



NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

International student fees: What are we paying for?

Education providers need to deliver on quality, otherwise reimburse fees.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, international students are not receiving the value of education they paid for.

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NZISA strongly urges all tertiary institutions and education providers to implement fee reimbursements to current international students for at least the first half of the 2020 academic year. If the lockdown period extends further into the academic year, institutions and education providers should implement fee reductions and continue to grant reimbursements.

On 23rd March 2020, the New Zealand Government announced the transition to Alert Level 4 in response to the rising threat of COVID-19. As a result, all students are expected to transition to online study while the country remains in lockdown. Education providers are still scrambling to ensure they are ready and prepared to deliver teaching online. Despite this, no announcements have been made by institutions to grant fee reductions for international students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level in reflection of this change. Refunds are only granted for international students withdrawing from or deferring their course by a certain date.

Currently, institutions are not reimbursing fees for the first half of the academic year. This disregards the reduced quality of teaching and the lack of access to physical services as well

as facilities covered by these fees. Moreover, students are unable to complete their practical learning requirements, such as placements and lab work. Students are also not receiving the overall experience of being on campus, interacting with professors and other fellow students, and forging a sense of community. In the past, institutions have allocated grants for international students in China affected by the travel ban. These grants acknowledge the difficulties and challenges faced by international students who have transitioned to learning remotely. Therefore, institutions and education providers should continue to acknowledge the challenges of learning remotely by reimbursing international students' fees as a response.

The value of the education international students are currently receiving is disproportionate to the cost they are paying to institutions. NZISA has heard troubling reports that some institutions are utilising lecture recordings from previous years. In addition, the use of commonly available online materials emphasises a large drop in quality of education standards. International students are paying to receive high quality, curated education; not an education taught through online sources available for free to everyone. It is exploitative to suggest that fees should not be reimbursed due to the unprecedented COVID-19 measures and this highlights the problematic recurring nature of institutions treating international students as cash cows. NZISA strongly recommends the following to tertiary institutions and education providers across Aotearoa:

1. Reimburse fees for the first half of the 2020 academic year; and

Institutions and education providers should, for the first half of 2020, reimburse at least half of international student fees. This reduction reflects the decrease in quality due to online and remote learning compared to in-person learning and teaching, inaccessibility to certain physical services and facilities on campus, and challenges that students are facing due to the transition.

2. Prepare for fee reductions and reimbursements in the second half of the 2020 academic year.

In the event that the New Zealand Government decides to maintain Alert Level 3 or 4 in response to COVID-19, institutions and education providers should ensure that fee reimbursements are further implemented for international students.

NZISA acknowledges and appreciates the New Zealand Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has affected every individual; however, we urge consideration and collective actions from institutions to address difficulties faced by international students. Above all, institutions and education providers should endeavour to ensure international students in New Zealand are assisted and supported during these uncertain times. These actions will preserve and cement New Zealand's reputation as one of the top international education providers in the world, and will further capture students' interest in studying in New Zealand.

Media contacts

Sabrina Alhady
National President
president@nzisa.co.nz

Ryan Wei
Public Relations Officer
publicrelations@nzisa.co.nz