



Tertiary Provider and International Bulletin

Friday 3 September 2021

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Today's bulletin focusses on queries we have received following our updated guidance. Please do continue to send your questions through.

COVID-19 Alert Level Changes

Auckland region remains in Alert Level 4 until at least Monday 13 September. The Northland region and all other regions south of the Auckland regional boundary are at Level 3 until at least Wednesday 8 September, with review on Monday 6 September.

Overarching Principles – Alert Level 3

The detailed tertiary guidelines have been developed in accordance with key overarching principles at each Alert Level. At Alert Level 3, all guidance needs to be read and actioned with the following key principles in mind:

- All teaching and other activities should be done remotely, wherever possible.
- Where it is not possible to deliver teaching online, some facilities may remain open (e.g., for research, post-graduate teaching, lab/workshops, or noho-based delivery).
- Any class, workshop, etc. that cannot be delivered online and remains open must be limited to 10 people or less. Each such group is considered a 'bubble' and must not interact with any other student/staff bubbles of 10. Contact tracing information that identifies which student/staff bubbles have met, and where and when they have met must be collected.
- For any on-site activities, appropriate infection control measures, such as physical distancing and face coverings, along with Worksafe requirements must be met at all times.



Collecting staff vaccination information

We have had some follow-up queries about our guidance on what providers should consider in collecting staff vaccination information.

Our 29 August [bulletin](#) noted that Ministry of Health advice is for everyone to get vaccinated. However, the current Health Orders do not provide a legal basis for TEOs to require staff members to be vaccinated.

TEOs' policies and practices for employees and other workers need to be consistent with employment agreements and employment law, the Health and Safety at Work Act, and the Privacy Act. While government agencies can offer guidance, any employment situation must be assessed case by case. TEOs may need to seek their own legal advice in more complex cases.

MBIE has useful guidance for employees and workers on vaccines and the workplace [here](#).

Worksafe has guidance on assessing if specific roles need to be done by vaccinated workers, [here](#).

The Privacy Commissioner's advice on the Privacy Act can be found [here](#). Personal information about vaccine status must be protected and cannot be shared without the staff member's consent. Collecting, storing, and sharing information about people's vaccination status must be done in accordance with the Privacy Act.

Requiring at-risk staff to come on site

At Alert Level 3, the detailed tertiary guidelines state that "at-risk and vulnerable people (or those caring for/living with vulnerable people) should not be asked to carry out any on-site activities unless they are fully vaccinated."

Tertiary providers should therefore allow unvaccinated, at-risk people (or those caring for/living with vulnerable people) to work remotely, as they have been during Alert Level 4. Providers should only require at-risk employees to work on site if that employee is fully vaccinated (two weeks following their second dose).

If unvaccinated at-risk employees wish to work on site, the Health Orders do not prohibit this. However, employers must assess whether this is consistent with their Health and Safety at Work Act obligations.

DHBs requiring students on practicum placement to be vaccinated (e.g., nursing, medicine, and pharmacy students)

Some providers and students have queried whether students on a practicum can be required by a placement provider to be vaccinated, e.g., can a DHB require nursing students on placement to be vaccinated?

The current Health Orders do not require vaccinations for most roles. Vaccination requirements in the Health Orders currently focus on border, port and MIQ workers.

DHBs and other organisations hosting students for practicum placements or internships have responsibilities for these students under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. These overlap with the responsibilities that TEOs have for those students (both under that Act and the Code of Practice). Where parties have overlapping responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act, they are [obliged to consult and cooperate](#) with each other. We recommend that TEOs contact the relevant workplaces and professional bodies to determine a collective response. Appropriate responses will need to be worked out on a case-by-case basis.



MBIE has also provided guidance on this in their *Vaccines and the workplace* webpage here: [Vaccines and the workplace » Employment New Zealand](#). (This also discusses how vaccination information should be collected and stored under the Privacy Act).

Removing the 2-hour time limit for classes/workshops at Alert Level 3

We have removed the 2-hour time limit for classes at Alert Level 3. This change makes the Alert Level 3 guidelines more consistent with the rules for schooling and other essential services that operate at Alert Level 3.

While the risk of transmission of COVID-19 increases with cumulative exposure time, Health advice is that the other public health mitigations in place are appropriate – including operating in a bubble of 10, ensuring physical distancing of 1m, contact tracing, classes taking place in a well-ventilated area, and shared equipment are sanitised between use. On this basis Health supports removing this time limit.

Clarifying when on-campus libraries and computer labs can open

We have received queries about what circumstances on-campus libraries and computer labs can open at Alert Level 3.

At Alert Level 3, the detailed tertiary guidelines only allow for libraries and computer labs to open where they are “essential to education delivery”. There is a high bar for an activity to be considered essential to education delivery. Access to libraries or computer labs is only allowed when the delivery of education cannot occur remotely; for example, if a computer science lecturer can only undertake remote teaching from a computer lab with specialist devices. Any on-site delivery at Alert Level 3 must also be limited to 10 people or less (including tutor).

The [detailed tertiary guidelines](#) have been updated to emphasise the limited scenarios in which libraries and computer labs should open at Alert Level 3.

Contact tracing systems at TEO facilities

TEOs should now have contact tracing systems in place for all staff and students onsite. TEOs should display the official NZ COVID Tracer QR code posters in a prominent place at or near main entrances. It is important to ensure (to the greatest extent practicable) that each person entering the facility scans the QR code or provides details to enable contact tracing.

Reinstating Fees Free entitlement for learners affected by COVID-19

Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) should inform Fees Free eligible learners who used their entitlement for study or training in 2021 that there is a process to reinstate Fees Free entitlements in certain circumstances. Some or all of learners’ Fees Free entitlement may be reinstated if they are an eligible learner and:

- they withdrew from study or training due to the impact of COVID-19 or
- their study or training was adversely affected due to the impact of COVID-19.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) will reinstate the entitlements of learners who withdrew between 17 August to 31 December 2021, without learners needing to appeal. Learners’ entitlements will be reinstated in the next few months.

For withdrawals outside this period, or where learners didn’t withdraw, but their studies were adversely affected, learners can appeal their entitlement use. Learners can do so by entering their NSN on the [Fees Free website homepage](#) and completing the COVID -19 Entitlement Appeals form on the results page. For more details, visit the [TEC website](#).

COVID-19: locations of interest and the basics

Locations of interest



With a high number of locations of interest, we ask that providers continue to be diligent and contact their stakeholders directly, as they have been doing, if they become a location of interest.

COVID-19 basics

The Ministry of Health continues to remind everyone to please remain vigilant and stick to the basics:

- If you're sick, stay home. Do not go to work or school. Do not socialise.
- If you have cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms, call your doctor or Healthline on 0800 358 5453 and get advice about getting tested.
- If you have been told to self-isolate, you legally must do so immediately.
- In an emergency always call [111](https://111.govt.nz/).

Things change quickly so stay up to date by following the links below:

For health advice, please refer to the Ministry of Health's website.

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

Please continue to check the **Ministry of Health's locations of interest page** to find out if you might have been exposed to COVID-19 [COVID-19: Contact tracing locations of interest | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

For cross-agency information about COVID-19, including what support is available, health advice, and travel restrictions visit the All-of-Government website <https://www.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/>

Stress counselling and support is available. Friends and family members can help you to cope. You can also get help and information from, your education provider, your GP or local community health centre, Youthline at [0800 376 633](tel:0800376633) or www.youthline.co.nz or by calling or texting [1737](tel:1737)

For resources in Te Reo Māori, visit <https://covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/translations/te-reo-maori/>

For information to support Pacific communities, visit <https://www.facebook.com/MinistryforPacificPeoples/>

For resources in [sign language and easy read formats](#).

Free counselling/Psychology Service in response to COVID-19 for Migrants and Former Refugees: [Diversity Counselling New Zealand | DCNZ Hamilton | Contact Us for help](#)

To keep updated on travel restrictions and visa information visit <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/coronavirus-update-inz-response>

Advice for international students in NZ <https://naumainz.studyinnewzealand.govt.nz/help-and-advice/healthcare/the-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know>

For additional advice for tertiary providers/whare wānanga visit the Ministry of Education website <http://www.education.govt.nz/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-3/>

