

## 'Student immigration policy changes build New Zealand's competitive edge'

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"The education export industry strongly supports today's announcement of policy changes that will improve New Zealand's attractiveness to high quality international students' says Robert Stevens, Chief Executive of Education New Zealand.

Mr Stevens was responding to announcements today from Hon David Cunliffe on a range of facilitative measures for the education export industry, including an extension of the duration of graduate job search permits from 6 to 12 months, a more competitive policy (including the ability to 'trigger' the IELTS 5 requirement whilst studying rather than prior to commencement as per current policy) that improves the ability of English language students to work whilst studying and the forecast of further changes to encourage long term study and work in New Zealand.

Education New Zealand has been in discussion with the Government on these measures since November 2006 and has vigorously promoted a more facilitative and internationally competitive student immigration environment across all sectors.

"We appreciate the inclusive approach adopted by the Government as they have reviewed these measures. Whilst the review has taken several months, we appreciate that these are complex matters that require careful deliberation", says Robert Stevens. "We are pleased that the Ministerial decisions have taken into account the industries views and submissions, including via the industry consultative process that was coordinated through Education New Zealand".

"Competitive and effective immigration policy and practice is the lifeblood for our industry. International students are sophisticated people with many options, and to attract the best students requires New Zealand to be competitive in all areas" says Robert Stevens. "We appreciate the Governments priority around risk management, but given the pathways approach undertaken by international students in all education sectors, and the importance of having motivated, skilled and qualified

people work and live in New Zealand, the importance of continuous monitoring and improvement in student immigration policy and practice cannot be overstated. New Zealand does not operate in a vacuum – other countries are refining policies all the time, whilst students themselves have differing priorities and motivations. In this context, today’s announcement is most welcome as a further step in the ongoing journey to attract and retain international students”.

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