

New Zealand Medical Students' Association

# Guide to Graduation

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Edition 1 2025: Guide to Employment



**nzmsa**

# **Guide to Graduation: Guide to Employment**

Many thanks to our sponsors for supporting the creation of this guide:

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Designed by Sam Butler - resonatemedianz@gmail.com

## **Disclaimer:**

This is a student-produced publication and is written as a guide for students only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document, NZMSA cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions.

Please note that ACE resources have not been made fully available by the time of writing this guide. Therefore there may be inconsistencies with the information in this guide and the ACE process. We recommend you follow the updated ACE guidelines when they become available.

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## Just give me the crucial information about ACE

- All ACE applicants are divided into three categories. Graduates from New Zealand medical schools who are New Zealand or Australian citizens are category 1. More detail about the categories in the 'Nitty Gritty Details' section.
- You need 3 references for your ACE to be complete. Use [the algorithm](#) on page 17 to determine who you can ask to be your reference.
- Ensure your CV is up to date and error free. See our CV section for more information on how to build your perfect CV
- Make sure you write a personalised cover letter for each hospital (and attach the correct cover letter to the respective DHBs)
- Read the specific criteria for the DHBs that you want to apply for. Each DHB uses a different combination of criteria to rank applicants. More details [here](#).
- Submit your ACE application before the deadline. ACE applications close on Friday, 4 July 2025 at 12 noon (NZT) - no exceptions!
- Find out more information from [ACE Resources](#).

## Key Dates

### 10 March, 9am

*ACE applications open.*

### 20 June

*Registration cut off. 2 weeks to close. Applicants should have started their application and have already sent three reference requests prior to this time to allow sufficient time for referees to complete the form.*

### 4 July, 12 noon

*ACE applications close.*

### 25 August

*Match results emailed to all applicants*

### 1 September

*Employment offers sent to applicants.*

### 8 September

*Deadline to accept employment offers.*

### 9 September

*Talent Pool opens.*

### 19 January 2026

*Start date for Training year 2025.*

## Overview of ACE

The Advanced Choice of Employment (ACE) scheme was started in 2003. Its purpose is to streamline the process of applying for Postgraduate Year 1 (PGY1) positions across the multiple hospitals under Health New Zealand. It is an electronic matching process for recruiting graduate doctors into PGY1 positions at these hospitals. It is managed by Technical Advisory Services (TAS) under Health New Zealand (HNZ) on behalf of the District Health Boards (DHBs). TAS has contracted Northern Regional Alliance (NRA) to administer the ACE Service. The NRA are based in Auckland.

The ACE system allows graduates to apply to up to 20 hospitals with one application by using a centralised matching process. The process takes into account the graduate's and employers' (DHBs) preferences during the selection process. The outcome is that applicants are matched to one PGY1 position at one DHB, in accordance with their ranked DHB preferences. ACE is not the only way to apply for a PGY1 position. You can also apply directly to employers via their career pages or other job search sites.

## Where do I begin?

The ACE website is a rich source of information, and you can find all the PDFs in one convenient location [here](#). As a starting point, the 'ACE RMO Applicant Guide' is a great resource as it provides an overview of the various elements of your ACE application and links to additional resources.

If you are a TI in 2025 and aiming to start as a PGY1 in 2026, you are applying for the ACE 2026 training year. The first step is to create an application profile on the ACE website. This profile allows you to request references from supervisors and includes a built-in checklist to guide you through the application process.

It's important to note that while ACE manages the administrative side of the application, it's the employers (the hospital RMO units) who ultimately decide whom to employ and how to rank applicants. Each hospital has its own selection criteria, so

it's crucial to review [their preferences](#), attend ACE RMO roadshows to ask employers questions directly, or visit the RMO units of hospitals you're interested in before submitting your application.

## ACE Categories

To be eligible to apply for a job via the ACE process you must belong to one of the following categories:

### Category One:

Graduates from New Zealand medical schools who are permanent residents or citizens of New Zealand or Australia.

### Category Two:

Graduates from Australian medical schools who are citizens or permanent residents of New Zealand or Australia.

### Category Three:

Graduates from New Zealand medical schools who are not citizens or permanent residents of New Zealand or Australia.

It's important to note that the DHBs are only required to provide sufficient PGY1 positions to match the number of graduates from a New Zealand medical school who are citizens or permanent residents of New Zealand or Australia.

## The ACE Process

1. Create an application profile via the ACE RMO website.
2. Submit application to ACE, ensuring you have ranked at least 6 employers.
3. ACE rank applicants based on;
  - Academic Transcript
  - Year 4/5 distinction and/or commendations
  - Additional qualifications
  - Publications and presentations
  - Prizes, awards or scholarships
  - References
4. ACE provides each employer with a ranked list of applicants specific to each employer i.e applicants are only ranked on employers list if they too have also ranked the employer on their application.
5. Employers rank applicants based on [their specific criteria](#) and provide their ranked list to ACE.

*Note that although employers are provided with the ACE Score; the use of this information varies across employers. Some employers will take ACE scores into consideration, while others will use their own assessment criteria to look at graduates' suitability.*

6. ACE runs the matching algorithm.

*The algorithm looks at each employer's list of ranked graduates and starts with category 1 applicants. The algorithm begins with the top ranked applicants, and works its way down the list, matching the employer to graduates who have ranked that employer first. It continues this process for each employer until all vacancies for that employer are filled or the algorithm has exhausted the list of ranked graduates who preferred the employer first. The process then repeats with the list of graduates who have ranked the employer second. The algorithm continues until there are no more ranked*

*category 1 applicants. The process stated previously then repeats for category 2, and then category 3 applicants. When a graduate is matched to their first preferred employer, they are then removed from all other employer lists, preventing them from being matched to more than one employer.*

7. If at the end of the algorithm, there are still positions available and unmatched applicants, ACE will reach out to the unmatched category 1 applicants giving them the opportunity to extend their employer preference list to include additional employers. This process is then followed for Category 2 and Category 3 applicants respectively. This process happens prior to applicants being notified of their match results.
8. Manual matching process for remaining applicants and unfilled employer positions (not via ACE algorithm)
9. ACE notifies applicants if they are successful or not
10. Employers contact applicants with job offers
11. Unsuccessful applicants are automatically placed in the talent pool
12. All unmatched graduates and graduates who decline their matched job offer will be placed in the talent pool. The talent pool is made available to DHBs to fill any remaining vacancies.

For further details on this process [click here](#).

## What is the Talent Pool?

The Talent Pool is a list of unmatched applicants maintained by ACE and made available to all employers to fill subsequent vacancies if any arise due to offers being declined by applicants or other reasons. Applicants in the talent pool can contact any employers they are interested in working with directly to indicate their interest after the Talent Pool is released.



ACE will accept any new/updated documents including references from the applicants who are in the Talent Pool and will add it to their application on the ACE system. All new documents will be available to employers via the Talent Pool. New references can be submitted during this stage, but they must be completed on the ACE reference form. Once the new references are added to your talent pool application, the old reference forms will no longer be accessible.

Note that all unmatched applicants are automatically placed in the national Talent Pool as soon as the match process has been completed. All employers have access to all information for candidates in the Talent Pool.

## Algorithm matching principles

1. Graduates preference of employer is the algorithm's highest priority.
2. Employers ranking of preferred graduates is the algorithm's second priority.
3. Graduates can only be matched to one employer.

## Important principles of ACE

1. All DHBs have agreed to implement the ACE scheme and to work within the ACE process. They will not pre-match applicants to PGY1 positions.
2. All applicants seeking PGY1 positions for the start of the 2026 training year (January 2026) should apply through the ACE programme in 2025
3. Applicant employer preferences and employer ranking of preferred graduates is confidential
4. Therefore, applicants do not need to disclose their ranking to DHBs and DHBs are advised not to ask applicants to disclose their preferences for the ranking process.

5. Neither party should draft up independent contracts prior to notification of the match result
6. Once matched to an employer there is an expectation that you will accept that position. Declining will remove you from the centralised matching process. However, you would automatically enter the Talent Pool from which alternative job offers can be made
7. DHBs are required to provide sufficient positions for graduates from a New Zealand medical school who are citizens or permanent residents of New Zealand or Australia.

## Key documents for your ACE applications

- CV
- Cover letter (s)
- Academic Transcript + Other educational documents (Make sure you have authorised your university to release this on your behalf)
- Citizenship/ Residency documents
- Passport/ Birth certificate

## Key links from ACE website

### ACE Resources

[This is the link](#) to the page on the ACE website which has all the links to the PDFs to help with your application. Some key links have been highlighted below.

### ACE Applicant Guide

[This link](#) gives you all the details about the ACE application process from start to finish. It also includes links to other useful documents within it.

### ACE Reference Collection Guide

[This link](#) gives you all the details about who you can request to be your referee, how you do that and when you can submit reference requests.

## ACE Timeline

[This](#) is a detailed timeline which outlines all the steps on the ACE process and when they will occur.

## ACE Employer Information Sheets

[Summary documents](#) about each hospital you can apply for including their selection criteria.

## Contact ACE

Website: [www.rmo.acenz.net.nz](http://www.rmo.acenz.net.nz)

Email: [rmo@acenz.net.nz](mailto:rmo@acenz.net.nz)

Phone: 0508 223 766

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RMOACE>

## Terminology

**ACE** - Advanced Choice of Employment, the process to match graduates to jobs.

**DHB** - District Health Boards, governing bodies which run hospitals across the motu.

**PGY1** - Postgraduate year 1, also known as first year House Officer or HO.

**TAS** - Technical Advisory Services now sits under Te Whatu Ora.

**TWO** - Te Whatu Ora, Health New Zealand the national health service.

**NRA** - Northern Regional Alliance, administer the ACE service.

**Talent Pool** - Graduates seeking employment who have either not been matched or who declined their match. Employers may offer jobs to graduates in the talent pool.



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[advice@medicalprotection.org](mailto:advice@medicalprotection.org)

[medicalprotection.org/nz](https://www.medicalprotection.org/nz)

Free  
membership  
for PGY1s

## Quick links section

[2025 intake presentation](#)

[ACE website resources](#)

[ACE FAQ guide](#)

## Which hospitals can I apply to?

PGY1 is fast approaching and it's time to start thinking about where you want to work. All hospitals have their positives and it's important to think about why you want to serve the community you're planning on working in.

ACE has compiled a [handy list](#) of each of the 20 hospitals. You'll find heaps of information here including important contacts, information sheets and webinars. The information sheets contain amazing information including the perks of working in each hospital, selection criteria, rosters & salary information, and much more. Please note that the number of positions indicated below were offered in 2024. These numbers can change for the year 2026.

# Where Can I Work as a PGY1?



**Te Whatu Ora - Te Tai Tokerau**  
Whangarei Hospital (20)

**Te Whatu Ora - Hauora a Toi**  
Tauranga Hospital (21)  
Whakatāne Hospital (6)

**Te Whatu Ora - Waitematā**  
Waitakere & North Shore Hospital (62)  
**Te Whatu Ora - Te Toka Tumai Auckland**  
Auckland City Hospital (62)  
**Te Whatu Ora - Counties Manukau**  
Middlemore Hospital (61)

**Te Whatu Ora - Lakes**  
Rotorua Hospital (13)

**Te Whatu Ora - Waikato**  
Waikato Hospital (44)

**Te Whatu Ora - Tairāwhiti**  
Gisborne Hospital (10)

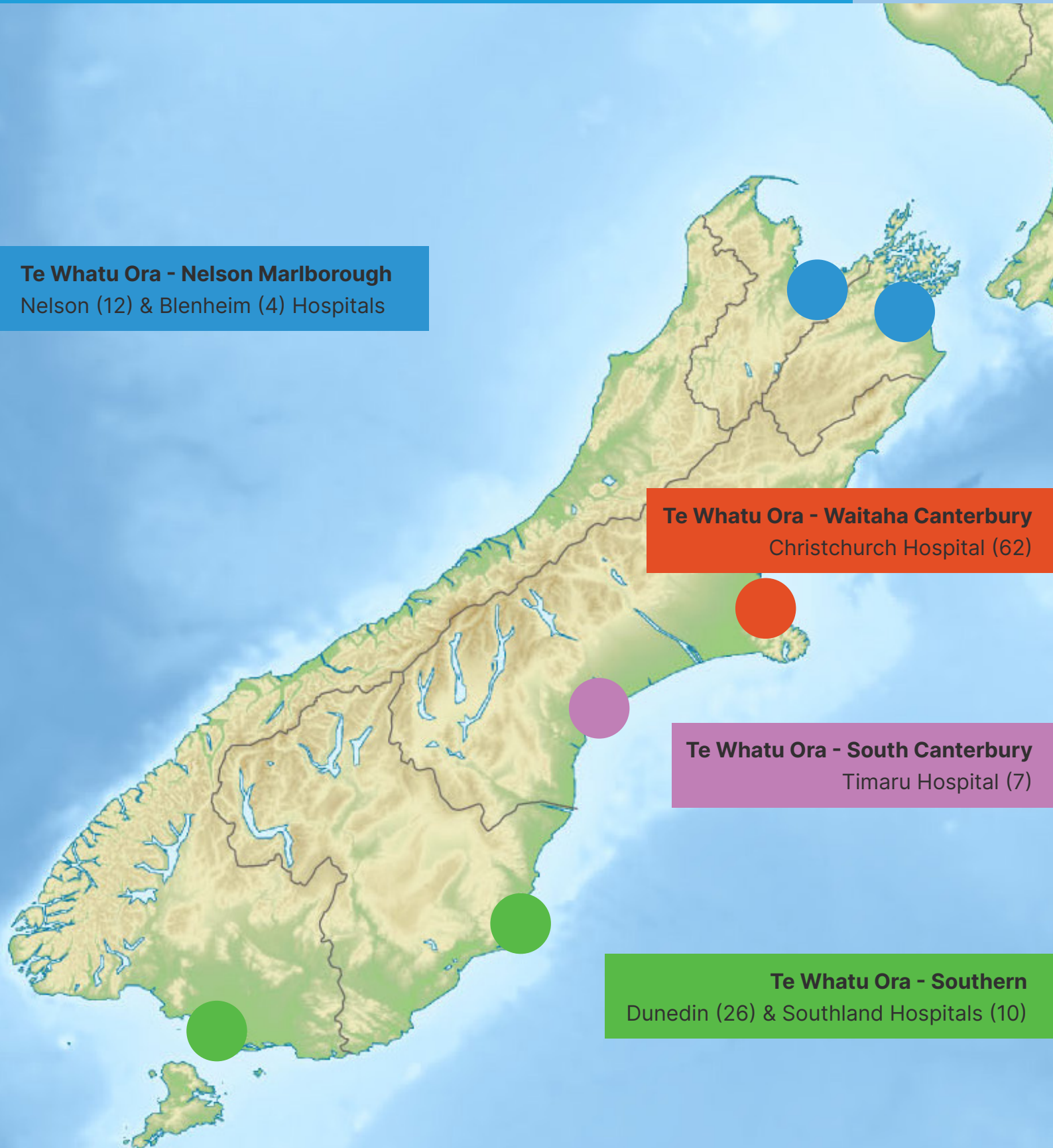
**Te Whatu Ora - Taranaki**  
New Plymouth Hospital (14)

**Te Whatu Ora - Whanganui**  
Whanganui hospital (7)

**Te Whatu Ora - Te Pae Hauora o Ruahine o Tararua Midcentral**  
Palmerston North Hospital (20)

**Te Whatu Ora - Te Matau a Māui Hawkes Bay**  
Hastings Hospital (19)

**Te Whatu Ora - Capital, Coast + Hutt Valley**  
Masterton, Kenepuru, Wellington Regional & Hutt Valley hospitals (58)



**Te Whatu Ora - Nelson Marlborough**  
Nelson (12) & Blenheim (4) Hospitals

**Te Whatu Ora - Waitaha Canterbury**  
Christchurch Hospital (62)

**Te Whatu Ora - South Canterbury**  
Timaru Hospital (7)

**Te Whatu Ora - Southern**  
Dunedin (26) & Southland Hospitals (10)

## FAQ section on PGY1 jobs

ACE has a handy [FAQ document](#) which summarises almost any question you can think of. We have also answered a few key questions below.

### Where can I find out what hospitals I can apply to?

Information for all hospitals, employers contacts and fact sheets are found at [this link](#). It is a good idea to consider all hospitals in this link as certain places might actually work better for you than you'd think.

### What things should I consider when ranking the hospitals?

Everyone has different priorities, but some things to consider which could be important to you are;

- The number of other HO there will be at the hospital. In 2023 the number of PGY1 positions range from 4 (Wairau Hospital) to 62 (Auckland City, Christchurch, North Shore & Waitākere Hospitals).

*You can check the 2025 intake numbers when they're updated at the bottom of [this page](#). At the time of writing, only 2024 intake numbers had been released.*

- The available PGY1 runs

*What you hope to experience as an HO*

- Location

The possibility of movement within an area, for example going between Wellington, Masterton and Kenepuru and Hutt Hospitals.

- Protected Teaching and education sessions
- Rosters
- Community
- Life outside the hospital and what that location might offer

It's important to remember that you have to rank **at least 6, and up to 20** when submitting your ACE application.



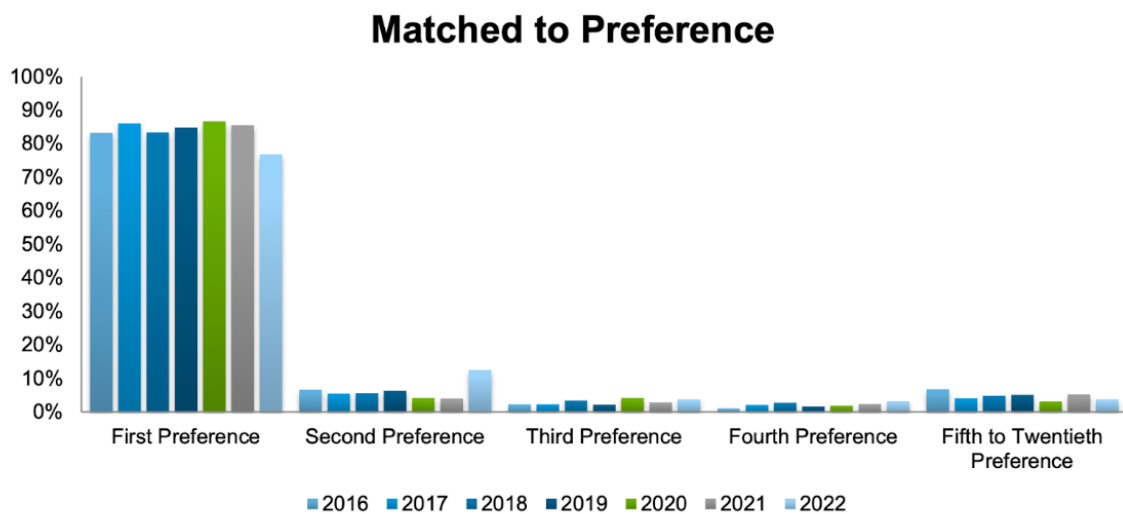
## How do I know how many people the hospital will employ?

The exact numbers won't be available till later in the year when the government releases their funding caps to the individual Health New Zealand regions. To get a pretty solid idea check out the 2024 position numbers (<https://rmo.acenz.net.nz/content/Positions>) .

## How likely am I to get the hospital I put down first?

All the data that you need to look at are in the end of year reports, currently neither the 2023 or the 2024 end of year report are published. Below is a summary of the Matched Applicants to Preference results.

### Matched Applicants Preference Results



## What percent of each category applicants were matched in the first round?

Again these are based on the 2023 report findings\*

In the first round, the following applicants were matched:

- 513/514 category one
- 3/4 category two
- 14/25 category three

\*NB the report has not been released, but this data is taken from the 2025 presentation

## **How competitive is each hospital?**

Each hospital receives a different number of applications; the data is shown on table 4 of [this document](#). Though, there will always be some hospitals that are more competitive than others.

There are a wide range of hospitals available to apply for, from Invercargill to Whangarei, and even the mighty Timaru. It's reasonable to consider all the places on offer when deciding which hospitals to rank for ACE. There is also the ability to move locations after completing PGY1 so you aren't locked into the place you will get as a first year HO.

## **How do I increase my chances of getting a job at my first choice?**

The selection criteria varies between hospitals, so make sure you read the employer information to see what they score you on individually so you can determine what you need to include in your application.



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[general@nzmii.co.nz](mailto:general@nzmii.co.nz)



[@nzmedicalindemnityinsurance](https://www.instagram.com/nzmedicalindemnityinsurance)

## What are the ACE Employer Webinars?

The ACE Employer Webinars are an opportunity for the hospitals to provide an overview of what the job of a PGY1 House Officer looks like at their hospital including runs, rosters, pay scales and training as well as insight from current PGY1s. This is an opportunity to promote what is unique to their hospital, share the experience of PGY1's as well as provide an opportunity to ask any questions you might have. You can find more information on [YouTube](#).

## How will ACE Roadshows be communicated?

Check your Class of 2025 Facebook groups and follow NZMSA on Facebook and Instagram for reminders for when the ACE roadshow is coming to you. Check your university emails for emails from NZMSA reminding you of ACE roadshows

## When are the ACE roadshows?

The ACE Roadshow happens from the **7th April until the 20th May** with each webinar focusing on a different district. Don't stress if you can't make it, they will be recorded and uploaded to youtube. You can also access previous roadshows via [YouTube](#). The full schedule is [available on the ACE website](#).

## **A CV - What is it? Why do you need one?**

A Curriculum Vitae (or CV) is a summary of your achievements, career, and qualifications.

You need one because it is most employers' preferred format of receiving a concise summary of your achievements, to help them determine how suitable you are for a job. The ACE process is no different, with applications requiring both a CV and a Cover Letter.

*NB: While technically a resume is a more concise version of a CV, the RMO ACE website uses the terms interchangeably.*

	CV/Resume	Cover Letter
<b>Content</b>	Full history of your professional, academic, and extracurricular background.	Information specific to the job you're applying to
<b>Length</b>	It can be as long as it needs to be	Generally between a half and a whole page.
<b>Need it for your ACE application?</b>	Yes	Optional
<b>Examples of what you might include</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic history &amp; achievements including previous degrees, and any publications.</li> <li>• All work &amp; volunteering experience.</li> <li>• Sports participation and/or achievements</li> <li>• Arts &amp; Cultural participation and/or achievements</li> <li>• Other involvement in community</li> <li>• Different to another CV you may have written, ACE/RMO also recommends adding your clinical attachments.</li> <li>• Other interests/hobbies you'd like to include.</li> </ul>	Why you are suited to the hospital you're applying to, and reason for picking this specific hospital. What qualities will you bring to the job?

Both Auckland and Otago Universities usually offer two graduation dates, one in December, and one in May. If you can't make either of these, don't stress! You can graduate 'in absentia' (just means you won't be there!)

## What to wear?

If you want top tips about the latest fashions, you're reading the wrong magazine! Plenty of other options out there, folks.

However, remember to be organised in advance, consider the weather, and recognise that you may be doing a lot of standing and walking in the outfit that you choose. Pockets are always a plus for some snacks as it is a long day!

Rental companies can be a good option especially budget-wise, but get in early for fittings and so everything can be posted to you. This is the same for any alterations you might want to make to outfits you have purchased.

## Auckland:

The 2025 Auckland graduation date is the **9th of December** as of writing this document.

The Auckland MBCHB hood colour is crimson with two crimson bands around the outside edge. The University of Auckland does not organise its own academic regalia, and instead recommends its students hire from the supplier below.

### Academic Dress Hire

17 George Street, Newmarket (off Carlton Gore Road)

Phone: +64 9 358 1044

Email: [regalia@academicdresshire.co.nz](mailto:regalia@academicdresshire.co.nz)

Open: Mon, Wed-Fri - 8:30am-4:30pm, Tues, 8am-6pm

Website: [academicdresshire.co.nz](http://academicdresshire.co.nz)

More information [here](#).

## Otago:

**Saturday, 6 December 2025 at 4pm** as of writing this document.

More information [here](#).

Graduation regalia at the University of Otago can be hired through the graduation application process. You will select the regalia that you wish to hire and pay the associated charge by credit card within your eVision student portal. For the Otago MBCHB degree the hood colour is lilac (BCC 176).

Please ensure that you make your payment at least five weeks before your graduation ceremony. The university does not recommend booking flights or making other arrangements for graduation before you have submitted your application and you have received confirmation via email. If you choose to make your own arrangements, please be aware that you do so at your own risk.

When you're eligible to graduate, you'll receive an email to your student email address. You will then have to apply to graduate, and the applications will open the following Monday after you receive this email. It is recommended that you apply promptly.



It's no secret Medical School has its ups and downs. As a TI, things change a lot and you gain more responsibility, but with that brings a whole new set of challenges. One thing to keep in mind and keep on top is taking care of yourself amongst everything else going on. It's important to make self-care a priority to ensure you're able to give the best to your work. There are a variety of resources that you can utilise to help support you along the way, ranging from in person to online and professional to peer support. Check out the resources below and find what could work best for you.

## University and Clinical Placement Support

### Your Peers

We're all in this together so some useful people to lean on could be those around you. Those on placement with you are likely having similar experiences and could provide some great support to one another.

### Your Clinical Team

There's some really supportive doctors and supervisors out there. Many of whom were TIs not too long ago. Each member of the team, from House Officer to Consultant will have different things to offer and could help support you along the run.

### Your Class Reps and Student Reps

Class reps, student reps and NZMSA reps are always here to help. No matter the issue, big or small, if it needs to be addressed then they're there to help. Reps are always here to help support you, provide more resources or help to point you in the right direction if we're unable to sort it out ourselves. Reach out via the emails below.

### NZMSA Rep Contact Details

Te Oranga Workforce Rep: Ocean-Jade Rhind - [ocean-jade@nzmsa.org.nz](mailto:ocean-jade@nzmsa.org.nz)

Auckland Clinical Rep: Maitreyi Jain - [maitreyi@nzmsa.org.nz](mailto:maitreyi@nzmsa.org.nz)

Auckland Clinical Rep: Geraldine Atchico - [geraldine@nzmsa.org.nz](mailto:geraldine@nzmsa.org.nz)

Wellington Clinical Rep: Katherine Coombes - [katherine@nzmsa.org.nz](mailto:katherine@nzmsa.org.nz)

Christchurch Clinical Rep: Sarah Jane Russell - [srussell@nzmsa.org.nz](mailto:srussell@nzmsa.org.nz)

Otago ALM Rep: Evie Clatworthy - [evie@nzmsa.org.nz](mailto:evie@nzmsa.org.nz)

## **Student Support Advisors**

### **Auckland University**

Available for Auckland students, the Student Support advisors are a fantastic resource. No matter what your problem is, they are here to work with you to help out. Please email the incredible team at [fmhssupport@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:fmhssupport@auckland.ac.nz)

Further information about different Auckland specific support services (academic, financial and personal well-being) available via [this website](#).

### **Otago University**

Each campus (Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington) have student affairs administrators you can get in touch with. They're there to help with any issues that arise or if you're needing support.

## **Student Counsellors**

Some campuses have free counsellors available for medical students to utilise as much as you'd like. Reach out to them if you're requiring someone to talk to.

Wellington - [studentcounsellor.uow@otago.ac.nz](mailto:studentcounsellor.uow@otago.ac.nz)

Christchurch - Contact Associate Dean of Student Affairs - they subsidise up to \$900 for counselling costs. Link for more information [here](#):

Dunedin - Contact [Student Affairs or Student Health](#) at the University of Otago for access to counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists.

Auckland - The University of Auckland provides support in the form of short-term counselling services that are available [for free](#).

## **Māori Support Staff**

Campuses have Māori support staff that you're able to contact if you need support.

**Wellington** - Eru Pomare Centre

**Christchurch** - MIHI

**Dunedin** - Kōhatu

**Auckland** - [Te Korowai Atawhai](#)

## Personal Wellbeing

### **Puawaitanga**

Free over-the-phone counselling services free for all university students to access.

<https://puawaitanga.nz/> or call them on 0800 782 999

### **MAS**

Members of MAS are eligible to receive 3 free EAP counselling services.

<https://www.mas.co.nz/free-eap-counselling-for-our-members/>

### **1737**

Free helpline providing 24/7 phone and text support from a trained counsellor.

<https://1737.org.nz/>

### **Depression NZ**

Free online and over the phone support

<https://www.depression.org.nz/> or text 4202 or call 0800 111 757

### **Small Steps**

Free online resources to help manage stress, anxiety and depression.

<https://www.smallsteps.org.nz/>

### **The Lowdown**

A space created with rangatahi for rangatahi. Here you can learn, express and engage around your hauora (wellbeing), identity, culture and mental health.

<https://www.thelowdown.co.nz/> or free text 5626

### **MAS Āki Wellbeing Hub**

Free for all MAS members

<https://www.mas.co.nz/aki-wellbeing/>

### **Mental Health Foundation New Zealand**

They have a wide range of resources, articles and links to further support services available through their website

<https://mentalhealth.org.nz>

## Guide to Employment II:

- Contracts
- Unions
- Indemnity Insurance
- Medical Council Registration
- KiwiSaver
- Hauora Taiwhenua tell us everything we need to know about rural medicine
- Plus much more!!

