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A course offer, a visa application and an eVisa can describe the same student’s plans without granting the same permissions. For Nepali families preparing for study in New Zealand, that distinction matters more than a reassuring headline about work hours or extra time after graduation. The offer describes the course. The application asks for permission. The granted visa sets the conditions the student must follow.

Immigration New Zealand’s changes effective from 27 October 2026 affect research-master’s work rights, assessment of English ability, processing where education-provider compliance is in

question and some post-course expiry dates. They are not a single new entitlement for every international student. Before adjusting a household budget or accepting another shift, establish which change applies to the application or visa in front of you.

Four changes, different consequences

The announcement removes unlimited in-study work rights for master’s-by-research students, aligning master’s conditions at 25 hours a week and full-time during eligible holidays. It expressly identifies English ability as a factor in assessing whether a student can meet visa conditions. It also broadens circumstances in which processing can be formally suspended, including while an education provider’s non-compliance is being determined.

The fourth change extends the applicable post-course expiry period from one month to two. The separate 31 March expiry rule remains unchanged. That distinction rules out the simplest—but misleading—reading: that everyone receives an extra month on their existing visa.

First establish which student you are

For someone applying now for a research-master’s student visa, the updated official work-rights guidance specifically identifies new applicants as no longer eligible for unlimited work. Doctoral students retain different provisions. A research degree and a

doctorate should not be treated as interchangeable simply because both involve substantial independent study.

For someone already holding a visa, start with the work conditions in the eVisa or visa letter. Do not assume that a news announcement has rewritten them. Holiday and post-course work also depend on the conditions attached to the visa; the existence of spare time is not itself permission to work. International students cannot use self-employment as a way around restrictions.

For an application already awaiting a decision, there is an important limit to what this article can establish. The official material checked on 28 October did not settle the precise transitional treatment of every pending case. Neither automatic exemption nor automatic retrospective application should be assumed. Seek case-specific clarification from Immigration New Zealand or an appropriately authorised immigration adviser before making a consequential decision.

A useful first step is to write one sentence at the top of your planning notes: “I already hold a visa”, “I am awaiting a decision” or “I am preparing an application”. Put the relevant application or visa reference beside it. This is an organising tool, not a legal test, but it prevents advice meant for one group from being silently applied to another.

Do not turn work permission into a funding plan

The practical question is not only how many hours a student may work. It is whether the study plan remains workable when paid work is limited, unavailable or incompatible with the course timetable. A legal maximum is not a job offer. Families comparing courses should separate confirmed funding from hoped-for earnings rather than adding the largest permitted number of shifts to every week of a budget.

INZ’s student funding requirements specify NZ$20,000 a year for tertiary living costs, or NZ$1,667 a month for study shorter than a year. Outward travel is additional. These are immigration evidence requirements, not a personalised estimate of what a particular household will spend. Funds must be genuinely available; an impressive account balance without a credible explanation is not a substitute for a coherent funding story.

For a family contributing from Nepal, make a simple private worksheet with separate lines for tuition, living expenses, outward travel and an emergency reserve. Record which amounts are already available, which depend on another person and which are merely expectations. Keep exchange-rate assumptions dated. The purpose is not to produce a polished document for social media, but to expose a gap before a deposit or travel decision makes it expensive.

English ability belongs in the evidence, not just the sales pitch

The English-language change should not be inflated into an invented universal test score. INZ’s genuine-intentions guidance explains the broader assessment and relevant evidence, including English test results or verification of current tertiary study. A provider’s admission decision and an immigration decision serve different purposes.

The same guidance considers matters such as study plans, academic progress, attendance and credible financial support. It also says honest ambitions to apply for another visa after study are not viewed negatively. The answer is truthful disclosure, not a rehearsed story that conceals the student’s actual intentions.

Applicants can usefully review their own explanation aloud: why this course, why this provider, and how does it fit their previous study or intended work? If an answer only repeats a brochure, identify what is missing. Where documents contradict one another, resolve the discrepancy honestly rather than asking someone to produce a more convenient version. No adviser’s fluency can make inconsistent facts reliable.

Ask a more precise question about the provider

A question such as “Is this college good?” mixes teaching quality, suitability, admission, refund terms and immigration processing into one vague judgment. Break it apart. Ask for the exact legal name of the provider, the qualification, the course dates and the written terms that apply if the intended start becomes impossible. Keep the offer and relevant correspondence together.

The expanded processing power is not evidence that any named institution is under investigation. Avoid passing on a rumour as a warning about a particular college. If your application encounters a provider-related delay, establish what INZ has actually communicated about your case before deciding that a classmate’s experience explains yours. This article makes no finding about any education provider.

Financial support also requires careful reading of nationality and location conditions. The Fee Paying Student Visa guidance limits sponsorship or financial undertakings for Nepali citizens applying from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal or Bhutan to immediate family: a partner, parents, siblings, grandparents or parents-in-law. Do not assume that location-specific rule applies identically to Nepalis applying elsewhere. Match the guidance to both citizenship and application location.

Put the expiry date on the calendar—not the headline

Extra time after a course is useful only when it is actually granted. INZ's conditions guidance explains that a variation of conditions cannot extend a visa's expiry date; a longer stay requires a new visa. Changes take effect after approval and an updated eVisa. The page also explains that older holders with 20-hour work conditions must apply to obtain 25-hour conditions rather than simply working the extra hours.

Keep separate calendar entries for the course end, visa expiry and any application preparation deadline. Do not use the first as a proxy for the second. Nor should additional time in New Zealand be treated as an automatic post-study work entitlement. The next immigration step needs its own eligibility check.

For prospective students, INZ's September application advice recommends applying at least three months before the course starts and specifically highlights higher application volumes from Nepal. Booking travel does not secure priority for a late application. A family's planning calendar should therefore begin with a complete application, not a discounted flight.

Return to those three documents: the offer, the application and the eVisa. Give each a different job. The first helps you judge the education being purchased; the second must explain an honest, supportable plan; the third determines what has actually been

permitted. Keep a dated note of any unresolved question and obtain an answer before acting on it. For a family committing savings across borders, the most useful response to a rule change is not panic or celebration. It is a careful comparison between a public announcement and a particular student’s position. Read the permission, not just the promise.

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