

Safety Information for International Students

Provided by Iwi & Community Partnerships



NEW ZEALAND
POLICE
Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa

International Student Safety

Purpose

The purpose of this information is to provide accurate, consistent and confidence-building safety information to international students and their families before arrival in New Zealand.

From a New Zealand Police perspective, early and clear safety messaging helps:

- ▶ Prevent harm through awareness and education
- ▶ Reduce anxiety and misinformation about policing and law enforcement
- ▶ Encourage early seeking of support services and Police reporting when issues occur
- ▶ Support positive, respectful engagement between students, communities and Police

New Zealand Police recognise international students as an important and valued part of New Zealand communities. This information reinforces that Police are here to keep people safe, support victims, and work in partnership with education providers, not to penalise students for seeking help and reporting incidents.

Education agents play a critical role in setting realistic expectations, correcting misinformation, and ensuring students are well prepared before travel. The information should be introduced early and reinforced throughout the counselling, offer acceptance and pre-departure stages.

New Zealand Police's Commitment to International Student Safety

International students are welcome in New Zealand. Police are here to help keep students safe, to listen, and to support them as members of the community. Early, honest conversations about safety strengthen trust and contribute to positive study experiences.

International students are expected to follow New Zealand laws, just like everyone else. At the same time, students are protected by New Zealand law and are entitled to fair, respectful and non-discriminatory treatment. Police interactions are guided by professionalism, transparency and accountability.

Contacting New Zealand Police

Reporting a crime to New Zealand Police will not affect your visa status, Police encourage you to report all crimes.

Call 111 **in an emergency** – it is free from all phones. When you call 111 you will be asked which emergency service you want: Police, Fire or Ambulance. Call 111 and ask for Police when:

- ▶ people are injured or in danger; or
- ▶ there is a serious, immediate, or imminent risk to life or property; or
- ▶ a crime is being or has just been committed and the offenders are still at the scene or have just left.

Call 105 **in a non-emergency** to report situations that don't require immediate Police or Emergency Services' attendance. 105 is a nationwide, 24-hour per day, 7 days per week service that's available via phone and online.

You can use 105.police.govt.nz to report:

- ▶ theft in a public place or a car
- ▶ intentional property damage
- ▶ shoplifting
- ▶ lost property

If you need to talk to us about something else then you can call 105.

Regardless of the language you speak, please call 111 in an emergency.

If it is hard for you to talk to Police because of language, you can get help by:

- ▶ telling the person you're speaking to which language you speak
- ▶ talking to one of our bilingual communications staff
- ▶ using a friend or family member as your interpreter for talking to Police.

Ethnic Liaison Officers

New Zealand Police have dedicated Ethnic Liaison Officers located across the country who work to build trust, improve understanding and support people from migrant, refugee and international communities, including international students.

These officers help explain New Zealand laws and policing processes, provide culturally informed support, and can assist students or families who feel unsure about engaging with Police. Ethnic Liaison Officers are a trusted point of contact and work closely with education providers and community organisations to keep people safe and informed.

Students or agents can find local Ethnic Liaison Officer contact information here:

[New Zealand Police – Ethnic Liaison Officers](#)

Key Outcomes for Students and Families

By receiving this information:

- Students arrive better prepared, informed and confident
- Parents have reassurance about safety and support mechanisms
- Misunderstandings and misinformation are reduced
- Students are more likely to engage early with orientation and support services

International Student Safety – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is New Zealand safe for international students?

Yes. New Zealand is widely recognised as a safe, stable and welcoming country with low levels of violent crime. International students study across New Zealand in cities and regional areas with strong community and education-provider support.

As with any country, students are encouraged to take common-sense precautions, such as securing personal belongings, being aware of their surroundings, and using safe transport options, especially at night.

2. Are there any laws students should be especially aware of?

Yes. Students should be aware of and comply with:

- ▶ **Alcohol laws** (legal drinking age is 18; restrictions on supply to minors). Acceptable identification includes a valid NZ Driver's license, a foreign passport or an 18+ card. You cannot use foreign driver's licenses.
- ▶ **Drug laws** (illegal drugs are strictly prohibited)
- ▶ **Driving laws** (drive on the left; driver licence rules apply)
- ▶ **Public behaviour laws** (respectful conduct, no disorderly behaviour)
- ▶ **Visa conditions** (study, attendance and work limits)

Following the law is an essential part of maintaining student wellbeing and visa compliance.

3. What cultural or social norms should students understand to stay safe?

Students should be aware of and comply with:

- ▶ Respectful, non-confrontational communication
- ▶ Equality and inclusion, regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability.
- ▶ Consent and personal space
- ▶ Respect for authority, including staff and police. You cannot bribe Police in New Zealand.

4. What should students know about local hazards (e.g. natural disasters)?

New Zealand experiences natural hazards such as earthquakes, severe weather and coastal risks. These are actively managed through public education and emergency planning.

Students will receive information from:

- ▶ Education providers (during orientation) on what to do when there is a fire, emergency, earthquake or other situation where evacuation is required.
- ▶ Official emergency channels and apps. Students with a New Zealand phone number will receive emergency alerts automatically, if they are in an area that is affected by severe weather or other local/national emergency.
- ▶ Civil Defence and local authorities

5. What should students know about road safety?

Safety on our roads is essential. If you do not know how to drive, you should learn first before driving on New Zealand roads to keep yourself and others safe. If you're from overseas, driving in New Zealand might be a bit different than what you're used to.

- ▶ There is information available to students about driving in New Zealand in multiple languages: [Driving in New Zealand booklet | NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi](#)
- ▶ we drive on the left-hand side of the road
- ▶ Seatbelts are mandatory for all passengers
- ▶ To drive in New Zealand, you must have a current and valid overseas driver licence or international driving permit.
 - ▶ You can drive in New Zealand for 18 months on an overseas car licence, or 12 months on an overseas truck or motorcycle licence. After that, you'll need to get a New Zealand driver licence. Please see the New Zealand Transport Agency website for the details of licensing requirements: [Driving on New Zealand roads | NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi](#)

6. How can students protect themselves online from scams or fraud?

Students should:

- ▶ Protect personal information (passport, bank details, visas)
- ▶ Be cautious of unexpected calls, texts or emails
- ▶ Avoid clicking unknown or urgent links
- ▶ Verify requests claiming to be from “immigration”, “Police” or “banks”

Common scams include:

- ▶ Fake immigration or visa calls
- ▶ Phishing emails posing as banks or delivery services
- ▶ Online rental home/flat or marketplace scams
- ▶ Job offers that seem “too good to be true”

7. Who supports international students with their safety during study in NZ?

All international students are provided with multiple layers of guidance and support during their studies in New Zealand. Student wellbeing is a shared responsibility supported by

national standards such as the Code of Pastoral Care. International students should feel comfortable and confident in approaching any of the following support providers:

- ▶ Education providers (international student services, welfare and wellbeing officers)
- ▶ Campus Security
- ▶ New Zealand Police
- ▶ Community support and health services, including mental health providers

Support provided after reporting a crime:

- ▶ Police Victim Support
- ▶ Education provider welfare support services. Your education provider can help with safety planning, referrals and information
- ▶ Community advocacy organisations, including counselling services in various languages

8. What should a student expect when interacting with New Zealand Police and how are they accessible for international students?

New Zealand Police is known to provide world-class policing services and upholds high standards of integrity. Students can expect Police:

- ▶ to carry official Police identification at all times
- ▶ professional, respectful and calm
- ▶ will not accept cash, money or bribes of any kind
- ▶ clearly explain the process and your rights in your preferred language if required

Police services are accessible to everyone in New Zealand

- ▶ interpreting services can be arranged both on the phone and in-person if required
- ▶ written and translated resources are available
- ▶ students can bring a support person if appropriate
- ▶ every person that interacts with New Zealand Police staff is treated with the same respect, empathy and professional standards.

9. Which city in NZ is the safest? Which is the least safe?

New Zealand is consistently recognised as a generally safe country overall, and international students live and study successfully across all major cities and regions. There is no official ranking of New Zealand cities by safety, and it is not accurate to describe any city as “unsafe” for students.

Levels of safety in New Zealand are influenced more by individual behaviour, awareness and lifestyle choices than by location. All main student destinations—such as Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Hamilton have:

- ▶ Established international student communities
- ▶ Strong partnerships between education providers, local councils and Police
- ▶ Dedicated student support, wellbeing and safety services

10. What protections exist against racial discrimination or harassment?

New Zealand has strong legal protections against racial discrimination, harassment and hate-motivated behaviour, and these laws apply equally to international students. New Zealand Police take reports of racial harassment and hate-motivated behaviour seriously, regardless of whether the incident is criminal or non-criminal.

Students are encouraged to report incidents, even if they are unsure whether the behaviour is “serious enough”. Early reporting helps Police identify patterns and prevent escalation. This may include:

- ▶ Verbal or physical abuse, threats or intimidation
- ▶ Racial slurs or offensive comments
- ▶ Harassment in class, accommodation, on the street or online
- ▶ Being treated unfairly because of your race, nationality, religion or ethnicity

11. What should students do if stopped or questioned by Police?

Students should:

- ▶ Remain calm and respectful
- ▶ Follow instructions
- ▶ Answer basic questions honestly
- ▶ Ask why they are being spoken to
- ▶ Request an interpreter if required
- ▶ Ask to contact a trusted person if necessary

12. Are New Zealand Police generally armed?

No. New Zealand Police are generally not routinely armed. Firearms/guns are carried only in specific situations where there is an identified risk to public or officer safety. This approach reflects New Zealand’s focus on low-force, community-based policing.

13. What official NZ Police resources are available?

New Zealand Police have information available in 13 different languages and can be accessed on our official website: [New Zealand Police | Nga Pirihimana O Aotearoa](#).

A general handbook is also available in 9 languages: [Be Safe, Feel Safe Booklet | New Zealand Police](#) and will be later updated with further languages in 2026.

New Zealand takes international student safety seriously. Clear laws, strong institutions, accessible Police services and comprehensive support systems work together to ensure students are safe, respected and supported throughout their study journey.