

# MYTHBUSTERS

## Hiring international students and international student graduates

Research shows that employers want immigration and visa support. They wish to know where to find information about visa statuses, processes, requirements and the legal implications for hiring graduates from overseas (Venture Taranaki - International Student Employability Scoping Study, April 2019). This resource is designed to answer some employer questions about hiring international students.

### Who has to make sure the person is legally entitled to work in New Zealand?



I've heard that it's my responsibility to make sure that anyone I hire can live and work in New Zealand. What's the story - isn't it up to them to make sure they are legally able to work? Can't I just take their word for it?

Employers do have to check that any worker is legally allowed to work for them. If you want to employ an international student, you'll need to check if the conditions of their visa allow them to work for you.

When I hired our international student graduate, she showed me her visa approval letter from Immigration New Zealand and I used the information in that letter to double check her visa status and conditions using Immigration New Zealand's VisaView tool.



Isn't that a bit of a pain?

Once you get yourself set up for VisaView, it's easy. Your VisaView account keeps a record of all the enquiries you and anyone else at your business has made so you can easily keep track of the visas you have checked.



## When an international student is still studying



I've had an international student approach me asking for a part-time job. Am I allowed to employ them?

Yes, many tertiary students who are here on a student visa can work part-time for up to 20 hours a week while they are studying. Many can also work full-time during all their scheduled holiday breaks and over the Christmas and New Year holiday period. You'll need to check VisaView to see if their visa conditions allow them to work.



But don't they all come from wealthy backgrounds? I mean, they've come all the way over here so their families must be well off.

International students have to show they have funds to support themselves while they're studying as part of their visa application, but many choose to get a job so they can get some valuable New Zealand work experience while they're here. It also means they can earn some extra spending money - not all international students are from rich families!



## Labour market tests and roles for international student graduates



I've heard there is a complicated thing called a labour market test that I have to do before I can hire an international student graduate to work for me. Please tell me I don't have to do that...

This one depends on the situation.

Many international student graduates will hold a post-study work visa. With this visa they can work for almost any employer in any job, and a labour market test isn't required.

You might have to do the labour market test if you would like to employ a migrant who holds a different type of work visa. This test proves that there are no suitable New Zealanders to do the work.



OK then – but don't we have to employ international student graduates in their specialty area?

No, you don't – although I guess you'd usually want to employ them to do what they do well!

An international student graduate who has a post-study work visa can work for almost any employer for 1, 2 or 3 years (the duration of their post-study work visa will depend on what qualification they have studied in New Zealand). So if they've studied here as an international student, and got a post-study work visa (most of them do) you can hire them.

The only exception to this is if your business sells commercial sexual services.





What about this Employer supplementary form I've heard other employers talk about. Do I have to fill out that paperwork when I offer an international student a job?

If you're employing an international student graduate who has a post-study work visa, you don't have to fill in that form.

If you are looking to employ someone who needs an employer-specific work visa, you will need to complete the Employer supplementary form so they can provide it to Immigration New Zealand with their visa application.

Here's the list of work visa applications for which the Employer supplementary is required: Essential Skills work visa, Work to Residence, Long Term Skill Shortage List (LTSSL) work visa, Silver Fern Practical Experience work visa, Specific Purpose work visa (where a job offer is required), and a Variation of Conditions if they hold one of these work visas already and are changing employers.



So...it's pretty straightforward if they've got a post-study work visa. Easier than I'd thought.

## Working with international students



I'm wondering how an international student graduate would fit in to my workplace and get on with everyone else.

What about their English language skills?

It does depend a bit on the individual person.

International students need to provide evidence to their education provider to show they meet the English language requirements for enrolment in the course they've studied in New Zealand. Also, some will have studied at a New Zealand secondary school before their tertiary studies so will have many years of English experience.

They may need some help in the first few weeks of working with you to get up to speed with workplace jargon. And we've found that thinking about how we communicate has helped a lot. Slowing down a bit, taking the time to communicate clearly, and check that people understand what they are being asked to do - these things have improved communication for all our staff.



Won't they want time off to celebrate cultural holidays and festivals?

Just like all our staff, international student graduate employees might want time off to celebrate important occasions.

This can sometimes help with managing leave, though - I've found that some international graduates prefer to work when their Kiwi colleagues want time off - like Christmas and New Year - because their festivals happen at different times.





What about New Zealand workplace culture. Will they know how we do things around here?

Many international student graduates will have worked while they were studying. They have lived in New Zealand while they have been studying - so they are already building a life in New Zealand and will understand how we do things.

Some patience will be needed on both sides as there are bound to be some misunderstandings. Immigration New Zealand has some good resources on their website that you might find useful - <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/employ-migrants>.

When you think about it though, misunderstandings can happen when any new team member is starting work...



I'm worried that if I employ an international student graduate they won't stay for long.

That's a risk with anyone you take on! We've had a couple of staff recently leave after only being with us for six months, and they were Kiwis.

When their post-study work visa is coming to an end, graduates can apply for another type of work visa with your support. This can help you retain skilled staff.

