issued new general instructions to immigration officers setting out the order and manner of visa processing.

Appendix 1 contains amended operational instructions effective on and after 13 May 2020.

**Appendix 1 - Amendments to General and Operational
instructions effective on and after 13 May 2020**

A16.1 General Instructions as to the order and manner of processing visa applications

Pursuant to section 26(4) of the Immigration Act 2009 and acting under delegated authority from the Chief Executive of the Ministry of the Business, Innovation, and Employment, I hereby give the following general instructions as to the order and manner of processing of visa applications under Government residence instructions, effective from 13 May 2020:

Residence Applications

- a. First priority will be given to residence class visas where the applicant is in New Zealand. Within this, further prioritisation criteria will apply to applications made under the following categories:
 - i. For the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC), priority will be given to applications with job offers where:
 - o Applicants have an hourly rate equivalent to or higher than twice the median wage (currently \$51.00 per hour or an annual salary of \$106,080 or more);
 - o Applicants hold current occupational registration where registration is required by immigration instructions;
 - ii. For Residence from Work Category applications (Talent (Accredited Employer), Talent (Arts, Culture and Sport), South Island Contribution, Religious Worker and Long Term Skill Shortage List), priority will be given to:
 - o Applications which include a job offer with an hourly rate equivalent to or higher than twice the median wage (currently \$51.00 per hour or an annual salary of \$106,080 or more);
 - o Applications which include a job offer which requires occupational registration where occupational registration is required by immigration instructions.
- b. Second Priority will be given to residence class visa applications where the applicant is offshore.

Temporary Entry Class Visa Applications

- c. First priority will be given to the following types and categories of applications for temporary entry class visas in preference to applications under other types and categories:
 - i. Visas (and variations of condition requests) for critical workers to support the Government response to COVID-19;
 - ii. Visa applications where there is an urgent humanitarian need:
 - o Visa applications for victims of domestic violence
 - o Visitor visas (and variations of conditions) for the following exceptions to the restriction on entry permission: humanitarian cases; Tongan and Samoan citizens making essential travel; immediate family of New Zealand citizens and residents travelling with their New Zealand citizen or resident family member; immediate family of temporary visa holders who normally live in New Zealand;
 - o Residence class visas for Australian citizens and permanent residents who normally live in NZ;
 - iii. Applications to travel under the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) travel card programme made by people who are not New Zealand citizens or residence class visa holders;
 - iv. Diplomatic visas;
 - v. All other temporary entry class visa applications where the applicant is in New Zealand.
- d. Second priority will be given to all other temporary entry class visas where the applicant is offshore.
- e. Within the priorities set out above, applications should generally be processed in lodgement date order.
- f. These instructions do not prevent immigration officers according urgency to the processing of any particular visa application when the individual circumstances so warrant that.
- g. The previous General Instructions made pursuant to section 26(4) of the Immigration Act 2009 are revoked.