

International Student Hardship Fund

Frequently Asked Questions

21 May 2020

Overview of the Hardship Fund

Why has this fund been set up?

We are aware that some international students are experiencing unusual hardship because of changes to their personal circumstances due to the global impacts of COVID-19.

The Government has established a hardship grant fund for international students to address urgent, temporary needs, for example temporary inability to access cash or reduced part-time employment.

Who is eligible to be supported by the temporary Hardship Fund?

The fund is for international students who are in New Zealand and temporarily struggling due to the COVID-19 crisis.

To be eligible students must be a current fee-paying international student or enrolled as a fee-paying international student as at 23 March, in genuine temporary hardship and not be eligible for other government support.

International PhD students paying domestic fees are eligible for the domestic student hardship fund.

What is considered as temporary hardship?

An international student who is currently in temporary hardship could be someone who may have been working part-time to supplement their living costs but has had their hours reduced due to the COVID-19 crisis, or is having difficulties accessing funds from overseas due to international transfer restrictions. However, these are just a couple of possible examples. Each request will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the providers / organisation.

What if an international student's situation is not likely to improve?

If a student's situation is not likely to improve in the long term, they are advised to talk to their embassy, family and support network to consider their options.

How much money will be available?

There is \$1 million available to be accessed by organisations to provide eligible international students with direct financial relief or support.

Administration of the fund

How will the fund be administered?

Education New Zealand (ENZ) will administer the fund. Providers and organisations will apply for grants and if successful will be allocated funding. Organisations can apply for grants of up to \$20,000 (excl GST). Multiple applications can be made.

Who can apply for grants?

The following organisations are eligible to apply to ENZ for grants:

- Education providers who are signatories to the Code of Practice
- Community groups
- Peak bodies, or
- Other organisations who currently work with international students and have the mechanisms and experience to support international students with hardship requests.

Individual students and education agents may not apply to ENZ to access the fund.

What process does a provider / organisation need to complete?

Letters / emails have been sent to peak bodies, providers and community groups raising awareness of the fund. This includes information on how to apply.

The provider or organisation must apply for grant funding by completing an application form <add hyperlink when available>. This will quickly be assessed against a set criteria.

Each organisation / provider that receives funds will be required to report to ENZ how many students they have assisted, what assistance was provided, general reasons for the temporary hardship and how much money was spent. The student's identity will never be revealed.

How long will provider / organisation applications take?

Applications will be assessed within five working days. All applicants will be contacted by email to inform them of the outcome of their application.

Where is the money coming from?

The Hardship Fund is a reallocation of funding from Education New Zealand and a portion of the Ministry of Education's wellbeing funding. Each year, budget is allocated to student wellbeing; this is part of that work. It does not take funding away from providers or domestic students.

A separate hardship fund for NZ's domestic tertiary students was announced in the 2020 Budget.

What does this fund cover?

The fund may be used to support students through direct cash grants, to purchase resources such as food parcels, medicines and cleaning products. It may also be used to scale up existing student hardship initiatives.

What does it not cover?

The fund cannot be used to fund flights home, tuition fees, salaries or staff administration costs or supporting non-international students.

How much can each student receive from the Fund?

The maximum amount per student is \$1000.

How will we know the requests from students are genuine?

As with all the COVID-19 financial assistance, there is a high level of trust that only those who are in genuine hardship will apply. This fund will be no different and we would expect only those in genuine hardship to apply. As you are more connected with your international students, we would expect you will have a process to assess hardship needs.

We would like to apply but we don't have the resource available to allocate funding. What can we do?

We understand that providers are under significant pressure at the moment. If you don't think you have the resource available to administer the funds then you can work in collaboration with other organisations, such as multicultural ethnic councils, to help deliver support.

International students**Why do we need to assist international students?**

International students are an important and valued part of our communities with many having lived and studied here for some time.

While the COVID-19 crisis has had a huge disruption to everyone's lives, it must have been doubly difficult for those students who are far from their homes and families. The hardship they are facing is because of changes to their personal circumstances due to the global impacts of COVID-19. We need to support them during these difficult times. This is the right thing to do.

How many students do you think will apply?

We don't currently have any estimates, but there are anecdotal stories of international students at different levels of study experiencing hardship. The aim of this fund is to support as many international students as possible. If there is hardship, then they will not be denied while the fund is available.

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