

Education Report: Broadening Eligibility Criteria for Teacher Border Exceptions

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Cc:	Border Ministers		
Date:	7 December 2021	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1278958

Purpose of Report

Minister of Education recommends you:

- **Agree** to expand the eligibility criteria for the current class workforce border exception.
- **Note** that an increase above the current 300 places is not being requested at this time.

Recommended Actions:

Border Ministers

- a. **agree** to broadening the eligibility criteria to allow all early learning services, state and state-integrated schools, and kura, to apply for a Teacher Workforce Border Exception;

Agree / Disagree

- b. **agree** to remove the current cap of two applications per early learning service, school, and kura;

Agree / Disagree

- c. **agree** that all subject teachers be considered eligible;

Agree / Disagree

- d. **agree** that these changes become effective as soon as communications are ready

Agree / Disagree

Proactive release

- e. **agree** that this briefing is proactively released with appropriate withholdings under the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree



Anna Welanyk

**Hautū – Te Puna Ohumahi Mātauranga |
Education Workforce**

8/12/2021

Border Exceptions Ministerial Group

Hon Kris Faafoi
Minister of Immigration

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Hon Chris Hipkins
**Minister for
COVID-19 Response**

.... / /

Hon Megan Woods
Minister of Research, Science and Innovation

.... / /

Hon Carmel Sepuloni
**Minister of Social Development
and Employment**

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Hon Stuart Nash
**Minister for Economic and Regional Development
Development**

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Hon Willie Jackson
Minister for Māori

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Background

1. On 1 June 2021, Joint Border Ministers considered a paper that included two class exceptions for the education sector: 'Teacher workforce (up to 300 teachers) and family reunification for teachers on temporary visas'. Cabinet confirmed these decisions on 8 June 2021 (MBIE briefing 2021-3654 refers).
2. Online applications for the employer-led border exceptions launched on 6 October 2021. To date, uptake of the employer-led exception for teachers has been lower than expected, with 103 applications received and 87 teachers given preliminary approval by the Ministry of Education, as of 7 December. These teachers are in the process of securing their relevant visas and MIQ places. Of these preliminary approvals, 52 (60%) have come from the ECE sector.
3. The exception is currently targeted towards those schools or early learning centres with the greatest need for additional teachers, namely the lowest decile schools/kura/centres, those schools/kura that are regarded as "hard-to-staff", or those school or kura looking to recruit for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) roles.
4. All applicants applying for the scheme must demonstrate that they have met a labour market test, namely that they have been unable to recruit a suitable domestic teacher.
5. We have conducted a short review of how the exception is operating, including seeking input from sector groups. Both early learning and school sector representatives agreed that giving priority initially to those employers with the greatest recruitment need was the correct approach. There was a consensus from those we interviewed that the current eligibility criteria should now be broadened to allow other schools and centres to apply. This feedback is echoed by early learning services, schools, and kura who have expressed an interest, but are currently ineligible.
6. Our recommendation is to broaden eligibility criteria to increase the number of applications before the cut-off date by:
 - allowing all early learning services, state and state-integrated schools, and kura to apply;
 - removing the cap of two applications per service/school; and
 - allowing all subject teachers, including STEM, to be eligible
7. Enacting these changes will allow more schools, kura and centres to use the border exception as one of their recruitment tools to meet the demand for teachers in 2022, should they require it. We believe this change will be particularly helpful for the ECE sector who have told us that they continue to struggle to recruit sufficient qualified teachers from within New Zealand.
8. All other existing requirements will remain in place, including the need for any border exception teacher to satisfy New Zealand teaching registration and certification requirements, be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and that all teacher applicants must have been overseas before borders closed on 19 March 2020. Evidence of a local labour market test will also continue to be required.

Next Steps

9. The Ministry would look to implement these changes as soon as possible, recognising that Border settings are likely to change again in the first half of next year. We would work with the Minister of Education's office to agree an effective date – likely, mid-January.
10. If Border Ministers agree to these recommendations, the Minister of Immigration will be asked to provide direction to officials to implement the required consequential changes to the Immigration Instruction.
11. The Minister of Education will provide a retrospective oral update to Cabinet as soon as practicable in 2022.
12. The Ministry will continue to monitor the uptake of the border exception and wider immigration/border settings and advise on any further changes necessary. The Minister will also provide further advice on next steps in advance of the expiration of the current exception in June 2022.