

NZMSA Statement on Job Positions for Graduating Doctors

[02/08/2025]

The New Zealand Medical Students Association (NZMSA) would like to acknowledge the positive change that has occurred as part of the employment intake for graduating doctors in 2025.

The number of Post-Graduate Year 1 (PGY1) positions available for 2026 for graduating doctors has increased to now equal the number of medical students expected to graduate as doctors in New Zealand by the end of 2025 (573 confirmed PGY1 positions for 573 projected graduates - both domestic and international students). With the input of Te Oranga and the Regional Medical Students Associations, NZMSA has advocated for a change in New Zealand's employment system for years, and NZMSA welcomes this positive change by Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) and its districts as part of the Health Workforce Plan 2024^[1].

This change will contribute to creating and growing a sustainable and resilient healthcare workforce, and one that will ultimately best serve our communities in Aotearoa. Our domestically trained doctors are ready to serve Aotearoa, and our employment system needs to reflect the value they bring. We are appreciative of Te Whatu Ora and other contributing organisations responding to the concerns of medical students across the country.

Although a step in the right direction, this action alone does not rectify our medical workforce crisis. It is still likely that some of our graduating New Zealand-trained medical students will still not receive a job offer this year on the first round of Advanced Choice of Employment (ACE). This is because the ACE RMO program (which is overseen by Te Whatu Ora) currently prioritises Australian graduates over our own locally trained international students, continually leaving many of our locally trained international medical students behind in the process. Our taura want to work and contribute to the New Zealand health system that has fostered them into safe and competent health professionals, but the current ACE program forces them to consider alternative employment overseas. Our health system desperately needs them, and changes have to be made urgently to strengthen our health workforce. We acknowledge that the ACE program is currently under review, and NZMSA welcomes the opportunity to continue working with Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) and the ACE team to ensure that none of our future graduating doctors are left behind.

With the government's commitment to increase the number of New Zealand medical students every year, we also recognise that the number of graduating doctors is projected to increase every year as a result. We therefore wish to emphasise that the number of PGY1 positions on offer needs to continually increase to match this. We risk moving backwards otherwise, and the improvements seen this year will become redundant. Thus we strongly call for this increase in PGY1 positions to occur every year to match the forecasted increase in medical students in the coming years.

Thus, NZMSA urges for the New Zealand government to maintain its commitment to grow the medical workforce in New Zealand by incorporating changes to the ACE program to ensure that ALL New Zealand graduates are guaranteed a job on first round offer, and make an annual commitment to increase the number of PGY1 positions available to match the number of New Zealand graduates every year.



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[1] Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora. (2024). New Zealand Health Workforce Plan 2024.
<https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/publications/health-workforce-plan-2024>

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