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Draft product

Focus area & designer	Focus Area 5 - student experiences for international partners / Friederike Tegge (Rike)
Topic & priority #	Understand New Zealand Student Services - Priority 2
Topic proposal link	https://docs.google.com/document/d/1glomp7_1d7zlOgvD2o3I18Vuv53zxqzG/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=108683113707117084282&rtpof=true&sd=true
Project title:	Understand New Zealand Student Services
Category: (choose 1)	Partnerships / Customers & markets / Innovation / Intelligence / Leadership / Marketing / Operations / Strategy / Student experience
Topic (if applicable):	Agents
Difficulty level: (choose 1)	Beginner / Intermediate / Advanced
Duration: (choose 1)	Minutes: 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 OR 45 Hours: 1, 2 OR 4 Day: 1
Project card / In card summary:	Understanding New Zealand student services Learn what services are available to international students in New Zealand. Learn how you can support even service-shy students to seek out support when facing challenges in their studies, their work, their life and wellbeing.
In project summary:	Understanding New Zealand student services In New Zealand, there are many services available to international students to support them in their study, their life, their wellbeing, and their work. Many services are directly offered by or through the education providers. Support can also be found in the wider community. This project looks at the services available in New Zealand and how international students can access them. It also explores reasons why some international students find it difficult to make use of the provided support. It outlines ways in which agents can assist service-shy students in finding and engaging with the available support as well as ways in which those students can overcome such challenges themselves.

Header list -**Add****Summary****Point:****You will learn:**

- what support services are available to international students through education providers and in the community
- why some international students don't access the support services available to them
- how international students can best make use of the support services provided and how you can help them take that step

1. Introduction: Student support services in New Zealand

In New Zealand, there are many services available to international students to support them in their study, their life, their wellbeing, and their work. Many services are directly offered by or through the education providers that the students attend. Support can also be found in the wider community.



In this project, we will look at the wide range of services available to international students in New Zealand. We will also consider reasons why some international students find it difficult to access the provided support. We will outline ways in which these service-shy students can overcome such challenges. This project further explores how you – the education agents – can assist your students in finding and engaging with support services.

We then explain how students firstly at schools and secondly at tertiary institutions can find support. We will also provide a short overview of some valuable services available in the community and online. Finally, this project contains several case studies and learner testimonials based on students' real-life experiences, and links to useful resources for you and your students.

2. What support do international students require?

The New Zealand government is aware that studying – whether in school or tertiary education – is not just about academic learning but poses many other challenges for students as well. Education providers in New Zealand are therefore required to not only support students in their studies but also in other aspects of their lives. This required support is clearly laid out in the Education Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Students Code of Practice 2021. The

Education Code of Practice – “the Code” for short – sets out the requirements that education providers must meet for the wellbeing and safety of their learners ([NZQA](#)). For more about the Code of Practice, see our project “[Key Code of Practice considerations](#)”.

Areas where students might need help and can find support include the following (please click on each title to see a more detailed description). Below we will look at who to contact to find assistance in any of the areas in the list.

- **Academic support**

Both domestic and international students are likely to require and are entitled to academic support beyond the classroom, including additional help and training around study and test-taking skills, self-management skills (time management, goal setting etc.), critical thinking, academic writing, research, and more.

- **Additional learning needs**

Many students have additional learning needs and require support for example for dyslexia, visual impairment, autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, and more. Please see Section 4 of this project to learn more about the students’ and their guardians’ responsibility to disclose additional needs to the school before enrolment.

- **Enrolment matters**

One obvious area where students are likely to require support involves matters around enrolment, including course planning and advice, re-enrolment, withdrawals, academic holds and other matters.

- **Safety concerns**

Many students will seek help around safety concerns at some point in their studies, for example around emergencies, stolen or lost property, after-hours campus security, and more.

- **Transport**

Transport is of vital importance to students, and questions often concern bus passes, student discounts for public transport, and more.

- **International student support including visa matters**

International students require support not needed by domestic students, including amongst other things, assistance around visa renewals, insurance claims, cultural and social support.

- **English language support**

International students often require English language support. Many schools offer additional ESOL classes. Many tertiary institutions provide pre-sessional English classes, learning support services, language learning centres with self-access materials, language-buddy programmes, and more. Community services might also offer support in this area, for example by offering discussion groups.

- **Student technology support**

All students are likely to require help with educational technology, including accessing the institution’s Wifi, logging into the institution’s intranet, changing one’s password, dealing with the institution’s learning management software (LMS), submitting an assignment online, accessing software made available for free by the education provider, installing programmes, accessing online materials.

- **Health and wellbeing**

All students require and can expect support for their health and wellbeing, including for their general health, their sexual health, and for mental and emotional wellbeing (homesickness, test anxiety, depression, etc.). Education providers offer information about

how students can access health services and provide assistance if students find it challenging to access services on their own. Many tertiary providers offer their own basic medical centre and mental health service. All institutions provide self-access materials on topics around health and wellbeing, and many organise workshops, meditation classes, and more.

- **Career advice, employability skills development, and job search**

All students need and can expect advice and training around deciding on and preparing for their future career, including course choices, employability and soft skills training, exploring strengths and interests, finding an internship, volunteer position, or part-time job. Many institutions offer leadership and intercultural programmes and access to a career portal where students can manage their CV and learn more about becoming employable.

- **Accommodation**

Students can find assistance finding and changing their accommodation, resolving conflicts with accommodation providers, including homestay families and landlords.

- **Conflict resolution**

Students might require help resolving conflicts with classmates, teachers, and other people in their lives. Schools and tertiary institutions can assist in finding mutually acceptable solutions for interpersonal conflicts. Legal disputes can often also be resolved without going to court, and support can be found at: [Resolve a problem without going to court](#).

- **Student advocacy and legal advice**

For more serious conflicts and disputes in their academic as well as personal lives, students can find advice from advocacy groups and community advice services. Topics may include disputes with an education provider (unfair grades, incorrect fees, lack of promised services), an employer, or a landlord, breaches of information privacy, and financial problems.

- **Financial advice, help, and skills development**

Many young students are not yet fully skilled and confident in managing their finances. Many education providers offer financial advice and workshops (budgeting, saving, investing, dealing with debt). When finances are tight, some institutions provide hardship funds, more affordable fruit and vegetable markets, and more. Some student associations organise food “give-aways” like “Free Bread Friday”. Many community services, for example chaplaincies, offer a free lunch once per week.

- **LGBTQIA+ support**

Students who identify with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and sex characteristics can and should find support through their education providers. Various community services provide advice, support, and community for “rainbow students”.

- **Socialising and leisure-time activities**

All students, but especially international students, who arrive at a new school or tertiary institution have to build new relationships and friendships. Education providers offer a range of social clubs. Students can also get involved in the student association. Institutions often organise social events and excursions specifically for international students.

Community services provide a wide range of opportunities to socialise. For example, [Meetup](#) is a social media platform for hosting and organising social groups around common interests, from discussion groups debating hobbies, professional topics, or politics to sports and adventure meetups and more. Students who would like to explore the beautiful outdoors in New Zealand can benefit from tramping clubs, who will provide guidance around outdoor safety. Many cities and communities in New Zealand also offer opportunities for free or a low price. For example, some museums offer free entry, and

many cities organise seasonal events that are free to attend, such as fireworks and festivals.

- **Religion**

Students of different faiths can find support at their institution to practice their religion. Religious centres, churches, and centres of various faiths can be found in many cities in New Zealand.

- **Peer support and mentoring**

Many students feel more comfortable opening up to other students of a similar age or in a similar situation. Many education providers recognise this need and organise support from students for students, for example, through student buddy or mentoring programmes, language buddies, and campus guides.

- **Consular support**

International students might require consular assistance, for example to renew their passport or their national ID card. The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides [contact details for different embassies](#) in New Zealand. NauMai NZ gives advice on accessing consular support: [NauMai NZ – Help from your embassy, high commission, or consulate](#).

- **Childcare**

More mature international students often bring their children while studying in New Zealand. They can find different facilities at tertiary institutions such as baby change and (breast-)feeding rooms. Parents can also find a range of child care options in New Zealand, which include crèches and kindergartens. International students with small children are advised to arrange childcare early – ideally before they arrive in New Zealand – to secure a place for their child.

- **Other life skills**

Many education providers offer training in various other life skills via self-access materials and/or in-person workshops, for example around eating well, managing stress, making friends, overcoming anxiety, and other matters. Many community providers also cater to a wide range of needs.

While the kind of support in these areas might look slightly different at each individual institution or in different locations around the country, international students should be able to get help in any of these areas; they don't have to face challenges alone. However, some international students try to solve issues all by themselves, despite the many services available to them. In the next section we will look at several reasons why some international students might be reluctant to ask for assistance even in very challenging situations. We will also explore what students can do to make good use of the provided services and how agents can encourage them to reach out for help and find the right support.

3. What stops some international students from accessing available services?

Despite a wide range of services available in New Zealand, some international students try to “go it alone” and try to deal even with major challenges all by themselves. What might keep these service-shy students from seeking out and making use of the support on offer? Let's look at a short case study. Next, we will look at some of the main reasons. Please click on the title to open the full text. Click on “answer” – after you have thought of your own ideas to support Lawrence – to see what help the student found and where.

Case Study: Lawrence isn't getting the needed IELTS score

Lawrence is an international student from Hong Kong studying at a New Zealand university. He is facing challenges around a required IELTS result, and he feels increasingly isolated, anxious, and depressed.

Lawrence is enrolled in a pre-selection semester for a medical programme, which has granted him conditional enrolment with an overall IELTS score of 6. However, to be admitted to the full professional phase of the demanding programme, he needs to have an IELTS score of 7. Lawrence has re-attempted the test twice already, but each time he missed the needed score in the writing section. He is getting increasingly anxious that he won't be able to continue his studies.

Lawrence often feels depressed now. Every day he sits alone in the library, studying hard – both for his pre-selection courses and for the IELTS test. He is very busy, so he is not eating well. He also is no longer playing basketball, and he stopped going for his morning run through the park. He is no longer seeing his friends. They are not enrolled in the same programme, and they don't understand the demands of this medical degree.

Lately, Lawrence has also had problems sleeping. He often lies awake worrying. He feels ashamed that he hasn't been able to get the required IELTS score. It seems that all the other international students in his programme have passed their IELTS exam easily. He doesn't feel like he can tell his family of this challenge. They have invested so much money in his education! They want to be the proud parents of a doctor. How can he tell them that he might not be able to continue his studies due to one area in an English test?

A Kiwi friend, Alice, has told him that he should go and see a counsellor, but Lawrence thinks that's really embarrassing. He has always been a top student and feels that he should be able to handle this by himself. Lawrence starts to feel like all is lost and there is no way out of this dark place.

Back to you: What advice would you give Lawrence? What services are available to him in this difficult time? Think of services for study, health, and mental health. Think of friends and other people he trusts.

Answer: Lawrence reaches out to his education agent Hao. He trusts Hao, an older adult who is also from Hong Kong and who has always encouraged Lawrence to come to him with problems.

Hao encourages Lawrence to see a counsellor at the university's counselling service. The agent understands that this is a new idea for Lawrence, and he explains that seeing a counsellor is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, Lawrence has already paid for this service with his student fees. Hao encourages Lawrence to take a friend to the first appointment. Lawrence likes the idea and asks his friend Alice to come along for "moral support". Hao makes sure that Lawrence has actually followed through with this plan by checking in with him a week later.

The counsellor Pria meets with Lawrence several times. She helps him develop a plan on how to feel better. As a start, Pria helps Lawrence to get an extension on some of his course assignments. This way, he doesn't feel overburdened and can focus on the IELTS test before having to submit some of his assignments. She also shows him how to book an appointment

with Learning Support Services, where he gets help for some of his course work.

The counsellor doesn't only focus on the academic side of Lawrence's life, though. Together, they come up with a daily schedule for Lawrence that includes time for relaxation, sports, and hanging out with friends. Pria recommends a weekly meditation class that is offered for free on campus. They also work out a healthy diet for Lawrence. All of this helps his body and mind to feel better and to be more resilient. He starts to enjoy life again.

The counsellor asks him whether he himself has ideas on how to improve his situation. Lawrence realises that he really likes and trusts his tutor Michael in his course on academic skills and writing. He approaches Michael and asks for ideas to prepare for the IELTS test. The tutor is an expert in this area and provides helpful study materials. For example, he points Lawrence to [New Zealand IELTS Prepare](#), which offers many free (and also some paid) videos, practice tests, and other materials to get ready for his next attempt.

Lawrence gets the desired IELTS score. What is equally important, though: he has realised that he is not alone but that there are many people and services around him that are willing and happy to help. He has learnt that he shouldn't isolate himself but seek support from the community. He knows that he can start with someone familiar, someone he trusts – like his agent Hao, his friend Alice, and his tutor Michael. Lawrence has also learnt that he should take good care of his mind and body and always schedule time for relaxation, fun, and friends. Today, Lawrence helps other international students. As an international buddy, he supports first-semester students by showing them around campus and sharing his knowledge about studying and living in New Zealand.

3.1 Nine reasons why some international learners might be “service-shy”

While many international students seek support when they need it, some do not make use of the available services, even in challenging circumstances.



International students have to make many decisions while being far away from family.

Experts in the field of international education highlight nine reasons why some international learners might not reach out when they need help. Please click on each title to access more detailed information:

1. The students are unaware of the available services.

Some international students are unaware of the services available to them at their institution and in the community. Many support services are introduced to new arrivals

during orientation. However, some students do not understand the relevance of this welcome event and deliberately choose not to attend it in order to save money.

2. The students don't remember vital information about services.

Most international students will be informed about services in their first weeks in New Zealand, for example during orientation. However, some are understandably overwhelmed by the large amount of information presented in a foreign language at a time when they find themselves jetlagged in an unfamiliar environment. They might receive a large number of brochures and leaflets, but put them in the bottom drawer and forget about them.

3. Some students wait for help to come to them.

Some international students wait for help to come to them rather than to take active steps themselves to seek out support. This can be due to their cultural background: they might come from a high context culture (see "Cultural Info" below), where help is provided and not "demanded". This contrasts with New Zealand culture, where independence and self-reliance are valued and where "the squeaky wheel gets the oil". (Please see our project ["Understand New Zealand cultural values"](#) for further information.) Other students might not yet have enough life experience to navigate an "adult" world independently.

4. Some students feel ashamed when they need help.

Like Lawrence in the case study above, some students feel shame about perceived "failures" and "shortcomings". They are afraid that they will "lose face" if they ask for help. Challenges around mental and emotional health, especially, are still difficult areas for many students. They are happy to get help from a doctor for a broken leg, but they are reluctant to get support when dealing with anxiety or depression.

5. Some international students don't understand the benefits of the provided services.

Some international students don't understand what support services can do for them. Some are unfamiliar with such services in their home country and can't imagine how they can be beneficial. Others expect that the cultural difference between them and a New Zealand service provider will result in ineffective or culturally inappropriate advice and support.

6. Some students think that the language barrier will be too great.

Some students feel that their English is not good enough. They fear that they might not be able to explain their problem well and that they won't be able to understand the answers provided by the support staff.

7. Some students fear negative consequences when sharing personal struggles.

Some students fear negative consequences if they open up about personal struggles and perceived "weaknesses", especially around mental and emotional health. International students are often unaware of the strict laws in New Zealand around information privacy and confidentiality. Often, they don't know that a service provider cannot share a student's private information with their parents or teachers except in very few circumstances, such as an indication that the student might harm themselves or others.

8. Some students are afraid that they will disappoint their families.

Some students fear disappointing their families. Lawrence in the case study above is afraid to tell his parents that he hasn't received the needed IELTS score, especially as

they have invested so much in his education. He doesn't want to disappoint them.

Maybe he also doesn't want them to hear the bad news from the counsellor or another university staff member. As explained in point 7, students like Lawrence might be unaware that counsellors and other support staff cannot easily share their personal information with other people. They are also often unaware that seeking out support is usually the best way to solve a problem and get through a challenging situation – thus avoiding any expected disappointment.

9. Accessing and using services requires some skill.

Accessing and using services typically requires some life experience and sometimes technical or other skills. Making an appointment with a doctor seems an easy, routine task for most adults, but inexperienced students might find this too challenging. Hao, the education agent in the above case study, is aware that Lawrence might not follow through with the plan they discussed – maybe because he has changed his mind or because he finds it difficult to make an appointment. Hao checks in with Lawrence a week later to see whether he has followed the plan. He has also encouraged Lawrence to bring a trusted support person to have support in a potentially challenging situation.

Education providers in New Zealand also provide a lot of self-access materials on their website on a range of topics – from time management to academic writing, but accessing these materials takes technical and digital skills that some students have not yet acquired. Making effective use of these materials might require self-management skills such as goal setting and prioritising, and not all young students have yet developed the required level of maturity to be “their own life coach”.

Overall, not all international students have all the skills to immediately be independent and thrive in a culture where “the squeaky wheel gets the oil”. While New Zealanders value self-reliance and raise their children accordingly, other cultures emphasise different important aspects of life during adolescence, such as academic study. However, we should acknowledge that most students, whether domestic or international, find it challenging to become increasingly independent and face the demands of the adult world. Also, international students face an additional burden: on top of everything else, they must navigate a new culture and education system in a foreign language.

Cultural Info: Two cultural differences that can affect the communication of problems

High- versus low-context communication

Different national cultures tend to be on a continuum from high- to low-context communication. In a high-context culture, many important things are not explicitly said but must be inferred from a person's behaviour and from the context; people have to “read between the lines” to understand the full message. In low-context cultures, speakers state explicitly what they mean.

Students from high-context cultures might be reluctant to express their worries very explicitly. Instead, they might assume that certain things can be left unsaid but will still be understood – just like it would work at home. New Zealand, however, can, for the most

part, be seen more as a low-context culture. [The Cultural Atlas](#) writes:

“New Zealanders are relatively indirect communicators; they do their best not to create conflict and take careful measures to remain polite throughout discussion. This usually involves making hints that vaguely communicate their message without ‘rocking the boat’. Nevertheless, communication is not so indirect that one has to decipher it. New Zealanders tend to speak openly enough that the intention and meaning of their words are easily apparent.”

In New Zealand, students need to speak up when they need assistance, for example, when they don’t understand something in class or when they wish they could get an extension on their assignment.

High versus low power distance

Power distance describes how equally or unequally power is distributed in society, or how similar or different people are in terms of influence in society. In cultures that tend to have a high power distance, communication between superiors and subordinates tends to be more formal and one-sided. The professor, the teacher, the manager at work are high up in the hierarchy. They speak, come up with new ideas, criticise, and make decisions. Students and employees are lower in the hierarchy. They listen and accept criticism.

In low power cultures, superiors and subordinates are more equal. Professors, teachers, and managers are more accessible, and communication is more informal. Subordinates like students and employees can – but are also expected to – contribute new ideas, solutions, and criticism. If something is wrong, they need to speak up. The website [Hofstede Insights](#) writes about New Zealand:

“New Zealand scores very low on this dimension (22). Within organizations, hierarchy is established for convenience, superiors are always accessible and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise. Both managers and employees expect to be consulted and information is shared frequently. At the same time, communication is informal, direct and participative.”

Students in New Zealand can speak up when they are facing challenges and they can demand support. More importantly: They are expected to speak up and ask for help when they need it. Students cannot wait in silence for help to come to them. If the problem worsens, they might be asked: “Why didn’t you say anything?”

4. How can agents best support students in finding help and in becoming independent problem-solvers?

“Don’t make assumptions about the students’ knowledge and skills, even in everyday situations. As adult professionals we sometimes forget that routine tasks like making a doctor’s appointment can be quite challenging when doing them for

the first time. Check in and make sure that a student has followed through with a suggested solution.”

(from the project text)

International students find themselves in an unfamiliar cultural context that usually requires communication in a foreign language and in an unfamiliar communication style. Whether they are young and inexperienced or already older with a lot of life-experience – they all tend to value more involved guidance when first arriving in New Zealand. Many see their education agent as a trusted person of authority in their lives.

“Many Asian students like to solve problems. If you guide them and you show them that figuring out solutions to problems is fun and can make you proud, they will enjoy it.”

(Ivan Yeo, [Asian Family Services](#))

You can make positive use of this role and guide students to help students through some challenges but also to help students become increasingly self-sufficient problem solvers who can help themselves. Some education agents regularly check in with their “new arrivals”. Others offer regular group meetings for “sharing and caring” and problem solving. Whichever way you choose to engage with your students, the following 11 points might be good to keep in mind, especially with less experienced students. Please click on each title to access more detailed information.

1. Explain in detail all the steps that are involved in getting help.

For international students with little life experience around practical responsibilities, even seemingly simple tasks like making a doctor’s appointment can be new and challenging. Make sure to communicate clearly all the steps that the student needs to take to get the needed support.

2. Don’t make assumptions regarding students’ knowledge and skills.

If you have agreed on a plan with the student, ask them to repeat back to you what they are supposed to be doing: “I will go to counseling services. I will talk to the receptionist and make an appointment with a counsellor. I will put the appointment in my calendar and set an alarm. I will go to the appointment. I will send an email to you afterwards and tell you whether that was helpful or whether I need different help.”

As adult professionals, we sometimes forget that routine tasks like making a doctor’s appointment can be quite challenging when doing them for the first time by yourself. We might also assume that the student understood our instructions – after all, they often nod and say that they understood everything perfectly. But when we ask them to repeat things back to us, we are often surprised to find out that they didn’t understand our instructions at all.

3. Always check in later!

If you and a student agreed on a solution to a problem, check in later to make sure that they followed – and were able to follow – your advice. In the case study above, agent Hao checked in with student Lawrence to make sure that the student actually went to

the university's counselling service. You can ask your students to meet or call or write you an email to tell you whether they received the needed help or not.

4. Make clear to students that you are available to support them.

Explain clearly to students that you are available to support them. This includes giving them clear instructions on how to approach you and an easy, low-threshold way to contact you. If you are not available for ongoing support, provide students with a helpful and trustworthy alternative.

5. Support independent problem-solving.

While new and young students might need a lot of “handholding”, you should help them become increasingly independent in finding solutions and help for their problems. In the case study above, the counsellor Pria asks Lawrence whether he has his own ideas of improving his situation. He decides that he will contact his trusted tutor Michael to get more help with preparing for the IELTS test.

When they are ready, help your students to develop creative problem-solving strategies that work for them. Support them in becoming independent problem-solvers.

6. Direct students to the most appropriate support service in their community.

To direct students to the most suitable support service for them and their problem, you must be familiar with the services available at their institution and in their community. While we cannot give you all services in every city and at every New Zealand institution, we have highlighted a few helpful community services below.

7. Find ways to help students accept the recommended help.

Sometimes, students are afraid to access new, unfamiliar services and to talk to strangers. Can you find creative ways to help them overcome this fear? For example, like agent Hao in the case study above, you could suggest that they take along a friend or a homestay parent.

8. Help students with the (anticipated) language and cultural barrier.

Some international students anticipate that support services in New Zealand won't understand them because of the language barrier or due to cultural differences. Assure students that many services in New Zealand are prepared to support international visitors.

Find practical ways to deal with potential issues: If **students declare their language needs** when they make an appointment, the service provider might be able to select a staff member with the needed language skills and cultural knowledge. Services can also arrange translation services, if they know about language challenges in advance.

Some online services also provide **support through written communication**. The [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) – which can help with many questions around work, money, transport, and more – offers a live chat during the day. At the end of the conversation, students can select to receive a transcript of the entire conversation by email. This way, the student can review the conversation and make sure that they understood everything correctly.

Alternatively, you can **recommend culture-specific services to students**, if they are available. For example, [Asian Family Services](#) is an online service providing help for mental distress, gambling problems, crisis intervention, and navigation of the New Zealand Health System in ten languages, including Hindi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, and Thai.

9. Explain the value of using support services.

Some international students are unfamiliar with certain support services and do not understand how they can benefit from seeking out help. Lawrence in the case study above thought that going to the counsellor would not be helpful and might even be shameful. His agent Hao clearly explained to him the advantages of getting help from a mental health professional.

10. Explain that asking for help is not asking for an unreasonable favour.

Some international students think that they are a burden if they ask for help. Explain that students have already paid for many of the services available through their education provider with their student fees. They are entitled to help in many circumstances. Please note that the New Zealand Education Pastoral Care Code of Practice requires education providers to support students not only in their learning but also around their health and wellbeing. Have a look at our project “[Understand key Code of Practice considerations](#)” for more information.

Make sure that students are aware of [ACC in New Zealand](#), whose no-fault scheme covers everyone, including visitors and non-residents, when getting injured in an accident in New Zealand. Finally, students should be aware of what their (compulsory) student health insurance covers. Please note that all international students must have (and pay for) medical insurance.

11. Explain New Zealand laws around information privacy and confidentiality.

Some international students are afraid to speak up about their problems and worries with professional support staff, because they fear that this information might be shared with their families or with their education provider. New Zealand has very strict laws around information privacy, which protect the personal information even of teenagers and children. Please make students aware that their information will be kept confidential. To learn more about privacy laws in New Zealand, see our project “[Understand key principles in the Privacy Act](#)”.

Disclosing additional needs before enrolling

Please note that students and their families must be open about any additional needs and requirements before enrolment. These include:

- Low English proficiency and a need for very intensive ESOL support
- Specialised learning and disabilities support, for example for visual or hearing impairment, other physical disabilities, ADHD, autism, etc.
- The need to study rare subjects such as Latin.

The institution might agree to provide specialised support for these particular needs – included

in the student fee or for additional costs. However, not every institution is prepared for every need. For example, a very small school will not be able to provide Latin lessons or very intensive ESOL support. In that case, they can recommend a more suitable institution for international students and their specific needs – but only if they know about it in advance.

Schools will always try to accommodate students' needs and requirements. However, a student requesting specialised support after arrival – without having revealed this prior to enrolment – cannot expect this need to be met.

4. What should international students know and do to make full use of the support available to them?

The two important points to take away for students are:

- Ask for help when you need it.
- Know where to find the most suitable support for your problem.

“When I came to New Zealand, I didn’t know that writing essays and other assignments in a ‘Western style’ is very different from home. In my first semester here, I got pretty low grades. I didn’t know what to do. I have to admit: I skipped orientation week because by doing so I saved one week of rent. Then, a friend asked me to attend a workshop with him on academic writing. He had heard about it during orientation. It was an eye-opener. I have attended several workshops since, and they were all really helpful: how to use references correctly; how to avoid plagiarism; and several more. I also realised that I can book an appointment with Student Learning Support. They give me one-on-one help when I struggle with my assignments.”

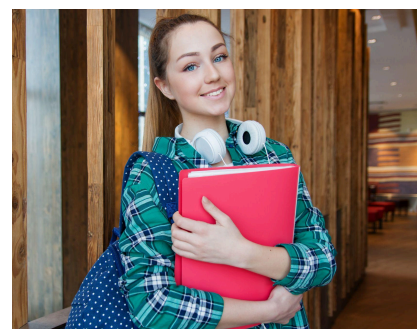


(Abdul, polytech student from Egypt)

We have created two “cheat sheets”, one for tertiary students and one for school students. These worksheets can help students reflect on the support they might need and where they can find it. Please click on the links below to open the pdf-documents:

- [Tertiary students: Guide to using services](#)
- [School students: Guide to using services.](#)

“When I first arrived in New Zealand, I was always hungry. My homestay family was eating so little, but I didn’t want to complain. I didn’t want to insult them. I told my Homestay Coordinator at school about it, and we talked to my homestay parents together. Of course, they wanted me to have enough food. They just cooked as they would always do. But I am very tall and an athlete. Now, they give me more food, and they check in with me occasionally whether I have had enough.



They also leave out snacks like fruit and granola bars that I can take anytime. We have a really good relationship now. They are my best friends!”

(Henrietta, a 15-year-old high school student from Sweden)

5. How to access services available at or through education providers

School students and tertiary students differ in their needs for support in learning, life, work, and wellbeing. Consequently, the provided services differ, as do the ways to access them.

5.1 How to access services at NZ schools

International school students can talk to their **form teacher** about academic challenges. They can also discuss specific problems with each subject teacher.

For any other questions – accommodation, disagreements with the homestay family, health, mental health, transport, recreation, and more – international students should talk to the **international team** at their school. Often, a designated staff member, for example the homestay coordinator, has been pointed out to them as a first point of contact.

For emergencies, schools provide a **phone number that international students can call 24/7**, that is, day or night, including during holidays. Note that this should be used for emergencies only.

Guidance counsellors can support students with personal concerns like depression, stress, and bullying.

International students should not hesitate to **talk to a trusted adult** when they are facing challenges. This could be a member of the international team at school, a homestay parent, a teacher, or an education agent. They can also **ask more experienced peers**, that is, other international and domestic students, for advice.

If international students feel overwhelmed or anxious about going to a particular service, for example the doctor, they can **take a trusted adult or peer along**, for example to translate or simply for moral support and to feel safe.

The benefits of participating in a buddy programme

“At our school, we provide orientation not just when students arrive in the country but even before arrival for those who need it. Some international students have all those nerves and questions about school and life in NZ. So I ask students who are coming if they would like me to find them a student buddy to connect with before they come. It can be a Kiwi or an international student. This helps to calm the pre-travel nerves and prepares the students for their time in New Zealand. The other great thing about buddy programmes is that it is of mutual benefit: it also allows our Kiwi students to gain cultural competence and make international friends.”

(Craig Fuller, Director of International Students, Cambridge High School)

A short glossary for primary and secondary schools

Here is a short glossary of (potential) roles and services at New Zealand schools, provided by the Ministry of Education. For more terminology used at secondary schools, see [Who's who at the secondary school?](#). For more information about primary schools, see [For parents and whanau: Primary school](#).

- **Careers advisers** help students prepare for work or tertiary education with information about things like jobs, tertiary course requirements, and scholarships.
- **ESOL teachers** support students for whom English is not their first language.
- The **form teacher** is with the class for the school year, and gives out daily notices and takes the roll. The form teacher will usually be your first contact if your child has any problems or issues they need help with.
- **Guidance counsellors** are there to help students and parents and/or carers with personal matters like stress and bullying.
- **NCEA liaison teachers** have an overview of NCEA results and can help with questions about things like missing assessments, financial assistance, and credits not being recorded accurately.
- **Primary school teachers** are the first point of contact for primary school students with all their concerns, including issues around friendships and bullying. The primary school teacher can direct the student to a more suitable service if necessary.



5.2 How to access services at tertiary education institutions

Tertiary students can face a range of challenges in life, work, and study. If they are in doubt who to talk to with a particular challenge, they can always go to **their institution's international support team**. The international team can provide help or direct the student to a more suitable service. The team is also in charge of all international concerns, including questions around immigration, visas, and insurance claims.

For **specific concerns in a particular course**, tertiary students should not hesitate to talk to their lecturer or tutor. For general learning challenges including problems with assignments, students can get individual support at **student learning services**. Student learning services also frequently

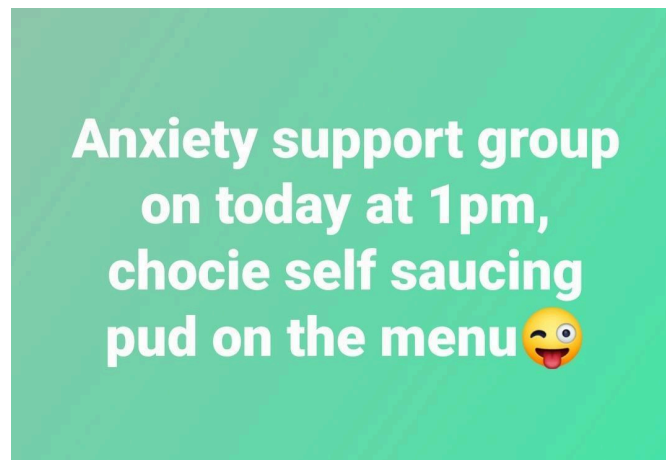
offer additional workshops on study skills, writing and grammar.

International students experiencing **emotional and mental health challenges, should not hesitate to contact the counselling service** at their institution. An increasing number of institutions also provide app-based mental health support such as [TalkCampus](#), which allows distressed students to chat with trained peers and professional staff at any hour. Students should search their institution's website whether this or a similar service has been made available.

Overall, tertiary students should take some time browsing the website of their education provider for different services, workshops, programmes, apps, and self-study materials.

Case - study "The Centre" at Massey University in Palmerston North

The Centre (short for "The Chaplaincy Centre") offers study and social spaces and cooking facilities to all students. Chaplains are happy to chat with students and provide support and advice on life issues, regardless of religious or spiritual affiliation or interest. Some chaplains speak Mandarin. The Centre offers free pancake nights and free lunches on certain weekdays, craft groups, and an anxiety support group. International students can ask for free thesis proofreading. The Centre also offers a range of Christian events like Catholic mass and bible studies for students seeking religious support. Help your students find similar services at their institution.



6. Community services available to international students

Students should find suitable services at their institution if possible. However, if they cannot find the necessary support through their education provider, they can also access many of the community services available in New Zealand. Below, we provide a short list of community services that are accessible to international students online, by phone, or through their branches in different locations across the country. The list is not exhaustive. We only highlight a few of the most important services.

Before we look at the different services, sorted by categories such as mental health, general health, and legal advice, let's take a look at a case study that shows how an international

student can benefit from community service both practically and mentally. Click on the title to see the full story.

Case study: A dispute with the landlord

“My name is Erina. I am an international PhD student, and I came to New Zealand with my husband. We had a dispute with my landlord. We had signed a one-year lease to rent a house. That means, we can securely live there for one year, but it also means that we cannot simply move out in that year. If we want to move out within that year, we have to find new, acceptable tenants or continue paying the rent. Of course, if the house is damaged or unsafe, that all changes.

A few months after moving in, my husband and I noticed that we were always sick. We both had a cough that didn't go away. And we felt run down and had no energy. We went to our family doctor, and she suspected that there was toxic mould in our house that made us sick. And sure enough, we found black mould behind the wallpaper in the bathroom. We reported it to the landlord. He said that was normal in New Zealand and that he wouldn't fix it. When we said that we would move out then, he said that we had to continue paying the rent because we had signed a lease.

I asked the Student Advocacy at my university what I could do, and they referred me to the Tenancy Services. The application fee was a little over NZ\$20. The Tenancy Tribunal eventually decided that the house was unsafe to live in and that the lease was no longer binding. So we were able to move out. And the landlord also had to give us the application fee back.

We have a really nice house now and a very friendly landlord. We are also healthy again! We are now seeking advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Community Law to see whether we should pursue legal actions because our health was affected for several months.”

Back to you: What services did Erina use to get support? How did they help her? Did she have to pay for the service? Where can you find the services Erina used in the list below?

Emergencies

- **Police, ambulance, fire services: Call 111.**

General information online for international students

- [**NauMai NZ – Life as an international student in New Zealand**](#)
NauMai NZ is a website providing information and suggestions for international students to find their way, connect with and explore their new home. It is run by the crown entity Education New Zealand (ENZ).
- [**Study with New Zealand**](#)
Study with New Zealand is the official government site for advice on studying in or with New Zealand.
- [**Immigration NZ – Study in New Zealand**](#)
Immigration New Zealand provides information about different visa options, student life, accommodation, working while studying or after graduation, registering for tax, and other matters.

General Health

- **Healthline: Call 0800 611 116**

Anyone can call Healthline 24/7 to ask a registered nurse for free health advice. They can call if they (1) feel unwell — but are not sure whether they need to see a doctor; (2) need some urgent advice about a family member or friend who is sick; (3) don't know much about New Zealand and want to know where the nearest doctor or pharmacy is located. If students need to talk to someone in their own language, they can ask for a translator.

- **COVID Healthline: Call 0800 358 5453**

For COVID-19 health advice students should call this number anytime. For COVID-related information they can also see <https://covid19.govt.nz/>.

- **Asian Helpline: Call 0800 862 342 (Mo-Fri, 9am-8pm)**

Asian Helpline is provided by [Asian Family Services](#) and offers nationwide free and confidential services from Monday to Friday between 9am-8pm. The helpline assists **Asian people in New Zealand** in ten languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Japanese, Hindi and English. It supports callers in accessing appropriate mental health services and often receives calls around depression, anxiety, gambling, addiction, and also general information (for example, how to navigate New Zealand's health and social systems).

Mental Health

The Mental Health Foundation offers an overview of a wide range of helplines mental health services, including their phone, text, online, and physical contact details: [Helplines and local mental health services](#). To highlight a few:

- **Samaritans New Zealand: Call 0800 72 66 66**

Students can call this crisis helpline for free if they are experiencing loneliness, depression, despair, distress or suicidal feelings. The phones are operated by trained volunteers from the community for the community. The service is confidential, non-judgmental, and non-religious. See the [Samaritans online](#).

- **1737: Call or text 1737**

If students feel down, stressed, or overwhelmed, they can call or text this number for free. They will talk to (or text with) a trained counsellor or talk to a peer support worker. The service provides support predominantly in English. However, the team is culturally diverse and might be able to connect students with someone speaking their language of origin.

- **Youthline: Call 0800 376 633, text 234**

Young people experiencing loneliness, anxiety, depression and other mental distress can call or text Youthline for free or use the Webchat on <https://www.youthline.co.nz/>. Youthline also works with young people in physical locations around New Zealand ([Our Centres](#)).

- **[The Lowdown Website](#)**

The Lowdown is a web-based service to help young people in New Zealand recognise, understand, and deal with depression or anxiety.

- **The Lowdown Helpline: Call 0800 111 757, text 5626.**

The Lowdown website also provides a helpline. Young people in distress can call, text, email, or engage via webchat (go to the [website](#) for email or webchat).

- **Asian Helpline: Call 0800 862 342 (Mo-Fri, 9am-8pm).**

Asian Helpline is provided by [Asian Family Services](#) and offers nationwide free and confidential services from Monday to Friday between 9am-8pm. The helpline assists

Asian people in New Zealand in ten languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Japanese, Hindi and English.

- **[Aunty Dee](#) – Mental health support for Pasifika students**

Aunty Dee is a web-based service relying on a holistic approach to support young Pasifika people who experience distress and mental challenges.

Safety Concerns

- **Police (no emergency): Call 105**

Students can go to any local police station to report safety concerns or to receive advice. Lost and found items are also often left with the local police.

- **[Netsafe](#)**

Netsafe is an independent, non-profit online-safety organisation. They offer free and confidential service to help people who are experiencing online bullying, abuse, and harassment.

Legal Advice and Conflict Resolution

- **[Citizens Advice Bureau \(CAB\)](#)**

The Citizens Advice Bureau provides free, confidential, independent information and advice to anyone. They help people understand what their rights are and how to access the services they need. Students can call (0800 367 222), email, use the webchat, or go to the local office. CAB also offers advice in a question-and-answer format on their website, including advice specifically for international students.

- **[Community Law](#)**

Community Law has offices all around New Zealand and offers free legal help, from easy-to-read information to community workshops and one-on-one legal help. Please note that they are focused on the vulnerable members of society and people who cannot afford legal advice.

- **[iStudent Complaint](#)**

iStudent Complaint helps international students to resolve complaints with their education provider. Students should first try to resolve the problem directly with their institution. However, if this fails, iStudent Complaint can help, first by mediating between both parties and finding a solution that is acceptable to everyone. If the two parties cannot come to an agreement, iStudent Complaint can make a binding decision.

- **[Office of the Privacy Commissioner](#)**

If students find that their education provider or another agency has breached their information privacy, they should first approach the agency. If the matter cannot be resolved, students can make a complaint with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC).

Tenancy problems

- **[Tenancy Services and Tribunal](#)**

The Tenancy Services and Tenancy Tribunal can help if students have a serious problem with a landlord that they can't solve themselves. The Tribunal will hear both sides of the argument and can issue an order that is legally binding.

Consular support

- International students might require consular assistance, for example to renew their passport or their national ID card. The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides [contact details for different embassies](#) in New Zealand.

LGBTQIA+ support

- [Rainbow Youth](#)

Rainbow Youth supports young people up to the age of 27 who identify as LGBTQIA+. Support workers can provide face-to-face support in Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Wellington, Northland, Taranaki, and Dunedin, and online everywhere else in Aotearoa.

Socialising, sports, and recreation

New Zealand has many clubs, groups, and organisations that offer opportunities to socialise and exercise. One option to find people with similar interests:

- **Meetup**

Meetup is a social media platform for hosting and organising in-person and virtual activities, gatherings, and events for people and communities of similar interests, hobbies, and professions. To find a meetup group in a particular city or region, have a look at: [Find a meetup group in New Zealand](#).

Translation services

- **Language Assistance Services (LAS)**

Free language assistance can be requested at participating agencies via Language Assistance Services (LAS). To learn more about LAS, see Help in your language. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) provides information about and help with Language Assistance Services (LAS) and can be used by citizens and non-citizens: [Citizens Advice Bureau](#).

"I lost my house keys twice. Once they fell out of my backpack on my university campus, as I ran for the bus. The second time, I was cycling with a friend along the river, and they fell out of my pocket. I still can't believe it, but both times I got them back! The first time, someone had left them with Lost and Found at Campus Security. The second time, someone had dropped them off at the local police station. I am so grateful! And yes, I learnt my lesson!"



(Natalie, university student from Germany)

7. What can students do if the promised support is unavailable or inadequate?

What can students and their families do if they feel that their education provider does not adequately provide for the students' safety and wellbeing? The first step should be to approach the education provider directly. If the issue cannot be resolved, students can make a complaint with [iStudent Complaints](#). To learn about the steps of making a complaint, please see our project "[Understand key Code of Practice considerations](#)".

8. Summary

In this project, we have looked at the many support services available to international students in New Zealand. Many of these services are directly offered by or through the education provider that the students attend. Support can also be found in the wider community.

We have also explored nine reasons why some international students find it difficult to access the provided support. For example, some are unfamiliar with such support and cannot see the benefits of asking for help. Others fear that their personal information will be shared with their families or their teachers if they openly speak about their problems.

We have explored how you – the education agents – can assist your students in making good use of the support services available to them. We have also explained how students in schools and at tertiary institutions can find and access support by themselves. This included two “cheat sheets”, one for school students and one for tertiary students.

We have provided a short overview of some valuable services available in the community and online. Finally, this project has offered several case studies and student testimonials based on real-life experiences, and links to useful resources for you and your students.

Heoi anō tāku mō nāianeī - that's all for now!

References (final content block):

All references included as hyperlinks in the text.

Neuliep, J. W. (2012). *Intercultural communication: A contextual approach*. SAGE Publications.

Notes to web designers:

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