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Foundation in NZ

Targeted foundation programmes for students intent on degree-level study in New Zealand – or even Australia – expertly prepare students for academic success. AMY BAKER finds out more.

With a small population and modest academic infrastructure, compared with its competitors, New Zealand offers a select group of universities for international students to consider, should they be thinking of furthering their academic career overseas. While there is a limited selection, all the tertiary institutions are of high quality, says Derek Chapman, Director of Lincoln University's Foundation Studies, who details further reasons for selecting New Zealand as a study destination.

He says overseas students consider the country because of its high quality of education, the portability of New Zealand degrees to any country in the world, good reports from previous students and the excellent reputation of New Zealand itself as a country, as well as relative value for money. "All New Zealand universities offer a pathway through foundation studies," he explains, "[and] foundation courses have proven to be very popular."

Foundation courses are designed to train overseas students for the rigours of a Western education and enable them to adapt to life and study in the country while also settling in socially. "For international students the foundation course has proven to be better preparation than year 13 at high school," says Chapman. "It has meant that the international students have been able to study with their peer group in a university environment."

Typical course content includes analytical assessment, research skills and themed learning modules depending on a student's future

study plans. For example, at University of Canterbury in Christchurch, Julie Allan, International Marketing Officer, says, "The course has three focuses – academic English, study skills and content knowledge of academic subjects. We offer three streams depending on what degree students wish to undertake – science, business and arts."

Allan attests that most of the intake on these courses is from Asia, although students from Latin America, the Pacific Islands, Africa and Eastern Europe also apply in smaller numbers. "We have 17,000 students on campus and 2,000 of those are international," she describes. "Of those we have students from countries such as the USA and UK who do not generally need to undertake foundation studies and of the rest, some will be going on to postgraduate programmes." Hence, the sector is relatively small but "it is a very important programme and we absolutely need to have foundation study programmes at New Zealand universities," underlines Allan.

At Academic Colleges Group in Auckland, two foundation programmes are offered on behalf of two separate institutions. Kim Harase explains, "The University of Auckland Certificate in Foundation Studies has been taught exclusively by ACG New Zealand International College on behalf of the University of Auckland since 1999. The AUT International Foundation Certificate has been taught exclusively by Norton College, (an independent school managed by ACG), since 2003."

Harase describes growing enrolments in this sector. "Interest in both the University of Auckland Certificate in Foundation Studies and the AUT International Foundation Certificate has grown in the last three years and we expect even larger intakes in 2009," she says, noting that the University of Auckland Certificate in Foundation Studies is recognised by all New Zealand universities and has also been approved for entry to a range of Australian universities, including The Australian National University, Monash University and The University of Adelaide.

At the University of Otago in Dunedin, Grant Hubbard underlines that most foundation students at this institution, however, stay on to continue with their studies. "Our foundation year has an 80 per cent pass rate for international students and of the successful students, 95 per cent enter the University of Otago," he explains. He is confident of the appeal of this sector: "New Zealand universities are consistently ranked in the top universities worldwide and when this is combined with the New Zealand study/living environment and competitive tuition fees, it is the ideal educational mix."



Selection of programmes available

Location	Name of institution	Name of programme	Minimum length of course	Conditional acceptance to uni?
Auckland	Academic Colleges Group	University of Auckland Certificate in Foundation Studies	8 months	yes
Auckland	Academic Colleges Group	AUT International Foundation Certificate	8 months	yes
Lincoln	Lincoln University	Lincoln University Certificate in Foundation Studies	24 weeks	yes
Otago	University of Otago	University of Otago Foundation Year	28 weeks	yes
Christchurch	University of Canterbury	Certificate in Foundation Studies	26 weeks	yes
Rotorua	Waiariki Institute of Technology	Foundation Studies	16 weeks	yes