



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

KIA ORA Ā-PŪTEA **MONEY MATTERS** **2026**

A guide for international students



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THE PASTORAL CARE CODE: The Government's Pastoral Care Code sets out the University's roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our students. This includes fostering learning environments that are safe and designed to support positive learning experiences of diverse learner groups. During your time here, you have access to a range of services and support to promote your overall wellbeing, development, and educational achievement. Read more about the code and our obligations.

i wgtn.ac.nz/support



Managing your money

Managing money is not easy for many people. If you are serious about your studies, it's important to manage your course choices, your study time, and your money.

This guide is designed to help you plan for the costs of studying and manage your money as well as possible. There is assistance for you to be on top of your finances, by managing your Student Loan or Student Allowance if you have one, paying fees, budgeting, and scholarship applications.

i wgtn.ac.nz/money

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington's student finance advisers can meet with students on campus and online to provide budgeting advice.

Budgeting

Budgeting means tracking the money you are earning and the money you are spending. It's a way of taking ownership of your finances, ensuring you're making the most of your cash, and helping you use your money to do the things you value the most. There's lots to keep track of when you start university. Setting up a budget will take the pressure off and give you the chance to plan ahead.

BLACKBULLION

Victoria University of Wellington has partnered with Blackbullion, an online financial learning platform that provides easy-to-use digital resources and tools to help you become more confident with your finances.

There are a number of pathways that cover topics such as starting university, budgeting, savings, debt, tax, and investing. Each pathway consists of short videos, with quizzes throughout to review what you have just learnt. You can register online with your email address.

i blackbullion.com

LIVING COSTS

The amount you will spend on living costs depends a lot on your needs and habits.

The following amounts are in New Zealand dollars and based on 40 weeks in Wellington:

- ▶ \$24,000 for essential living costs (keeping it basic, but comfortable)
- ▶ \$33,000 for generous living costs (allowing for weekend trips and socialising).

We estimate that most single students spend the following amounts per year:

- ▶ between \$20,000 and \$33,000 for 40 weeks
- ▶ between \$26,000 and \$42,900 for 52 weeks.

EXAMPLE BUDGET

This is an example budget for a student living in a hall of residence (university student accommodation). This budget is for 40 weeks and is based on the 2026 rate. There is a worksheet on page 20 for you to make a similar budget for your situation.

Weekly costs	(\$)
Catered room (electricity and internet included)—rates vary depending on the hall of residence you are living in	578
Mobile phone/international calls	15
Toiletries	15
Transport	10
Personal spending	70
Weekly total	688
Total weekly costs for 40 weeks (\$688 × 40)	27,520

Occasional costs	(\$)
Holiday travel	2,000
Large items (bicycle, laptop, room furnishings)	1,200
Accommodation deposit	1,070
Textbooks, materials	1,000
Haircuts (\$30–\$100 per haircut)	300
Clothes/shoes	700
Sport/gym/clubs (yearly)	500
Miscellaneous	400
Emergency (\$1,000-plus recommended)	1,000
Total occasional costs	8,170

Initial costs	(\$)
Tuition fees (full-time student)*	40,135.92
Non-tuition fees†	1,284.80†
Insurance	899.00
Visa application‡	850.00
Medical for visa application^	550.00
Airfare	2,500.00
Total initial costs	46,219.72
Total costs (weekly, occasional, and initial)	81,909.72

*Indicative, depending on programme.

†The Student Services Fee is calculated on a per-point basis capped at 150 points. How much you need to pay will depend on how many points you are enrolled in and where you are based for your study.

If you will be studying from within the Wellington region, either on campus or online, your Student Services Fee will be calculated at \$10.44 per point.

If you will be studying from elsewhere within New Zealand, or from overseas, your Student Services Fee will be calculated at \$5.22 per point.

‡Figure based on a student studying within the Wellington region, taking 120 points. This includes \$32 for the Student Hardship Fee.

§Medical and police certificates for Immigration New Zealand do not usually have to be repeated until they are 36 months old. If you intend to study for longer than three years, this is an extra expense you need to budget for. Visa application fees range in price depending on the type of visa and method of application. If you have to renew your passport, you will also need to pay a fee when you apply to transfer your visa label to your new passport. No fees are required if you apply to transfer your e-visa to a new passport. Make sure your passport is valid for as long as possible to avoid the extra cost and inconvenience.

^Medical costs can vary depending on the medical practitioner you go to and what is required by Immigration New Zealand.

Living in a hall of residence

Halls of residence (university student accommodation) have some advantages over other types of accommodation.

- ▶ You can organise your room in advance, so you have somewhere to stay as soon as you arrive in Wellington. If you hope to share private, non-university accommodation with other people, they usually want to meet you in person before confirming. It could take a number of weeks to find suitable private accommodation.
- ▶ You have to apply for a university hall only for the trimesters in which you are studying. When sharing a private, non-university house or apartment (see page 5), people are often committed to a 12-month contract, which means they are responsible for paying rent for the whole period even if they do not live there during the summer.
- ▶ You can apply for multiple years of university accommodation in advance. This means that you won't have to worry about reapplying for halls. In private, non-university accommodation, 12-month contracts aren't always renewed, which can lead to people looking for new accommodation every year—even if it's at an inconvenient time.

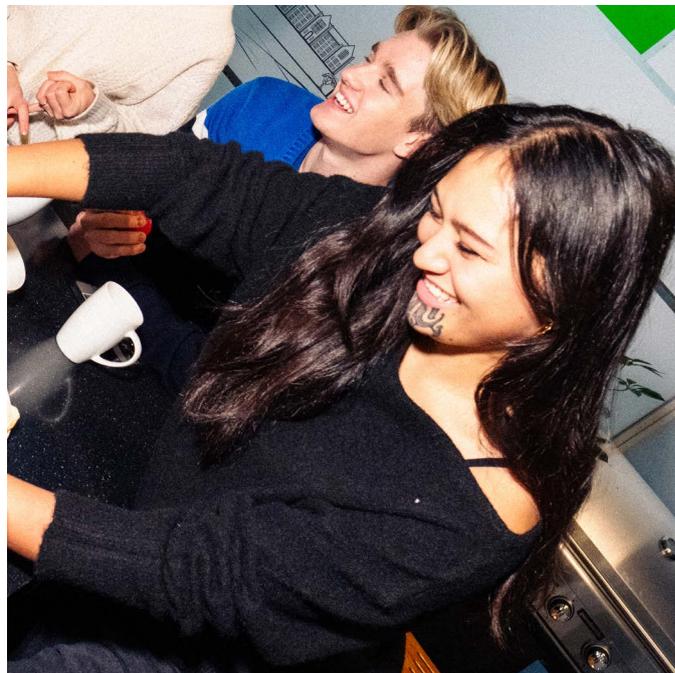
Halls of residence vary as to whether they are catered (food is provided) or independent living (you purchase and cook your own food—see page 9). All rates include electricity, internet, and laundry. At right are a couple of examples for 2026.

SAMPLE BUDGET

Hall of residence	Weekly cost (\$)	What is covered
Education House	424	Includes power, internet, and laundry but you pay for food
Te Puni Village	578	Includes three meals per day, power, internet, and laundry

wgtn.ac.nz/halls

Fewer openings at halls are available to students after their first year at university due to limited bed numbers in independent living.



Living in a flat

Flatting means living in private accommodation (a flat) shared with other people (flatmates). The cost of living in a flat can vary depending on the distance from the city centre, the number of people sharing, and the size and quality of the rooms. Cheap flats are often very cold over winter.

Example weekly budget (single person in a shared flat)	(\$)
Rent*	260.00
Bills	40.00
Mobile phone/international calls	15.00
Food	120.00
Transport—30-day bus pass	42.32
Personal spending	70.00
Total	547.32

*The above rent is based on triple occupancy. If you are looking to rent a flat or apartment by yourself, you could pay anywhere from \$475 to \$900. You can check the market rent rate for different suburbs on the Tenancy Services website ([tenancy.govt.nz/rent-bond-and-bills/market-rent](https://www.tenancy.govt.nz/rent-bond-and-bills/market-rent)).

Tenancy Services also has official forms and an information sheet about flatting on its website ([tenancy.govt.nz/starting-a-tenancy/flatting](https://www.tenancy.govt.nz/starting-a-tenancy/flatting)).

The flatting guide from the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association—Te Aka Tauira (VUWSA) will help you understand your rights when going flatting.

 [vuwsa.org.nz/flatting-guide](https://www.vuwsa.org.nz/flatting-guide)

LEASE AGREEMENTS

A fixed-term lease agreement means that both the landlord and tenants have committed to the term of the lease (usually 12 months). A periodic lease means that anybody can end the contract at any time, but tenants have to give 28 days' notice (landlords have to give longer notice). The government changed some tenancy rules in 2025. Check the tenancy website for the most up-to-date information.

Everyone who signs the lease agreement as a tenant is legally responsible for paying the rent and for ensuring damage does not occur to the property.

If you are the head tenant and your flatmates have not signed the lease, protect yourself by getting them to sign a flat-sharing agreement.

 [tenancy.govt.nz](https://www.tenancy.govt.nz)

BOND

A bond covers anything that might be owed at the end of the tenancy, such as unpaid rent or property damage. A landlord can ask for between two and four weeks' rent as bond. The law requires that the bond be lodged with Tenancy Services. Ideally, everyone in the flat signs the lease agreement and everyone lodges their own share of the bond. This makes it easier when one person moves out. The person leaving completes the Bond Refund or Bond Transfer form and the Change of Tenant form. Students often move into an existing flat and pay the bond to the person moving out. In these cases, we strongly recommend that you get a written receipt for the payment.

ADVANCE RENT

Landlords are not permitted to ask for more than two weeks' rent in advance. Once the advance rent runs out, more rent is due.

TOTAL COST OF MOVING IN

Based on a weekly rent of \$260, you will need to pay upfront between \$1,300 and \$1,560 for bond and two weeks' advance rent. Add shifting costs and furnishings (bed, desk, drawers, and kitchen things). The set-up costs will vary greatly, depending on how much you already have. If you need to buy most items and are happy to get second-hand goods, between \$1,000 and \$1,500 will get you the basics.

BILLS

Most bills are charged at the end of a month's usage. Some (for example, appliance rental) are charged weekly or fortnightly. Some utilities (especially electricity) may require a deposit. It may be waived if you arrange to have the payment direct debited from the bank account. Some services may have minimum contract periods (for example, 12 months). If you plan to use the service for a shorter period, find out the cost of breaking the contract.

Electricity/gas

Make sure that the power meter is read on a regular basis and a reading is taken on the day you move in. Many properties have smart meters that read automatically. With older meters, it is normal for somebody to come to read the meter every month or two. Sometimes, if there hasn't been a reading for many months, people are surprised by a large bill.

Check out Powerswitch (powerswitch.org.nz), which compares different electricity and gas plans.

You can prepay your electricity with Powershop (powershop.co.nz), which means you won't get caught with a bill you can't afford.

If your power is disconnected, you may have to pay a disconnection fee and a reconnection fee, which can cost between \$30 and \$300.

Phone and internet

Some services may charge connection fees or charge for a modem. In other cases, they are free.

If you are going to make international phone calls, compare the rates offered by telephone companies, calling cards, and services such as Viber. You might save yourself a lot of money.

With mobile phones, prepay is generally cheaper and safer than signing up for a contract. With a contract, you are bound to pay each month. Failure to do so will put you into debt and could impact your credit rating.

Wellington City has free Wi-Fi access in the central parts of town, and the University has free Wi-Fi access for students at all campuses.

Insurance

International students on the Studentsafe university insurance policy are covered for accidental damage to property (for example, broken windows, kitchen fire). Be aware of the excess on your policy, as this is the amount you must contribute towards a claim.

 wgtn.ac.nz/insurance



Cost of living for a family

Students who have a spouse/partner or children often want to bring their family with them when they come to study in New Zealand. Some find it easier to focus on study with the support network their family provides. Some students think they will manage if sacrifices are made—such as living further from the city, getting a part-time job, or buying the cheapest food—but living with family tends to be more expensive than people expect.

Weekly costs	Single person (\$)	Two adults, a baby, and a primary-school child (\$)
Rent	260.00	710.00
Bills	40.00	120.00
Mobile phone	15.00	30.00
Transport—30-day bus pass	42.32	84.64
Groceries (including nappies)	120.00	480.00
Activities, snacks, entertainment	70.00	150.00
Childcare	–	298.00
Weekly total	547.32	1,872.64
Weekly costs for the year (weekly total x 52)	28,460.64	97,377.28

One-off costs	Single person (\$)	Two adults, a baby, and a primary-school child (\$)
Accommodation set-up costs	1,760.00	4,260.00
Furnishings	500.00	2,500.00
Clothes	700.00	2,000.00
Textbooks, stationery, school fees	1,000.00	1,500.00
Medical/dental/optical	500.00	1,500.00
Special occasions	200.00	1,000.00
Insurance (2026 premium)	899.00	2,248.00
One-off costs total	5,559.00	15,008.00
Yearly total	34,019.64	112,385.28

This table doesn't include the cost of visas, medical exams, flights, or a car.

A student's spouse may be permitted to work in New Zealand, but there is no guarantee of finding work. Sometimes, highly skilled people are able to get jobs only as cleaners on night shift, for example. Often people try very hard but are unable to find any job at all. Unless your spouse has a legitimate job organised before coming to New Zealand, you need a plan for how you could survive without any income from their work.

There have been many cases where the time and effort taken to get a student's family to New Zealand and the financial stress and responsibility of looking after them in a foreign country have distracted students from their studies. Sometimes this means it takes them longer to complete their study and their scholarship runs out, leading to further financial trouble.

We encourage students with families to plan carefully and consider the consequences. If you are not absolutely sure you have enough money to support your family in New Zealand, contact a student finance adviser to review your situation before you bring your family to New Zealand (see contact details, inside back cover).

i wgtn.ac.nz/bringing-family

We encourage you not to have your family accompany you to New Zealand in your first trimester of study, as you will need this time to settle into academic life.



Food

Weekly food costs can vary. Below are some typical examples for one person.

\$90 per week: All meals prepared at home, only the cheapest ingredients (little, if any, meat) from the cheapest supermarkets and the fruit and vegetable markets.

\$130 per week: Most meals prepared at home, varied diet.

\$200 per week: Many meals prepared at home. Some shopping from supermarkets, some from local convenience stores, six meals per week from cafés or takeaways.

\$300 per week: No cooking, all meals bought.

Use your money wisely by following these recommendations:

- ▶ You can get fruit and vegetables at excellent prices at the weekend markets. There is a Saturday market in Newtown and a Sunday market at the corner of Cable and Barnett Streets, beside Te Papa Tongarewa.
- ▶ Shopping at supermarkets or markets is cheaper than shopping at convenience stores.
- ▶ Eating on campus is expensive. You can save money by bringing lunch from home. There are microwaves available in the Student Union building, in the VUWSA office, and by Louis' Takeaway Café, Level 1, Rankine Brown building.



Transport

Wellington is a compact city and, if you live close to the city centre, it is easy to get around by walking.

BICYCLE

Cycling to university may be one of the cheapest forms of transport (after walking). There are bicycle stands at all the University's campuses.

BUS

Wellington buses charge a fare for every trip. Paying cash is always the most expensive option. For regular users, we recommend using a Snapper card or a 30-day pass, depending on your use.

Wellington city peak bus fares

Zones	Single fare (\$)	Snapper card (\$)	Tertiary concession (\$)
1	3.00	2.06	1.55
2	4.50	3.39	2.54
3	6.00	4.53	3.40

Travel from the railway station to the Kelburn campus is one zone.

[metlink.org.nz/getting-started/tickets-and-fares](https://www.metlink.org.nz/getting-started/tickets-and-fares)

Snapper cards cost \$10 to buy, but they will save you a lot of money if you use buses frequently. You will have to load money onto your Snapper card to use it on public transport. Top-ups can be done at most local convenience stores, at Snapper card kiosks around the city, or by using the Snapper app on your phone.

Tertiary concession

All eligible full-time students will receive a tertiary concession on Metlink bus, rail, and ferry services. The tertiary concession is a 25 percent discount off the peak adult Snapper fare. This doesn't apply to cash fares.

[wgtn.ac.nz/tertiary-concession](https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/tertiary-concession)

Snapper cards

Snapper cards are available to purchase online, from a number of retailers around the city, or from the VUWSA office. If you're using a Snapper card, there's no extra cost for transferring between buses if you do so within 30 minutes, but you must tag on and off for each leg of your journey.

[snapper.co.nz](https://www.snapper.co.nz)



Free bus passes

If you have classes at two different campuses on the same day, VUWSA provides free bus passes to get between classes.

[vuwsa.org.nz/bus-passes](https://www.vuwsa.org.nz/bus-passes)

Metlink 30-day pass for Wellington

For \$181.40, you can travel on Metlink Wellington buses as much as you want within Zones 1–3 for 30 days (allows for transfers and getting on and off the same route). That comes to \$42.32 per week. Passes can be purchased from Snapper outlets.

☎ 0800 801 700

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

CABLE CAR

Wellington's cable car runs between Lambton Quay (in the central city) and Kelburn (where the main campus is located). You'll need to present your student ID card to get a discounted student rate.

	Standard fare (\$)	Student discount (\$)
Single ticket	6.50	4.00
5-trip ticket	18.00	12.00
10-trip ticket	32.00	20.00
25-trip ticket	64.00	40.00
Three-month pass	130.00	84.00

CAR

There are many expenses associated with owning a car. For most students, using public transport is significantly cheaper than maintaining, running, and parking a car. Here are some example costs for owning a car:

- ▶ initial purchase: \$5,000 for a simple, older second-hand four-seater car; \$15,000 for a reliable, newer second-hand car
- ▶ petrol: \$2.68 per litre (as at June 2025).

These costs are compulsory:

- ▶ vehicle licence (registration): 12-month licence for a passenger vehicle is \$144.22
- ▶ warrant of fitness checks (required every six or 12 months) are \$50 to \$100
- ▶ routine maintenance (tyre replacement, brake pads, and so on) is \$1,000 per year minimum
- ▶ mechanical repairs: these are variable and can be very expensive so budget for at least \$1,000 per year for older vehicles, \$400 per year for newer vehicles.

It's recommended that you have insurance: either third-party or first-party. If you do not have at least third-party insurance and have an accident that causes damage to someone else's vehicle, it could cost you thousands of dollars.

Parking costs

Parking on most streets close to the Kelburn campus requires a coupon. Coupons cost \$18.50 per day. Kelburn Parade and Salamanca Road have metered parking. The fee is \$5 per hour Monday to Friday and \$3 per hour Saturday to Sunday. Along Waiteata Road, there are also 125 metered parks where you can park for the whole day for \$11 (7 am to 7 pm). A 50 cent credit card fee applies per transaction.

Most inner-city suburbs require a resident parking permit, which costs \$199 a year. Eligible residents can also apply for a Coupon Parking Exemption Permit that will exempt them from daily parking charges. These cost \$122.50 per year. The exemption permit allows residents to park near their homes without displaying a coupon, but not in areas specially set aside for residents-only parking. You can get parking permits from the Wellington City Council offices.

It is hard to find parking near campuses. You will be ticketed if you do not pay for metered parking. If your registration or warrant of fitness has expired, you will be fined.



SHARED E-SCOOTERS

Shared e-scooters can be found across the city. Although they can be cheap, the costs of using them regularly add up. If you will be using these scooters, make sure you check out the student discounts they may offer.

TRAIN

Metlink peak train fares

From/to	Single fare (\$)	Snapper card (\$)	Tertiary concession (\$)	30-day pass (Snapper adult) (\$)
Petone and Lower Hutt/Wellington (4 zones)	6.50	5.08	3.81	152.40
Upper Hutt/Wellington (7 zones)	11.50	8.95	6.71	268.50
Porirua/Wellington (5 zones)	8.00	6.20	4.65	186.00

Snapper 30-day passes can start any day and are valid for 30 days following the first use. Buy 30-day passes through the Snapper app or at a Snapper retailer.

📞 0800 801 700

🌐 [metlink.org.nz](https://www.metlink.org.nz)

For most students, using public transport is significantly cheaper than maintaining, running, and parking a car.



Personal spending

Here are some examples of costs in Wellington:

- ▶ prepaid international telephone call cards: about \$20 for five to six hours of calls to many countries
- ▶ takeaway meal: \$15 to \$35
- ▶ coffee \$4+, soft drink \$3.50, beer \$10
- ▶ cinema ticket: \$16 to \$25
- ▶ theatre performance: \$14 to \$28
- ▶ taxi between Wellington airport and the city: \$40 to \$60
- ▶ taxi between the University and the city: \$17
- ▶ bus between the University and the city: \$3
- ▶ swimming pool entry: \$7.20.



SPENDING STYLES

David	Linh	Yuan	Tina
Bought lunch every day Movie once a week Drinks at a bar and takeaways at the weekend	Two coffees each weekday Three bought lunches a week Café lunch on Sunday	One smoothie per week One bought lunch Friday night gig with one drink only	Two coffees a week Sunday brunch with friends
Weekly spend = \$270	Weekly spend = \$160	Weekly spend = \$90	Weekly spend = \$50
Over 40 weeks (2 trimesters) = \$10,800	Over 40 weeks (2 trimesters) = \$6,400	Over 40 weeks (2 trimesters) = \$3,600	Over 40 weeks (2 trimesters) = \$2,000

Your spending

Per week	\$
Coffee/soft drinks	
Lunches/snacks	
Movies	
Gigs/bars	
Music/TV subscriptions	
Eating out/takeaways	
Total	



The basics

BANKING

It's a good idea to open a bank account as soon as you get to New Zealand, so you don't have to carry large amounts of cash or pay big fees to use your home account.

i wgtn.ac.nz/international-banking

EFTPOS

Eftpos means electronic funds transfer at point of sale. Most New Zealand shops have an eftpos machine at the checkout, and it is a very simple way to pay for things directly out of your bank account.

GST

GST stands for goods and services tax, which is 15 percent. Prices are almost always shown inclusive of GST.

MOBILE PHONES

The four largest providers in New Zealand

2degrees	2degreesmobile.co.nz
One NZ	one.nz/mobile
Skinny	skinny.co.nz
Spark	spark.co.nz/shop/mobile

In New Zealand, the person making a call or sending a text message pays. It is free to receive a call or text message. Many students use a monthly prepaid package. If you don't have a package deal, calls and data can be expensive.



SCAMS

There are a lot of scams on the internet, and some scammers may target international students. An example of a scam is when you apply for a room in a flat advertised online and are asked to pay a bond without even seeing the room. Later, you find out that the room doesn't exist and the advertiser has taken your money. To protect yourself, look out for the warning signs of scams by completing the scams pathway on Blackbullion (blackbullion.com). This service is free to Victoria University of Wellington students. Remember, if something looks too good to be true, it may well be a scam.

Anticipate your costs. Budget to pay rent and bills first. Control your extra spending. Be cautious of 'buy now, pay later' services such as Afterpay and Zip. They may seem convenient at the time, but small amounts can quickly and drastically impact your weekly budget.

Financial support

PŪTEA ĀWHINA—HARDSHIP FUND

The Hardship Fund is paid for by a levy at enrolment. It is an emergency fund that helps students facing financial difficulties, and it helps many students each year. Grants are available for a range of issues, including:

- ▶ flatting problems
- ▶ high course-related costs
- ▶ high transport costs
- ▶ medical, dental, and optical costs.

The student finance advisers administer the Fund. To make an appointment, use the online booking tool found on the Victoria University of Wellington website.

i wgtn.ac.nz/student-finance-advisers

Hardship Fund Equity Grant

Grants are available to encourage students who are facing financial hardship to continue in their studies at Victoria University of Wellington.

i wgtn.ac.nz/hardship-fund

The Hardship Fund is an emergency fund that helps students facing financial difficulties, and it helps many students each year.

STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association—Te Aka Tauira (VUWSA) runs the Community Pantry for free food parcels and provides free bread as well as other welfare services.

i vuwsa.org.nz



Part-time work

New Zealand student visas usually allow full-time students to work up to 20 hours per week during the year. During scheduled holidays and summer breaks, students are allowed to work full time, which can be between 35 and 40 hours per week. It is important to read the exact wording on your visa to determine your work rights.

The minimum wage in New Zealand is \$23.50 per hour before tax, so for:

- ▶ 10 hours' work you'll earn \$206.41 after tax
- ▶ 20 hours' work you'll earn \$410.90 after tax.

Study Abroad or exchange students attending the University for one trimester only are not eligible to work.

FINDING WORK

These services can assist you to find part-time work.

Careers and Employment

This is one of the University's student support services. Staff and online resources are available to help you with your CV, interview preparation, and other job-hunting skills. For students based in New Zealand, they can also provide advice on how to find part-time work.

- ❶ wgtn.ac.nz/international-working
- ❷ wgtn.ac.nz/careers
- ❸ wgtn.ac.nz/careerhub

Student Job Search

Student Job Search helps students based in New Zealand find part-time work during term time and the summer break. You can sign up online. Job offers come in from employers all the time, and your chances of getting a job are better if you visit the site often.

- ❹ sjs.co.nz

PAYING TAX

Inland Revenue is New Zealand's tax department. Before you start working in New Zealand, you need an IRD number from Inland Revenue. Your income and tax payments are linked to this. Apply for the number before you need it, as it can take a while to process.

- ❺ ird.govt.nz/managing-my-tax/ird-numbers

If you need assistance with determining which tax code to declare or how to claim a tax refund, you will need to contact IRD directly.

There is no guarantee of finding part-time work in Wellington. If you plan to cover part of your living costs through wages, you need to have a back-up plan in case you do not find work.



Health services

MAURI ORA—STUDENT HEALTH AND COUNSELLING

International students based in New Zealand can access all health services but are not eligible for free healthcare under New Zealand's public health system. Some international students on special government scholarships may be eligible for free healthcare. For all other international students based in New Zealand, healthcare costs will be covered in most instances by your insurance, and mental health counselling and support is fully covered by the University's insurance provider. Without insurance, medical treatment for international visitors can be extremely expensive.

The University's Mauri Ora—Student Health and Counselling service provides a high standard of primary healthcare with a fully qualified and experienced team of general practitioners, practice nurses, and specialist clinics such as endocrinology, a health coach, and a health improvement practitioner.

These services are only for international students based in New Zealand. If you are studying from overseas, the above information will not apply. Go to our website for detailed information regarding costs and insurance reimbursement.

i wgt.ac.nz/health-costs

MEDICATION COSTS

Medication can be expensive, and pharmacists will expect payment at the time of dispensing it. Generally, the costs of any medication related to pre-existing conditions will not be reimbursed through the Studentsafe university insurance policy. However, the costs associated with treatment of new illnesses and events will generally be covered.

DENTAL CARE

Discounted dental care is available for Victoria University of Wellington students at Capital Dental. It offers a 20 percent discount at its 10 locations. You need to show your student ID.

Capital Dental is open weekdays from 8.30 am to 5 pm.

i dentistwellington.co.nz

Studentsafe university insurance covers only injury to teeth or treatment of sudden, acute pain (consultation, antibiotics, painkillers, and extractions). The maximum paid out is \$500 per event.

OPTOMETRIST

Studentsafe university insurance can provide coverage of up to \$200 per year for glasses that are lost, stolen, or damaged, or if you need new glasses due to a change in your vision.

Specsavers offers a direct billing service, up to \$200, for Studentsafe insurance policyholders.

You can apply for pre-approval online at invoicing.specsavers.co.nz/referral/4bdbc/studentsafe

Specsavers provides some of the most affordable glasses. Go to its website for details on prices, locations, and special deals (such as 25 percent off for StudentCard holders).

i specsavers.co.nz



Cash flow

It is important to make a plan for how you will cover all your costs. If you set up your bank account to match your plan, you will not have to worry about how you will pay for bills. The money will be waiting when the bill comes in.

LUMP-SUM LUCY

Lucy is coming for her first year of study towards a Bachelor of Commerce. She will be in New Zealand for one academic year (February to November). Immigration New Zealand requires her to have \$20,000 for her living costs. Lucy works on a budget and quickly realises that the \$20,000 requirement will not be enough for the year. Her accommodation alone is \$16,051.43 at Education House. To figure out realistically how much she will require for the year, she estimates her major costs, which include \$1,000 for emergencies. Lucy can see that she will have a deficit of \$4,551.43. She can make up this amount by working approximately five hours per week at the minimum wage rate.

Costs	(\$)
Hall cost	16,051.43
Large purchases: bedding (\$300), winter clothes (\$500), books (\$700)	1,500.00
Reserves for emergency	1,000.00
Entertainment (\$50 per week)	2,000.00
Food (\$100 per week)	4,000.00
Total	24,551.43
	Deficit of \$4,551.43



MONTHLY MARK

Mark has a Wellington Doctoral Scholarship that provides \$32,000 per year towards living costs, but he needs to pay for non-tuition fees and insurance himself. He has already paid for the first year but plans to save up for the second year. He receives \$2,666.66 from the scholarship each month.

Mark lives alone, and his total regular basic costs are \$229 per month plus \$445.35 per week.

Monthly costs	(\$)	Weekly regular costs	(\$)
Power	130.00	Rent	260.00
Internet	70.00	Food/toiletries	120.00
Mobile phone	29.00	Transport	45.35
		Boxing class	20.00
Total	229.00	Total	445.35

He has set up his monthly costs (power, internet, mobile phone) to be paid just after his scholarship is received. But the weekly costs are difficult because some months will require four rent payments, and some will require five. He fixed the problem by planning for five weeks every month.

Budget	(\$)
Monthly scholarship	2,666.66
Minus monthly set costs	-229.00
Remaining funds for weekly costs	= 2,437.66
Divided by 5 weeks	= 487.53
Minus weekly set costs	-445.35
Remainder for other spending per week	= 42.18

Over the year, he will have saved up \$2,193.36 in total, or the equivalent of almost five extra weeks of \$445.35. That will cover his non-tuition fees and insurance and leave some extra in case there are any large, unexpected expenses that come up.

Budgeting worksheet

EXPENSES

Weekly costs	(\$)
Room	
Electricity	
Phone/internet	
Mobile phone	
Groceries/toiletries	
Transport	
Sports/gym/clubs (if paid weekly)	
Appliance rental	
Debts	
Personal spending	
Weekly total	
Total for ___ weeks	
One trimester = 20 weeks	
Two trimesters = 40 weeks	
Full year = 52 weeks	

Budgets need to breathe! A tight budget is harder to stick to, so make sure you are realistic about your spending and include some money for fun.

Occasional costs	(\$)
Holiday travel	
Large items (bicycle, laptop, bed, vehicle)	
Accommodation deposit	
Textbooks, materials, field trips	
Haircuts (\$30–\$100 per haircut)	
Clothes/shoes	
Special occasions	
Sport/gym/clubs (yearly)	
Medical/dental/optical	
Bank fees	
Emergency (\$1,000+ recommended)	
Total	

Study costs	(\$)
Tuition fees	
Non-tuition fees	
Insurance	
Visa application and medical check	
Airfare	
Total	
Grand total (add the total for all three sections)	

INCOME

Weekly income	(\$)
Regular scholarship payments	
Part-time work wages	
Regular family support	
Other	
Weekly total	
Total for ___ weeks	
One trimester = 20 weeks	
Two trimesters = 40 weeks	
Full year = 52 weeks	

One-off income	(\$)
Savings	
Other	
One-off total	
Grand total income (add the total weekly and one-off income)	
Grand total income less grand total expenses	

MY NOTES





Financial survival stories

EXAMPLES FROM STUDENTS

Emilio gets money for living costs deposited into his bank account every two weeks. He always manages to pay the rent and bills. Occasionally, he runs into trouble when big costs come up, such as the cost for renewing his visa or the cost of materials for his industrial design projects at the end of each trimester. When he doesn't have enough, he sometimes borrows from friends and may struggle to pay them back by the time the next big cost hits.

Lesson learnt: Anticipate infrequent costs and make a system to ensure that you have money for them when they come up.

Nadia came to Wellington with \$20,000 for her living expenses for her first year of study. She paid all her hostel fees (which included meals) in advance. She still had almost \$8,000 left over, so she bought a second-hand car and a laptop. She thought that the rest of the money would be enough. After four months, she was low on money due to expensive car repairs, couldn't afford to pay for her day-to-day living costs, and had to sell the car at a loss.

Lesson learnt: Make sure you have enough for essential costs and emergencies and do not overcommit your income.

Azreen was accepted to do a PhD in Psychology, but she didn't get the scholarship she was hoping to get. She was told that it might be possible to get it in her second year, especially once her topic was finalised and her official proposal was accepted. She had enough money to come to Wellington to begin the programme. Unfortunately, she did not get the scholarship for the second year and did not have enough money to continue. She had to stop studying.

Lesson learnt: Scholarships (and jobs) are not guaranteed. You need a back-up plan, or you may be wasting your time and money.

Tianyu was studying on a government scholarship that covered his living costs and tuition fees. He found his courses difficult, but did not reach out to anyone for help. He failed two courses and his scholarship was changed so his living costs were no longer covered. As a result, Tianyu needed to start working part time and asking his parents for money, which caused him additional stress.

Lesson learnt: Ask for help! Academic difficulties can sometimes lead to financial difficulties. Te Taiako—Student Learning's support service might have helped Tianyu to study better, and Mauri Ora—Student Health and Counselling might have helped him see that taking on extra work and study would only make the problem worse.

Stephen had a PhD scholarship. He left his wife and two children behind in his home country. After three months, he used their savings to move the family to New Zealand. The children studied at New Zealand schools and his wife looked for work in a biochemistry lab. She didn't find work in her field and found only casual cleaning and childcare work. The family struggled to afford even basic expenses and, eventually, Stephen's wife and children had to return home. This caused significant stress and financial loss.

Lesson learnt: Most scholarships with living expenses are intended to support one person. There is no support available for international students' families, and nobody is guaranteed to find work. Therefore, the decision to bring a family must be planned carefully and well financed.

Ruiheng was starting his second year of study. His friend Li was also a second-year international student. Li had a job to support him during his study, but still needed to show he had \$15,000 in his bank account for living costs as part of the application to renew his student visa. Ruiheng lent him the money temporarily. Li got his visa, but then he lost the money through gambling. Ruiheng was very upset. When it became clear that he wasn't going to get his money back, Ruiheng had to return home because he did not have enough money available and there was no way that he could support himself through his study.

Lesson learnt: Be very careful with your money. If you lend money to fellow students, be fully aware of the risks you are taking.

Comments from students

▼
"I wish to say that I am greatly impressed and I appreciate the financial support and advice I am receiving from the University."

▼
"Thank you very much for seeing me. Afterwards, I was able to enjoy a good week at uni with considerably less stress over what I would eat and how I would get there."

▼
"You and your colleagues have really got me out of such a bind and allowed me to get back to focusing on my exams and final week of classes."

▼
"The student finance adviser I dealt with was absolutely fabulous and made sure I had a session with her to discuss balancing my finances, as she could tell I was struggling."





Contacts

FINANCIAL QUERIES AND INFORMATION

Student finance advisers

To make an appointment, use our online booking form on our webpage.

- ✉ student-hardship@vuw.ac.nz
- 📍 wgtn.ac.nz/student-finance-advisers

Student fees advisers

- ☎ 0800 04 04 04
- ✉ student-finance@vuw.ac.nz

GENERAL QUERIES AND INFORMATION

Te Haumiri—International Student Experience

Level 4, Hunter Building, Kelburn Campus

- ☎ 04 463 5350
- ✉ wgtn.ac.nz/students/support/international

Te Kopanga—University Accommodation Wellington

- ☎ 04 463 5896
- ✉ accommodation@vuw.ac.nz
- 📍 wgtn.ac.nz/accommodation



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
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TE HERENGA WAKA

KIA ORA Ā-PŪTEA
MONEY MATTERS
2026

A guide for international students