

New Zealand Employment-based Residence Pathways For Engineers



Pathways to New Zealand®

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Employment-based Residence Pathways

There have been many changes over the past few years regarding pathways to New Zealand residence and these pathways continue to change and be fine-tuned on a regular basis.

There are two employment-based residence pathways available for engineers:

Skilled Migrant Category

6 points to be eligible for residence

Green List

Tier 1
(Straight to Residence)

Tier 2
(Eligible for residence after two years of work)

Only applicants who score 6 points under the SMC, or who have employment in, and the applicable credentials for, a Green List Tier 1 role, can apply straight for residence. All other applicants must work in particular qualifying employment roles, either to accrue the required additional SMC work experience points, or to become eligible to apply for residence under the Green List Tier 2 or Sector Agreement.



Applicable to all residence categories

To qualify for residence under any engineering-related pathway:

- Applicants must be in full-time employment (30+ hours/week) or have a valid job offer.
- Employment must be permanent or fixed-term (12+ months); some contract roles may also qualify.
- The role must meet at least the median payrate (currently \$33.56/hour, effective 18 August 2025) or the specified rate for the engineering role.
- For salaried roles with variable hours, INZ calculates hourly pay by dividing the annual salary by 52 weeks and the maximum weekly hours.
- Applicants must be under 56 years old, meet INZ's health and character requirements, and satisfy English language criteria.
- Partners and dependent children (under 25) can be included if they meet eligibility requirements.
- Applications are processed in 2 to 3 months, though complex cases may take longer.



Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) Residence

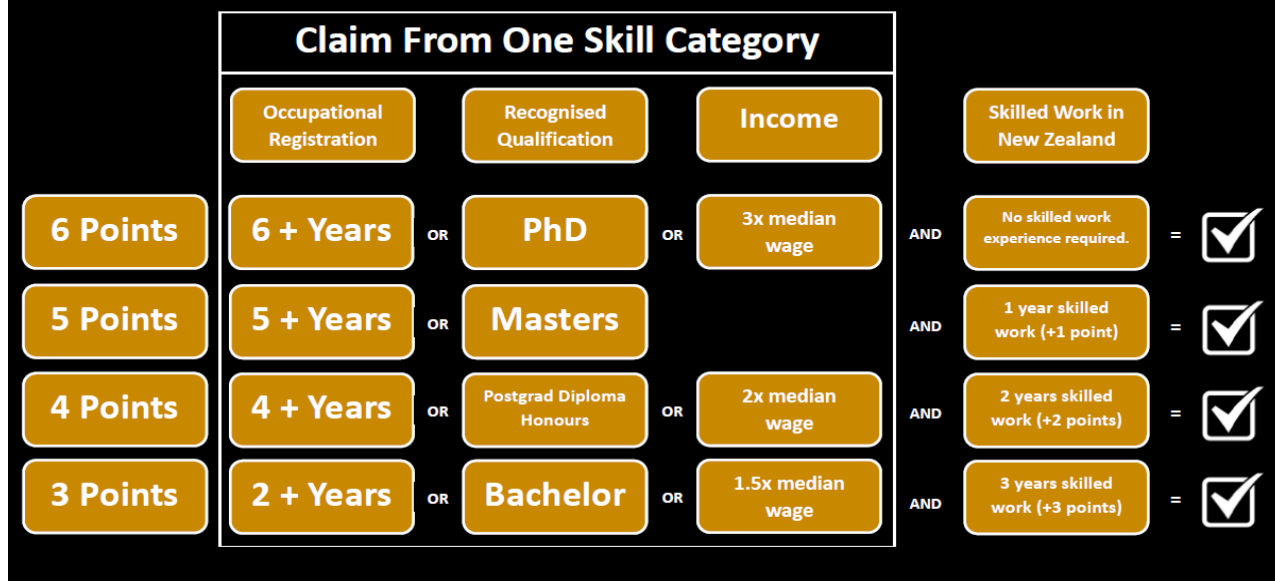
Skilled Migrant Category is the main job-based residence category and has:

- A 6-point system.
- Job requirements.
- The ability to immediately progress from making an Expression of Interest (EOI) to lodging the residence application.
- A Skilled Migrant Category Interim Visa (to maintain lawful status in New Zealand) while the residence is being processed.

Applicants must achieve **6 points** under the SMC points criteria to be eligible to make a residence application.

Applicants must first have (or have an offer of) skilled employment in NZ and can claim points under only ONE skill category (i.e., occupational registration or qualification or income) AND an additional 1 to 3 points for 1 to 3 years of skilled New Zealand work experience.

You need an acceptable job or job offer and 6 points for SMC



Skilled Employment

Applicants must have current skilled employment (or an offer of skilled employment) in New Zealand with an Immigration New Zealand (INZ) accredited employer.

Assessment of whether any employment is “skilled” is based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO 1.3 version) which associates skill levels with each occupation:

- ANZSCO skill level 1, 2 and 3 roles must be paid at or above the median wage rate
- ANZSCO skill level 4 or 5 occupations, or in an occupation for which there is no corresponding ANZSCO classification must be paid at or above 1.5 x median wage rate (currently \$50.34ph)

An applicant must also be qualified for their skilled employment role through having the required work experience, or qualifications, as detailed in the ANZSCO for their role e.g., skill level 1 roles normally require a degree or 5 years of relevant work experience, while

skill level 3 roles can require 3 years of experience or a diploma qualification. INZ will consider the main job tasks undertaken, rather than the job title, when assessing if any role is a substantial match to a particular ANZSCO role.

Evidence of registration or licensing is required for roles where this is mandatory in order to work in the role in NZ.

Occupational Registration

Engineers can claim up to 6 SMC points for occupational registration where required. CPEng (Chartered Professional Engineer) needs to be applied for via Engineering New Zealand.



Qualification

Points are awarded for qualifications recognised on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF):

- Bachelor 3 points
- Post Graduate Diploma 4 points
- Master 5 points
- PhD 6 points

Overseas qualifications not on the List of Qualifications Exempt from Assessment (LQEA) will require an acceptable International Qualifications Assessment (IQA) from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

Income

Income Thresholds:

- 3.0 x median wage 6 points
- 2.0 x median wage 4 points
- 1.5 x median wage 3 points

Wage must meet the current median at time of application.

Date range	Median wage
From 18 August 2025	\$33.56
28 February 2024 to 17 August 2025	\$31.61
27 February 2023 to 27 February 2024	\$29.66
24 October 2022 to 26 February 2023	\$27.76
19 July 2021 to 23 October 2022	\$27.00
24 February 2020 to 18 July 2021	\$25.50
26 November 2018 to 23 February 2020	\$25.00
15 January 2018 to 25 November 2018	\$24.29

Median wage rates (NZD/hr) from January 2018 to August 2025



Care is required in assessing the applicable hourly rate, especially for salaried positions.

The New Zealand median pay rates are published annually by Statistics NZ and are uploaded to INZ policy settings a few months later. Residence applications will be assessed against the policy settings in place at the time the application is lodged.

Skilled work experience

Engineers who do not qualify for residence through registration, qualification, or high income must claim points from skilled work experience in New Zealand:

Skilled NZ Work Experience (if not qualifying via registration, qualification, or income):

- 36 months in last 60 3 points
- 24 months in last 48 2 points
- 12 months in last 24 1 point

To qualify, the role must:

- Be paid at/above historical median wage (1–3 ANZSCO) or 1.5x median (levels 4–5)
- Be lawful and match ANZSCO engineering tasks
- Meet current median wage at time of application
- Contract roles may qualify. Professional advice is recommended.

SMC Application Process

The application process is undertaken online using a RealMe login on the INZ website, and as follows:

➤ Step 1 – Expression of Interest (EOI)

The EOI involves the completion of an applicant's personal information, and details of how they are claiming the required 6 points. There is no INZ fee for the EOI stage.

➤ Step 2 – Invitation to Apply (ITA) for Residence

If the information provided in the EOI confirms the claim of 6 SMC points, then an ITA will be immediately issued. The EOI selection and issuing of the ITA does not guarantee that the residence application will be approved.

➤ Step 3 – Lodgement of the residence application

The residence application must be lodged within 4 months of the date the ITA was issued. The residence application will require the online uploading of a range of personal documents together with those documents evidencing the claim of 6 x SMC points.

Skilled Migrant Interim Visa

An automated SMC Interim Visa enables applicants who have applied for SMC residence to remain lawfully in New Zealand, for up to 24 months, while their application is being assessed, and without the need to apply for further visas. The interim visa will include travel conditions so an applicant can travel in and out of New Zealand while waiting on their resident visa to be decided.

An interim visa will start on the day after the applicant's temporary visa expires, and the exact expiry date will depend on the date and outcome of the SMC application.



Green List – Tier 1 – Straight to residence

Engineers employed or offered employment in a Green List Tier 1 engineering role can apply directly for residence if:

- The employer is INZ-accredited.

- The role and applicant's qualifications, registration, and payrate exactly match the Green List requirements.

Green List – Tier 2 – Work to Residence

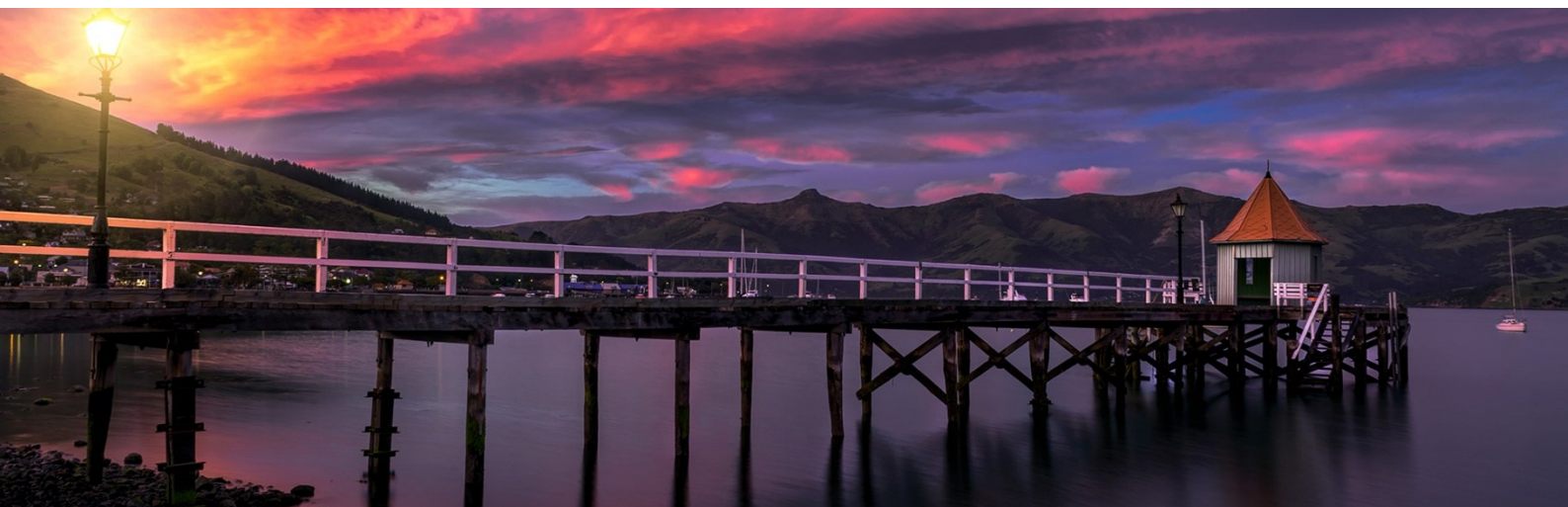
Engineers in certain trade-based roles—such as **Metal Fabricators, Fitters, Fitter-Welders, Pressure Welders, and Welders**—may qualify for residence after completing **24 months of employment** in New Zealand within the last 30 months.

- The roles stated here must earn at least **\$43.63/hour** (or **\$90,750/year** based on a 40-hour week).
- The qualifying 24-month period starts once all Green List requirements are met, including payrate.

To be eligible:

- Employment must be with an **INZ-accredited employer**.
- The role must match the **Green List Tier 2** criteria exactly, including qualifications, registration (if applicable), and the payrate.

Applicants who applied for their visa before **29 September 2023** may only need to meet the payrate at the time of residence application. We strongly recommend a full and proper review of circumstances by one of our friendly team.



New Zealand Residence

On approval of their residence application, irrespective of which job-based residence pathway is taken, the applicant (and any family included in the application) will be issued resident visas with travel conditions allowing multiple entries into New Zealand as a resident valid for 2 years.

During this 2-year period the main residence applicant must satisfy certain conditions in order to later be eligible for a Permanent Residence Visa (PRV). The normal requirement is for the main applicant to spend 184 days in each year, of the 2 years, in New Zealand immediately prior to applying for their PRV (there are other options). A PRV has no expiry date, and no conditions, and the applicant's family included in the original residence application can also be included in the PRV application.

Pathways to New Zealand®

Established in 1992, Pathways® is one of New Zealand's most experienced and trusted immigration firms.

Our team of 12 Licensed Immigration Advisers brings together over 150 years of combined immigration expertise. They include enrolled lawyers, previous Immigration New Zealand immigration officers, and experienced and passionate professionals from New Zealand, the UK, Philippines, China, India, and Malaysia. We speak 10 languages and provide expert, practical and proven guidance across all New Zealand visa categories with some 25,000+ people from over 125 countries having already relied on Pathways® to make New Zealand their home. Our advisers are recognised as industry-leading experts and with Offices in Wellington and Hamilton, and staff working remotely from Australia, UK and France, Pathways® has a true international focus.

At Pathways®, immigration is more than just about securing a visa – it's about understanding the full picture. We take into account the goals and circumstances of the person, their family, and their employer. Our approach is strategic and holistic, with a strong emphasis on pre-planning and futureproofing to ensure timely, cost-effective, and successful visa outcomes. This approach and these values are at the heart of everything we do at Pathways®.

We are proud to partner with Engineering New Zealand to support the immigration needs of both New Zealand employers and migrant engineers. With approximately 20 engineering roles currently listed on the Green List, many engineers are eligible for the Straight to Residence pathway. Our advisers are well-versed in engineering qualifications, professional registration, and the documentation required to meet Green List and other visa criteria.

Pathways® works closely with employers to make hiring smoother and “immigration-ready” by providing strategic advice to streamline recruitment processes, employer accreditation, and immigration compliance – and we are experts at problem solving!

Immigration decisions can be life-changing, and there is often a great deal at stake. Getting the right advice from the outset is critical to achieving stress-free, appropriate, and successful immigration outcomes. Through our partnership with Engineering New Zealand, Pathways® is committed to supporting the engineering sector to meet its' ongoing and future migrant workforce requirements.

Disclaimer

The above information provides a general overview and understanding of current New Zealand job-based residence pathways. The New Zealand immigration policies which inform this overview are detailed and comprehensive, and intending residence applicants should not rely solely on this information. Each applicant's personal circumstances, background and expectations are unique to them, and it is important that Pathways® has a full understanding of these matters in assessing an applicant's eligibility and suitability for any immigration application before proceeding. Please contact one of Pathways® friendly and experienced licensed immigration advisers today for a free initial assessment of your situation.

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