Immigrating to New Zealand via Green List Occupations

Step-by-Step Information Manual for the Straight to Residence Visa

A practical roadmap covering each stage of the process, with estimated timeframes, required documents, costs and direct links to official New Zealand Government resources. Particularly relevant for healthcare professionals, but applicable to every occupation listed on Tier 1 of the Green List.

Visa	Straight to Residence Visa (Green List Tier 1)
Government cost	From NZD $6,450 (principal applicant)
Processing time	80% of applications decided within 3.5 months
Age limit	55 years or younger when applying
Length of stay	Live, work and study in New Zealand indefinitely
Family	Partner and dependent children aged 24 or younger can be included

Primary reference: Immigration New Zealand - Straight to Residence Visa
Information checked against official sources on 4 October 2026.

Information manual only - not legal or immigration advice. Always verify details on immigration.govt.nz

1 Overview: how the Green List pathway works

The Green List is New Zealand's list of in-demand jobs, split into two tiers. **Tier 1** jobs lead to the **Straight to Residence Visa**, which lets you apply for residence directly, even from outside New Zealand. **Tier 2** jobs lead to the Work to Residence Visa, which generally requires 2 years of qualifying work in New Zealand first. This manual focuses on Tier 1.

Search the Green List for your occupation: Green List roles - jobs we need people for in New Zealand

Eligibility checklist

- Aged **55 or younger** when you apply (checked against your identity document).
- Working in, or offered, a **Green List Tier 1 job** with an **accredited employer** (accredited employer list).
- Job pays at least the **rate set for your Green List role**, or **NZD $35.00 per hour** (2025 median wage) if no rate is specified. See wage rates for visas.
- Job is permanent, or fixed-term for at least 12 months (from when you apply), or contract(s) of at least 6 months.
- You meet the **role-specific Green List requirements** (for example occupational registration, professional membership or a qualification).
- Good health and good character (applies to you and everyone in your application).
- You speak and understand English (IELTS 6.5 / PTE Academic 58 minimum, or an accepted exemption).
- A genuine relationship with any partner or dependent children you include.

Healthcare professionals: for many Tier 1 roles (for example nurses, doctors and other regulated health professions) you must hold New Zealand occupational registration **before** you can apply for the visa. Start the registration process early, because it is often the longest step in the whole journey. Always confirm the exact requirement for your role on the Green List page above.

2 Roadmap and estimated timeline

Several steps can run in parallel. The timings below are **indicative estimates** for planning only, except visa processing, which is published by Immigration New Zealand (INZ).

Step	Stage	Estimated time
1	Confirm your Green List role and requirements	1-2 weeks
2	English language test (IELTS / PTE Academic)	2-8 weeks (book, sit, receive results)
3	Qualification assessment (IQA) and/or NZ occupational registration	1-6+ months (registration is often the longest)
4	Secure a job or job offer with an accredited employer	1-6 months (varies widely)
5	Gather documents, translations and police certificates	2-6 weeks
6	Medical examination and chest X-ray (3 months validity)	1-3 weeks
7	Submit online application and pay fees	1-3 days
8	INZ assessment and decision	80% within 3.5 months (INZ)
9	Visa issued; travel to New Zealand (within 12 months)	Your choice, up to 12 months
10	Settle in; Permanent Resident Visa after 2 years; citizenship after 5 years	2 and 5 years

Realistic total: many applicants should plan for roughly **6 to 12 months** from starting preparation to receiving a decision. If you need registration or a qualification assessment, allow longer.

3 Step-by-step guidelines

Step 1: Confirm your occupation and Green List requirements

Search the Green List and open your occupation. Note whether it is Tier 1, the pay rate, and any registration, qualification, experience or membership required. Requirements update on the Green List page, so always read your role's entry directly. Teaching roles under Tier 1 are aimed at experienced teachers paid at or above the median wage.

Estimated time	1-2 weeks
Cost	Free
Official links	Green List roles search Straight to Residence Visa page

Step 2: Take an approved English language test

Principal applicants for skilled residence visas must meet INZ's English requirement, either through qualifying citizenship, study and qualifications, or an approved test. Test results must be **no more than 2 years old** when you apply. Principal applicants cannot use the English-lessons option.

Approved test	Principal applicant	Partner / child aged 16+
IELTS (General or Academic; One Skill Retake also accepted)	Overall 6.5 or more	Overall 5 or more
PTE Academic	Overall 58 or more	Overall 36 or more

Your partner and children aged 16 or older can show English ability by test, background, or by paying for English language lessons. There is no English requirement for children under 16.

Estimated time	2-8 weeks including booking and results
Cost	Test fees vary by country and provider; check with the test centre
Official links	English language requirements for skilled residence visas

Step 3: Qualification assessment and occupational registration

International Qualification Assessment (IQA). Qualifications gained outside New Zealand may need an IQA from NZQA, and the result must be included in your visa application. Some qualifications (for example Washington or Sydney Accord) do not need assessment. Use INZ's checker to find out if you do.

Occupational registration. Regulated roles must register with the relevant New Zealand authority. Examples for healthcare professionals:

- Nursing Council of New Zealand (registered nurses)
- Medical Council of New Zealand (doctors)
- Midwifery Council (midwives)
- Pharmacy Council (pharmacists)
- For other roles, check the registration body named on your Green List entry.

Registration commonly involves credential verification, English proficiency (some councils accept OET as well as IELTS/PTE), and sometimes a competence assessment or exam. Allow ample time.

Estimated time	IQA: roughly 4-10 weeks (standard processing is often quoted at 20-25 working days). Registration: often 2-6+ months depending on the council and your documents
Cost	IQA: fees vary by assessment type (roughly NZD $450-$800 is commonly quoted; confirm on the NZQA fees page). Registration fees: set by each council

Official links	Check if you need an IQA (INZ) NZQA - International Qualification Assessment NZQA - fees

Step 4: Secure a job or job offer with an accredited employer

Your employer must be on INZ's accredited employer list. Ask your employer to provide an employment agreement, fixed-term contract or offer letter that clearly shows **hours, duration, position and pay**. Contractors may have extra pay and skill requirements (for example 10 years of relevant experience and a higher wage threshold); check your role's Green List entry.

Start your job search once you know your registration status. Many employers will want to see that you are registered or well advanced in the process.

Estimated time	1-6 months (varies widely by profession and region)
Cost	Free (beware of anyone charging fees for job offers)
Official links	Accredited employer list Wage rates for visas

Step 5: Prepare your documents, photos and police certificates

Gather everything before you apply, since incomplete applications cause delays. Identity details must match your passport exactly. Any document not in English needs a **certified English translation** (plus a copy of the original). Police certificates are needed for you and anyone aged 17 or older in your application, from every country where you hold citizenship and every country where you spent 12 months or more in the last 10 years. They must be **less than 6 months old** when you apply.

Estimated time	2-6 weeks (police certificates can be slower in some countries)
Cost	Varies: police certificates, translations, passport, photos
Official links	Documents and proof (INZ) Applying for a visa (INZ)

Step 6: Complete your medical examination and chest X-ray

Everyone aged 15 or older in your application needs a chest X-ray and medical examination. Children aged 10 or younger need a medical examination only (X-ray if requested); children aged 11-14 need both. Use an INZ-approved panel physician or clinic. Results must be **less than 3 months old** when INZ receives them, so time this close to submission. You will enter the eMedical reference code or clinic details in your application.

Estimated time	1-3 weeks
Cost	Charged by the clinic; varies by country
Official links	Health requirements (see 'Who can apply' > Health)

Step 7: Create your account, apply online and pay the fee

Log in to (or create) your INZ online account, complete the application, upload your documents and pay the applicable fees. Check every entry carefully; identity mistakes can delay or jeopardise your application.

Estimated time	1-3 days to complete if documents are ready
Cost	From NZD $6,450 for the principal applicant (see Section 5 for the breakdown and family fees)
Official links	INZ online applications

Step 8: Wait for the decision and track your application

INZ will contact you if more information is needed (for example your original passport, bank statements or pay slips, or more English evidence). Log in to check progress; you will be emailed when a decision is made. If you are already in New Zealand and your current visa could expire before a decision, apply for a temporary visa too, which may give you an Interim Visa.

Estimated time	80% decided within 3.5 months (INZ published figure)
Cost	No extra cost, unless you need a temporary visa
Official links	Waiting for a visa Check your application progress Interim Visa

Step 9: Receive your visa and travel to New Zealand

Approved applicants receive an eVisa by email. If you applied from outside New Zealand you **must arrive within 12 months** of the date the visa is issued. Before travelling, complete the New Zealand Traveller Declaration (from 24 hours before an air journey begins). You can still be refused entry for character issues or a change in circumstances since the visa was issued.

Estimated time	Travel within 12 months of visa issue
Cost	Flights and relocation costs (personal)
Official links	Using eVisas and visa labels New Zealand Traveller Declaration Arriving in New Zealand

Step 10: Settle in and plan your long-term status

You may work in **any job for any employer** and study anywhere. You can travel in and out freely until your travel conditions expire, **2 years** after you first arrive as a resident (or from the date the visa is granted if you are already in New Zealand). If you are outside New Zealand when travel conditions expire, the visa expires too. After 2 years in a row on the visa you can apply for a **Permanent Resident Visa**; for most people, **citizenship** may be possible after 5 years as a resident.

Estimated time	Permanent Resident Visa: after 2 years. Citizenship: generally after 5 years
Cost	Permanent Resident Visa and citizenship fees apply; check INZ and DIA
Official links	Permanent Resident Visa Check or change resident visa conditions Requirements for NZ citizenship

4 Required documents checklist

Document	Who needs it	Notes
Valid passport (or certificate of identity)	Everyone	Enter details exactly as shown; renew early if needed
1 acceptable passport-style photo	Everyone	Must meet INZ visa photo rules
Evidence of Green List Tier 1 job or job offer	You	Employment agreement/offer showing hours, duration, position, pay; accredited employer
Role-specific evidence	You	Registration, qualification, membership or experience required by your Green List entry
IQA result (if required)	You	From NZQA; must be included in the application

Document	Who needs it	Notes
English language evidence	You (and partner/child 16+)	Test result under 2 years old, or citizenship/study evidence; lessons option for family only
Police certificates	Everyone aged 17+	Under 6 months old; from each country of citizenship and each country with 12+ months stay in last 10 years
Chest X-ray evidence	Everyone aged 15+ (11-14 too; younger only if requested)	Under 3 months old when received by INZ
Medical examination evidence	Everyone	eMedical reference code or clinic name/certificate; under 3 months old
Relationship evidence	Partner and children	Marriage certificate, birth certificates, proof of genuine relationship
Certified English translations	As needed	For all documents not in English, plus copies of originals
Possible later requests	You	Original passport, bank statements or pay slips, further English evidence

File formats and upload rules, plus translation requirements, are explained on INZ's documents and proof page.

5 Cost summary

The only figure confirmed directly by INZ for this visa is the government cost shown on its visa page. Other costs depend on your country, profession and providers, so use the notes below as a planning guide and confirm current amounts with each organisation.

Item	Amount	Source / who to ask
INZ application fee (principal applicant)	NZD $2,880	INZ fee table (rates from 1 Oct 2024)
Immigration levy	NZD $3,570	INZ fee table
Total INZ cost, principal applicant	**From NZD $6,450**	INZ visa page
Partner and dependent children included	Additional fees apply	Check INZ fees finder / Fees Guide
English test (IELTS / PTE)	Varies by country	Test provider
IQA (if required)	Roughly NZD $450-$800 (confirm)	NZQA fees page
Occupational registration	Set by each council	Nursing Council, Medical Council etc.
Medical exam and chest X-ray	Varies by clinic and country	Approved clinic
Police certificates, translations, photos	Varies by country	Issuing authorities / translators
Flights, relocation, initial living costs	Personal budget	-

INZ fees guide: Fees Guide (PDF). Visa fees are non-refundable if the application is declined. Fees and levies are reviewed periodically, so confirm the current amount before paying.

6 Common mistakes and practical tips

- **Start registration first.** For regulated healthcare roles it is usually the slowest step and may be required before applying.
- **Watch validity dates:** English test under 2 years, police certificates under 6 months, medicals under 3 months at submission.
- **Match names exactly** to your passport across every form and document.

- **Check the employer's accreditation** on the official list before accepting an offer.
- **Confirm the pay threshold** for your role; the NZD $35.00 per hour figure applies only where no role-specific rate is set.
- **Mind the age limit:** you must be 55 or younger on the day you apply.
- **Never pay for a job offer or guaranteed visa.** In New Zealand, immigration advice must come from a licensed adviser (or an exempt person); check the register at iaa.govt.nz.
- **Use only official websites** (immigration.govt.nz) for final decisions on requirements and fees.

7 Official resources directory

Resource	Link
Immigration New Zealand - Straight to Residence Visa	https://www.immigration.govt.nz/visas/straight-to-residence-visa/
Green List roles	immigration.govt.nz - Green List roles
Accredited employer list	immigration.govt.nz - Accredited employer list
Wage rates for visas	immigration.govt.nz - Wage rates
INZ online application	https://online.immigration.govt.nz/
English requirements (skilled residence)	immigration.govt.nz - English requirements
Check if you need an IQA	immigration.govt.nz - IQA check
NZQA - IQA information	nzqa.govt.nz - IQA
NZQA - IQA fees	nzqa.govt.nz - IQA fees
Nursing Council of New Zealand	https://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz
Medical Council of New Zealand	https://www.mcnz.org.nz
Midwifery Council	https://www.midwiferycouncil.health.nz
Pharmacy Council	https://pharmacycouncil.org.nz
Documents and proof	immigration.govt.nz - Documents and proof
Check application progress	immigration.govt.nz - Check progress
INZ Fees Guide (PDF)	immigration.govt.nz - Fees Guide
NZ Traveller Declaration	https://www.travellerdeclaration.govt.nz/
Permanent Resident Visa	immigration.govt.nz - Permanent Resident Visa
NZ citizenship requirements	govt.nz - Citizenship requirements
Immigration Advisers Authority (licensed adviser check)	https://www.iaa.govt.nz
INZ contact	immigration.govt.nz - Contact us

8 About this manual and disclaimer

This information manual is produced by **AS Global Healthcare Academy** (www.asghca.com) to help healthcare professionals and other skilled workers understand the Green List Straight to Residence pathway to New Zealand. It summarises information published by Immigration New Zealand, NZQA and related bodies, checked on 4 October 2026.

Disclaimer: This document is general information, not legal or immigration advice, and does not guarantee any visa outcome. Immigration rules, Green List contents, fees, levies and processing times change without notice. Timeframes and costs marked as estimates or indicative are planning guides only. Always confirm current requirements on immigration.govt.nz before acting, and seek advice from a licensed immigration adviser or lawyer for your individual circumstances.