**Ōritetanga**
Learner
Success

Tertiary Education
Commission
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

# Best Practice Guidelines to Support Refugee-Background Tertiary Learners in Aotearoa New Zealand

## Authors

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# Contents

# Kupu whakataki

He hunga ākonga hohe, ko te tikanga tē arohia, ngā ākonga whai takenga rerenga. He tino iti iho te nui o tā rātou uru, whai wāhi, tā rātou whakaoti hoki i te mātauranga matua i tō ō rātou hoa kāore i te whai takenga rerenga, ina koa kāore ngā whakahaere mātauranga matua e āta aro ana ki ō rātou āhuatanga matatini.

Nā te āhua o ngā maioro me piki e ngā ākonga whai takenga rerenga i tō rātou ara ki roto te mātauranga matua, ka whēuaua pea te whai i taua ara. Ina hapa i ngā whakahaere mātauranga matua ngā whai wāhitanga ki te tautoko i a rātou, ka uaua pea te putanga o te ihu. Ka whakaitia ngā herenga pūwhenua anō ā-ao me ngā mahi pūwhenua anō ā-motu, taea noatia ngā tukunga a nga ākonga whai takenga rerenga ki te ohaoha me te pāpori, e aua hapanga.

Ahakoa ngā tauārai matatini kei mua i te aroaro o ngā ākonga whai takenga rerenga i roto i te mātauranga matua, e tuhituhia ana ētahi tauira o "ngā ritenga papai" i roto i te rangahau ā-ao, e tiritiria ana hoki/ranei mā ngā kōtuitui taunaki. Ka kōrero āmikihia i te pūrongo rangahau e haere tahi ana me ēnei Aratohu Ritenga Papai Rawa te nuinga o aua mahi. He mea whakaputa e te Kōtuitui Mātauranga Matua ā-Motu o Aotearoa hei tautoko i ngā Ākonga Whai Takenga Rerenga, ā, kei roto ko te mōhiotanga me ngā wheako o ngā ākonga whai takenga rerenga puta noa i te whenua.[1]

Ko te whāinga o ēnei Aratohu Ritenga Papai Rawa, he mea whakaahu mai i tēnei pūrongo, he āwhina i ngā whakahaere mātauranga matua ki te whai i ngā anga angitu aro ki te ākonga e pai ake ai te tautoko i ngā ākonga whai takenga rerenga. Mā ngā mahi pērā ka puta pea ngā rerekētanga whaitake auroa. Mō te ākonga whai takenga rerenga, mā te whiwhi tohu mātauranga matua i te whenua hou i rarau iho ai ia, ka taea e tērā:

› te whakaū nō taua takiwā hou ia me tōna rite ki te whai wāhi ki te ohu mahi me te pāpori whānui atu
› te āwhina ki te whakapūmau hononga pāpori
› te tuku i a ia ki te whakapūmau anō i tōna tuakiri ngaio tōmua
› te whiwhi i te tū motuhake taha pūtea mā te whiwhi mahi e nui ake ai te utu i a ia
› te hanga i ngā whanaketanga takatika ka horahora haere pēnei i ngā pōkare e hora whakawaho ana i runga i tētahi hāpua, mai i te tangata ki te whānau, ki te hapori me te porihanga.

I ngā aratohu nei:
› e tautuhi ana mātou i tēnei mea te ākonga whai takenga rerenga
› e tautohu ana i ngā ara maha e haerea ai e rātou ki roto i Aotearoa me te mātauranga matua
› e miramira ana ētahi o ō rātou āhuatanga noa, ā,
› e whakarāpopoto ana i te horopaki tōrangapū ā-whenua e pā nga ki te hekenga uruhi, me tā Aotearoa urupare ki tērā. Me mahara tonu taua horopaki i a tātou e āta whai whakaaro ana me pēhea e pai rawa ai te urupare, te whakatinana rānei i ngā aratohu ritenga papai rawa i roto i tēnā, i tēnā whakahaere mātauranga matua kia karohia ai te whai i te "aronga kotahi anake mō te katoa."

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1    I whakatūria te Kōtuitui i te 2019.

# Introduction

Refugee-background (RB) learners are an active but frequently overlooked learner group. They access, participate in, and complete tertiary education at significantly lower rates than their non-refugee-background peers when tertiary education organisations (TEOs) do not accommodate their complex situation.

As a result of the barriers RB learners face, their journey into and through tertiary education can be challenging. Where TEOs miss opportunities to support them to realise their potential, they can struggle to achieve. Such missed opportunities also undermine international resettlement obligations and national resettlement efforts, as well as RB learners' contributions to the economy and society.

While RB learners within tertiary education face complex barriers, many instances of "good practice" are being documented in international research and/or shared through advocacy networks. The research report that accompanies and informs these Best Practice Guidelines details much of this work.[2] It was produced by Aotearoa New Zealand's National Tertiary Network to Support Refugee Background Learners (NTN) and includes the knowledge and experiences of RB learners across the country.[3]

Growing out of the report, these Best Practice Guidelines (BPGs) aim to help TEOs to adopt learner-centred success frameworks that better support RB learners. Such efforts can make a real and long-lasting difference. For RB learners, obtaining a tertiary-level qualification in their country of resettlement can:

› affirm that they belong in a new setting and are ready to participate in the workforce and wider society
› help establish rich social connections
› allow them to re-establish their former professional identities
› lead to financial independence via higher-paid employment
› generate a ripple effect of positive development, outward from the individual to family, community and society.

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2   The research report is available on the Tertiary Education Commission's website, www.tec.govt.nz, Refugee-background learners page.
3   The Network was established in 2019.
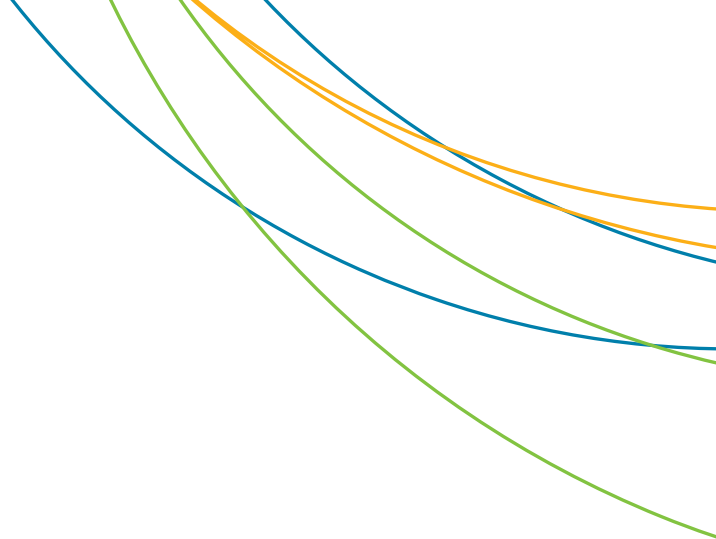
In these guidelines, we:

› define RB learners

› identify the diverse pathways along which they travel into New Zealand and tertiary education

› highlight some of their common characteristics, and

› briefly outline the geopolitical context concerning forced migration and New Zealand's response to it. Keeping this context in mind while considering how best to respond to or implement the BPGs within each TEO will allow TEOs to avoid "one-size-fits-all" approaches.

# Definition, pathways and characteristics of refugee-background learners

In the remainder of these guidelines, we use the term "learner" to refer to **refugee-background learners**. We adopt "learner" rather than "student" to refer to adults taking part in non-compulsory higher education.[4] The term "refugee-background" recognises any person who has entered, or is resident in, Aotearoa New Zealand as a result of one of six diverse pathways:

**1. The UNHCR Quota Programme (see also <u>Geopolitical context and New Zealand's response section</u>):**

   › Most of New Zealand's refugee-background population have been and continue to be resettled through this pathway on the basis of humanitarian need.

   › Aotearoa New Zealand currently resettles 1,500 quota refugees annually through the Red Cross Resettlement Programme, which aims to meet their basic needs within the NZ Refugee Resettlement Strategy.

   › Upon arrival, they gain permanent residence status.

**2. Refugee and protection status (claim for asylum):**

   › Some individuals file for refugee and protection status (asylum) upon arrival to, or after physically living in, Aotearoa New Zealand.

   › Lodging an asylum claim is a long, complex and selective process – most applications are rejected.

   › Those filing an asylum claim are often less resourced or supported than those entering through other pathways.

**3. Family reunification (Refugee Family Support Category):**

   › Some individuals may be sponsored to enter and reside in Aotearoa New Zealand by former refugee family members.

   › Family members commit to meet these individuals' resettlement needs.

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4    For more discussion of terminology and some of the reasons why some learners may choose not to identify with the use of "refugee-background", see the accompanying research report available on the Tertiary Education Commission's website, www.tec.govt.nz, Refugee-background learners page.

## 4. Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS):

› A small number of individuals arrive with community organisation sponsorship (since 2017), where a community organisation (CO) commits to meet their resettlement needs.

› These individuals are required to have higher levels of English proficiency and education, and to form relationships with the CO prior to resettlement.
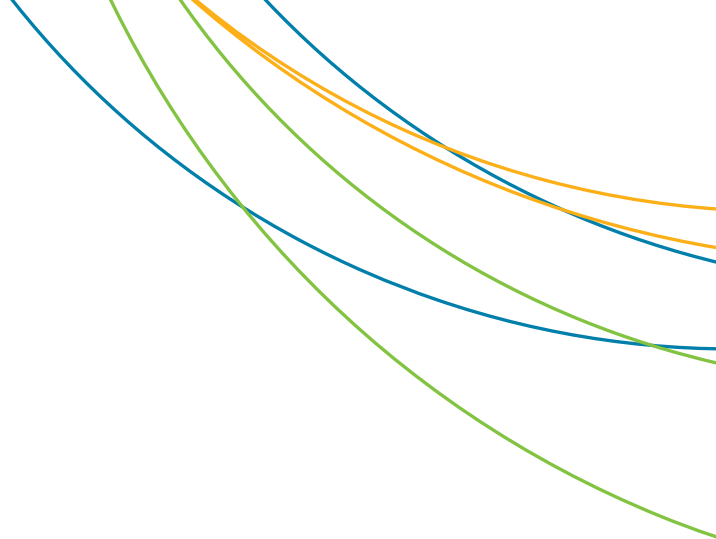
## 5. Other migrant pathways:

› A few individuals may identify as "refugee-background" or have refugee-like migration histories (fleeing conflict or disaster) even if they migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand on a non-humanitarian class visa (e.g., student or work class visas) and have not claimed asylum, or they live in New Zealand and never held a humanitarian-class visa.

## 6. Descent from former refugees:

› Many individuals identifying as RB learners were born in Aotearoa New Zealand to parents (or were raised by other immediate family) of refugee descent.

› Learners descended from former refugees are likely to have been, or remain, impacted by intergenerational experiences of forced migration, and are often called upon to support their families.

Given this diversity, we recommend adopting a broad definition of refugee-background learner, in order not to exclude any groups from targeted institutional provisioning and support.

This diversity can also make it challenging to identify the characteristics of RB learners. However, much research into culturally and linguistically diverse learners, including those from refugee backgrounds, has shown that RB learners often:
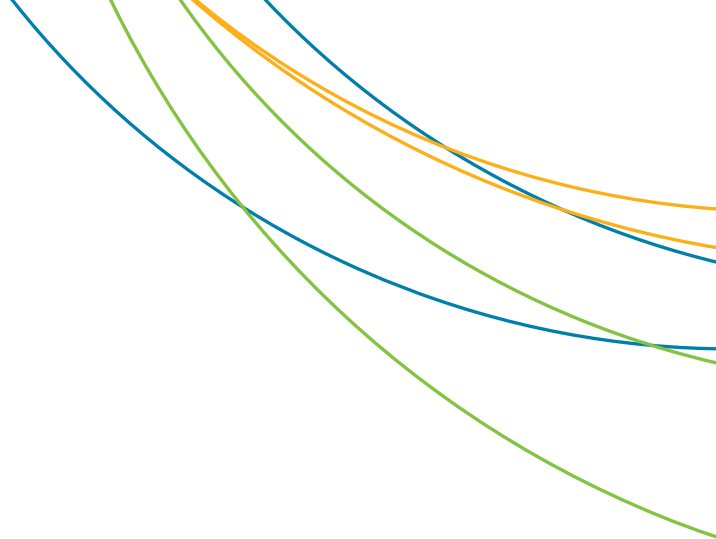
›   are multilingual

›   may have experienced disruptions to their education

›   tend to come from low socio-economic backgrounds

›   have multiple commitments

›   have diverse identities

›   may have experienced trauma

›   are likely to have experienced discrimination, and

›   are motivated, resourceful and resilient.[5]

To foster appropriate and responsive TEO policy and implementation frameworks, keep these characteristics in mind, and work with RB learners in a partnership model to design your supports. These guidelines may provide a starting place for such collaborations.

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5   More details about these characteristics and the assets and challenges they can create can be found in the accompanying research report available on the Tertiary Education Commission's website, www.tec.govt.nz, Refugee-background learners page.

# Geopolitical context and New Zealand's response

UNHCR estimates in early 2023 indicated that there are 117.2 million forced migrants worldwide, including 29.3 million refugees and 5.6 million asylum seekers. In response to this ongoing situation, Aotearoa New Zealand is one of 29 countries that have signed up to the United Nations Convention on Refugees and contributes collectively to the resettlement of 1 percent of the formally designated refugees through the New Zealand Refugee Quota Programme. Since New Zealand first officially recognised refugees in 1944, over 35,000 refugees from over 26 countries have been resettled here, with thousands more accepted via the alternate resettlement pathways noted in the **Definition, pathways and characteristics of refugee-background learners section**.

International agencies recognise education as a critical tool to help individuals rebuild their lives after disaster and displacement. TEOs in New Zealand and around the world play a vital role in ensuring that all individuals, including those living in circumstances resulting from forced migration, have access to inclusive and quality educational opportunities. In Aotearoa New Zealand, all TEOs – universities, Te Pūkenga (polytechnics), private training establishments (PTEs) and wānanga – are required by law to provide a fair, safe, diverse and inclusive environment that promotes equal opportunities for all learners, including RB learners. Some TEOs now recognise RB learners in their equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies, and many RB learners can apply for:

› student allowances
› student loans
› foundation (bridging) programmes
› named awards and scholarships specifically for RB learners.

However, not all TEOs have specific EDI action plans for RB learners. RB learners are not currently named as a formal equity group in Ministry of Education policy, which places some limits on how individual TEOs allocate resources to them. There is also currently no nationwide data collection about enrolment, retention and completion rates of RB learners in the tertiary sector, which undermines response efforts.[6]

In response to this current global and national situation, we have generated these Best Practice Guidelines from research and lived experience of staff and learners across the country. We hope they will act as an institutional map to enhance learner experiences and learning outcomes, as well as encourage TEOs to better deliver on their EDI commitments.

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6    Not all RB learners qualify for student allowances, student loans and/or named awards and scholarships. Several factors may restrict or inhibit an RB learner's access to these provisions; these are covered in depth in the RB learner research report. In addition, not all TEOs provide foundation programmes.

# Best Practice Guidelines to support refugee-background learners

The Best Practice Guidelines are organised into:

A. **Pre-access:** outreach and relationship building

B. **Access:** pathways and admission

C. **Participation:** transition, engagement and progression

D. **Attainment:** completion and graduation

E. **Transitions out:** graduate destinations

They are designed for a range of users within a TEO. Ideally senior leaders and managers will read all guidelines, but individual staff may focus in on the section, area or phase most pertinent to their responsibilities and work programmes.

# A. Pre-access: outreach and relationship building

1. **Learn** about the refugee background (RB) communities in your town, city and wider region and build relationships with them. Which national, ethnic, linguistic and faith communities live there? Which are well established and which are relatively new? How many of their people (young and older) enrol in your TEO?

   › Social service organisations, resettlement agencies and refugee-led community groups are excellent sources of this knowledge.

2. **Attend** RB community events (if invited) to learn about community aspirations, values and needs.

   › Consider how your TEO can support these initiatives.

3. **Work** with refugee-led community groups and resettlement agencies to develop appropriate information for prospective RB learners on your TEO's website, as well as via social media outlets and hard copy.
    › Offering to compensate individuals for their time (if possible) is always appreciated!
    › Creating materials in both English and the language(s) of the communities you are targeting greatly increases the accessibility of this information for RB learners and their families.
    › Ensure the information is clearly laid out and comprehensive.

4. **Distribute** information about your TEO to secondary schools, English language providers, and other locations and services that are frequently accessed by RB people (ideally, in person).
    › Remember some social media sites may be used by RB learners and their families more than physical services.

5. **Inform** schools about possible pathways and career funding for prospective RB tertiary learners.
    › Ensure that college counsellors and career advisors are made aware of this information.
    › Schools should distribute this information to all enrolled RB learners, not just to high-achieving students with strong English-language proficiency.

6. **Host** "open days" (e.g., campus tours, information sessions) for prospective RB learners, their families and community members.
    › Providing translators at these events will help to ensure that valuable information is communicated and accurately understood.

7. **Host** RB community events for free (or a discounted rate) so potential RB learners and their families become familiar with your TEO and feel welcome and safe there.

8. **Highlight** stories about RB learners' activities and achievements on your institution's website and media platforms.
    › Word these stories carefully to avoid stereotyping or romanticising RB people.

# B. Access: pathways and admission

1. **Ensure** there is a "refugee background" category on your TEO's enrolment form.
   › Including a definition of "refugee background" on the enrolment form and what your TEO will do with this information will build trust and help RB learners to decide whether it feels right for them to select it (see the **Definition, pathways and characteristics of refugee-background learners section**).
   › Collecting this data will allow your TEO to better understand its RB learners and inform responsive EDI actions.

2. **Offer** free or discounted childcare for prospective RB learners.
   › This can reassure many RB learners – particularly RB women or relatives acting in place of a parent – that they can spend quality time on their studies and that their children or younger family members will be looked after.
   › See what childcare you currently offer for other equity groups and low-income students; match this if possible.
   › If your institution doesn't offer childcare, explore creating this option and giving all student equity groups access to it.

3. **Create** targeted entry scholarships and/or grants for RB learners.
   › The broader these scholarships can be, the better for academic outcomes (e.g., covering full tuition and fees, accommodation, public transport, living costs).
   › Partner with external organisations to generate scholarships (e.g., for inspiration, look at the national Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship programme).
   › Consider what RB learner groups are not currently targeted and address gaps. For example, there are no current financial awards that support RB men.

4. **Distribute** information about other financial awards and opportunities to prospective RB learners and their families in English and their own languages.
   › This might include but not be limited to awards for learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, first-in-family scholarships, and/or awards for high school marks/achievement.

5.  **Make** free bridging programmes available to all prospective RB learners.

6.  **Support** RB learners to understand Fees Free eligibility when enrolling.

    › RB learners may need extra support to understand their entitlement under Fees Free.

7.  **Include** broad content in bridging programmes, including "soft skills" such as IT/technology use, alongside English language instruction.

8.  **Provide** access to appropriate technology to support learning, and/or bursaries to help purchase of laptops or other devices.

9.  **Recognise** RB learners' previous tertiary qualifications.

    › Or if this is not possible, find ways to recognise achievement and waive the need to take certain courses (depending on area of study).

    › Create a written assessment for the prospective RB learners' chosen course/programme of study to test students' subject-specific knowledge.

    › Consider having a "professional conversation" with the RB learner to assess their knowledge about a subject/course. The "examiners" could be programme heads or course coordinators; they can determine which courses (if any) the RB learner needs to take to have their courses/qualifications recognised.

    › Consider English language proficiency when assessing previously acquired tertiary qualifications, but also whether the subject requires fluency/high proficiency to communicate knowledge (e.g., a degree in mathematics or chemistry may not require as much English as a degree in social work or political science).

10. **Establish and protect** general entrance pathways for RB learners (e.g., granting enrolment access to RB learners at your institution, even if they do not meet standard NCEA requirements).
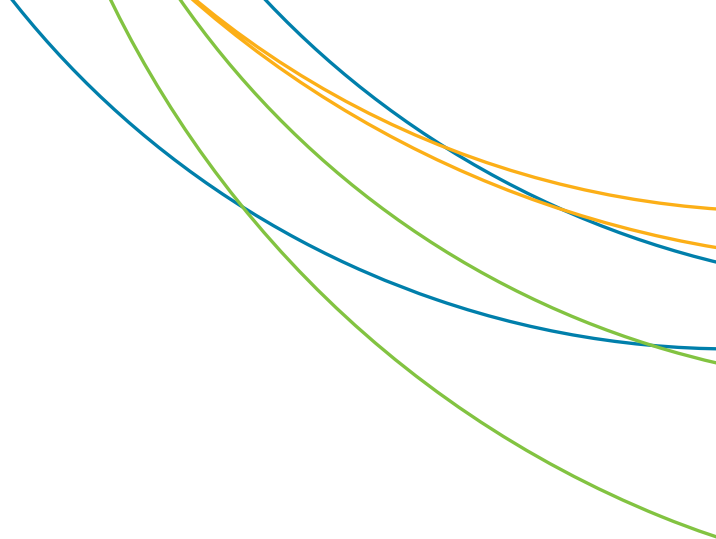
**11. Create** a targeted entry category for RB learners into specialist programmes (e.g., Law, Medicine, Engineering, Architecture, Dentistry, Teaching).

**12. Develop** a mentorship programme that connects prospective RB learners with currently enrolled RB learners (or students of a similar background).

› Offering worthwhile incentives for both sets of learners can help boost the programme's sustainability and attractiveness.

› Don't overburden tuākana (mentors) with mentoring responsibilities; they should not do the work of paid staff.

› MATES (Great Potentials Foundation) in Auckland provides a good example of a successful mentorship programme in practice.

# C. Participation: transition, engagement and progression

## Institutional preparedness and capacity

1. **Designate** RB learners as an equity group within your TEO's EDI policy.

2. **Generate** regular data reports on RB learner enrolment, retention and achievements to inform EDI action planning and targeted support.

3. **Create** an RB learner advisor position to assist enrolled RB learners.
   › Ideally, this person should have a refugee background, but if this is not possible, they should have a similar background and a rich understanding of refugee-background-related issues.
   › This person can use data reports to inform actions 4–8 below.
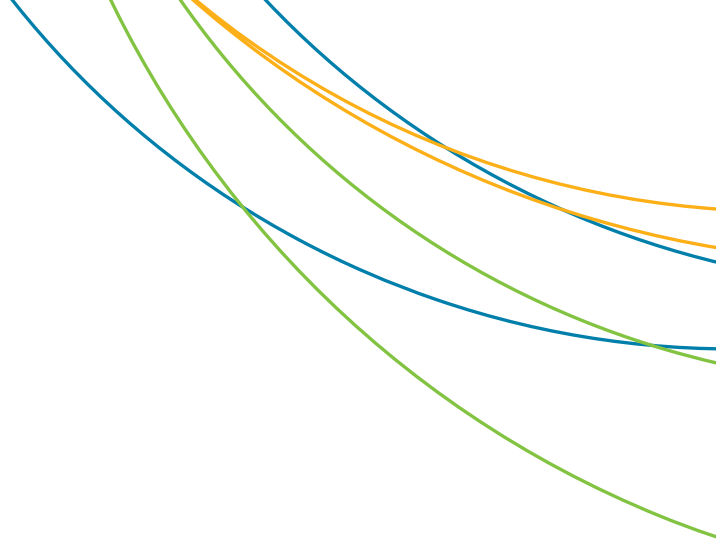   › Integrate the RB learner advisor position into the wider student support team, so they can access appropriate staff networks for support.

4. **Establish** an RB learner advocate within each academic unit (e.g., programme, faculty or other relevant grouping).
   › Provide information about advocates on a web page for RB learners, or distribute it by email.
   › Ensure RB learner advocates are compensated for their time and/or recognised through titles or awards.

5. **Resource** the TEO network of RB learner advocates to:
   › organise activities for RB learners in their academic units (see **Participation: transition, engagement and progression – RB learners' connections**, point 2)
   › monitor RB learners' performance to provide targeted support where needed and enhance retention and achievement
   › liaise across your TEO to provide RB learners with holistic support.

6. **Form** a pan-TEO network of RB learner advocates and associated staff.

   › Ideally, this should be run by your RB learner advisor, but anyone with passion and commitment can get things started!

   › This network can generate EDI responses across TEOs. It can be a focal point for advocating to senior leadership, including for RB learner-focused cultural competency training for teaching and support staff.

   › Ensure RB learner advocates and associated staff members are compensated for their time and/or recognised through titles or awards.

7. **Explore** possibilities for your TEO to become a private organisation sponsor for refugees.

   › Private organisation sponsors are organisations that "sponsor" refugees, committing to provide them with a community orientation and settlement assistance for up to two years after arrival in New Zealand.

   › This could connect into other TEO student leadership programmes or staff corporate responsibility initiatives.

8. **Establish** anti-discrimination, anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-ableism policies and promptly address any associated issues that may affect RB learners.

   › Bring an intersectional lens to recognise compounding factors such as those associated with race, gender and refugee background, or sexuality, refugee background and disability.

## RB learners' connections

1. **Host** orientation events for incoming undergraduate and postgraduate RB learners.
   › Offer a guided tour and a pōwhiri (where possible) to orient RB learners "on the ground" and to mana whenua.
   › Involve members of your pan-TEO network (RB learner advisor, RB learner advocates and other relevant staff; see **Participation: transition, engagement and progression – Institutional preparedness and capacity**, point 5).
   › Connect learners to core services: student learning; health and counselling; library; financial services; and technology.

2. **Generate** an email list of RB learners that can be used to share vital information about the RB learner advisor and advocates, events, clubs, services, grants and other resources or opportunities.
   › This list can be generated via enrolment data (if you collect RB learner data).
   › Regular emails help RB learners feel seen and connected.

3. **Create** a pan-TEO mentorship programme that pairs newly enrolled RB learners with those further along in the same (or related) area of study.

   › A mentorship programme could be a great opportunity to connect postgraduate and undergraduate RB learners, and encourage retention.

4. **Ensure** appropriate facilities are available for RB learners.

   › Provide areas to worship, social spaces to hang out, computer areas with appropriate technological support, food outlets that cater to cultural preferences and religious requirements, and quiet, warm study areas.

   › Postgraduate and undergraduate RB learners may need different things.

5. **Provide** culturally sensitive physical and mental health services.

   › Some RB learners may not identify or feel comfortable with "mainstream" or "Westernised" health care practice and practitioners; ensure there are multiple options for RB learners (e.g., a female doctor/clinical psychologist of a migrant or refugee background for female RB learners).

6. **Enable** diverse opportunities for RB learners to meet and socialise with one another, and with other learners.

   › If these events already exist (e.g., through a student club), funding can help boost their success!

7. **Establish** and/or support an RB learners' organisation or club through:

   › building organisational capacity to run meetings, keep minutes and plan ahead

   › funding for activities

   › providing spaces for meetings or activities.

8. **Provide** access to technology needed for study.

   › Laptops, in particular, can be very expensive – consider whether your organisation has the capacity to rent out laptops or tablets to RB learners.

9. **Continue** all of the above to support RB learners as they move through your TEO.

## Classroom support

1.  **Incorporate** course material that honours, acknowledges and promotes diversity.
    › Include thoughtful information that avoids stereotypes about different cultures, communities and regions of the world.

2.  **Pre-record** teaching content (and live classes if possible).
    › Recorded materials can support students with English as a second or other language to take the time they need to understand the content.
    › Add subtitles to recordings.

3.  **Slow down** the pace and delivery of course content; use good diction.
    › Use repetition and paraphrasing.
    › Use physical reminders, such as breaks in materials and pauses when teaching, to help RB learners follow course content.

4.  **Design** opportunities for RB learners to interact and form connections with other learners in their classes.
    › Facilitate inclusive small group discussions, especially in large classes.
    › Avoid singling out or calling upon RB learners to speak for their ethnic, religious or cultural group or what might be happening in their "home" lands.

5.  **Run** study sessions for RB learners (with refreshments if possible!)
    › Study sessions can be subject- or class-specific, or can address more general study skills.
    › If possible, bring ESOL support and/or student learning staff to study sessions.

6.  **Allow** diverse forms of submission (e.g., typed, handwritten, oral).
    › Some students may not have access to the technology to type assignments, and others might not yet feel able to express their knowledge in writing.

## Financial and other support

1. **Provide** student allowance and course planning guidance.
   › Student allowance guidelines for RB learners can change and be quite complex. It's important that staff are well informed and check in with RB learners about this throughout their programmes.
   › Nominate a team or pair in Student Finances to be the "experts" on RB learner student finance complexities. They can train other Student Finance staff in this, and be a trusted point of contact for RB learners and staff across the organisation.

2. **Increase** the duration and amounts of financial support available to RB learners throughout their programme of study.
   › Many financial resources for RB learners focus on initial access (entry) to tertiary education rather than retention and completion.
   › Create financial resources based on equity group status.

3. **Partner** with external organisations to financially support RB learners with scholarships, grants and paid internships.
   › For inspiration, see the national Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship programme.
   › Set up an RB learners' portfolio within fund-raising arms of your TEO to establish targeted scholarships, prizes and awards.

4. **Reserve** funding to enable RB learners to cover (or partially cover) the costs of off-campus activities such as unpaid internships, study abroad programmes, sports and outdoor or non-formal education programmes.
   › Non-formal education activities greatly enhance formal educational achievements, build social connections and support effective resettlement.
   › Ask student unions to add RB learners as a group to reserve funding for social and cultural events.

## Engagement and progression

1. **Develop** funded placements and internships for RB learners.
   - › If you are a stakeholder external to a TEO, consider offering paid internships for prospective RB learners.
   - › If you are a TEO staff member, reach out to organisations that could be receptive to developing a funded internship for RB learners, and/or see how you can support and mentor RB learners in current (or future) placements.
   - › Advertise placement opportunities and circulate this information through your TEO's RB learner network and advocates.

2. **Match** RB learners appropriately with prospective employers/internship locations to ensure employers provide safe, respectful and quality learning environments.
   - › Ensure employers/organisations hosting a placement opportunity have a point of contact at your TEO in case they require advice/assistance on supporting an RB learner.

3. **Encourage** RB learners to make appointments with Career Services throughout their tertiary education journey.
   - › The earlier that RB learners connect with Career Services, the better!

4. **Organise** a career expo for RB learners to connect them with prospective employers.
   - › Ensure these employers have a good track record of supporting their employees – particularly those with diverse backgrounds.

5. **Host** interactive workshops that focus on work placements, job readiness, and "soft skills" such as teamwork, professional interaction and presentations.
   - › RB learners may not know what to expect in an Aotearoa New Zealand work environment, especially if they've previously worked overseas. Many courses/programmes do not specifically prepare students for this.

6. **Inform** RB learners about postgraduate opportunities at your institution and beyond.
   - › RB learners may not be aware of the different programmes available or their potential benefits.

# D. Attainment: completion and graduation

1. **Host** a graduation celebration for RB learners and their families.
2. **Highlight** graduating RB learners in your TEO's social media and publications.
3. **Establish** an RB learner alumni network.
4. **Provide** information about postgraduate and scholarship opportunities to final-year RB learners and remind them of these when they graduate.

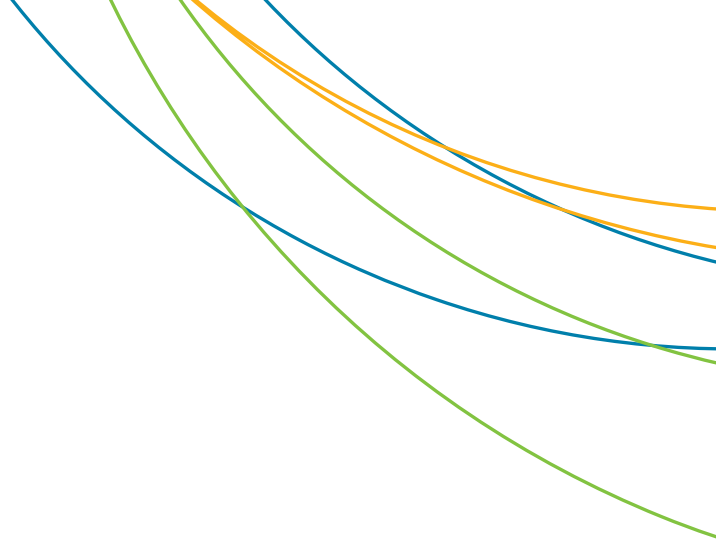# E. Transitions out: graduate destinations

## Employment

1. **Facilitate** networking opportunities for RB graduates that connect them with prospective employers and recently employed peers.
2. **Identify** mentor(s) for RB graduates **within** workplaces/industries they aspire to enter.
   › Connecting RB graduates with mentors can help increase their understanding of the industry and workplace, and accelerate their job readiness.
3. **Identify** mentor(s) for RB graduates **external to** workplaces/industries they aspire to enter.
   › Connecting RB learners with mentors outside the workplace can allow them to safely interpret/discuss situations and events that have occurred.
4. **Host** interactive workshops that focus on work placements, job readiness, and "soft skills" such as teamwork, professional interaction, and presentations.
   › RB learners may not know what to expect in an Aotearoa New Zealand work environment, especially if they've previously worked overseas. Many courses/programmes do not specifically prepare students for this.

5.  **Stay connected** with RB learners two to three years beyond graduation to be a point of reference for career guidance.

    › Early career aspirations may not always go to plan once in the workforce. It's important that institutions stay connected with RB learners a few years after graduation to be a source of support and advice as they navigate their first years of employment.

    › Some RB learners and employers may encounter difficulties navigating cultural differences and workplace expectations. It's important that both parties have a point of reference to contact to discuss issues if they arise.
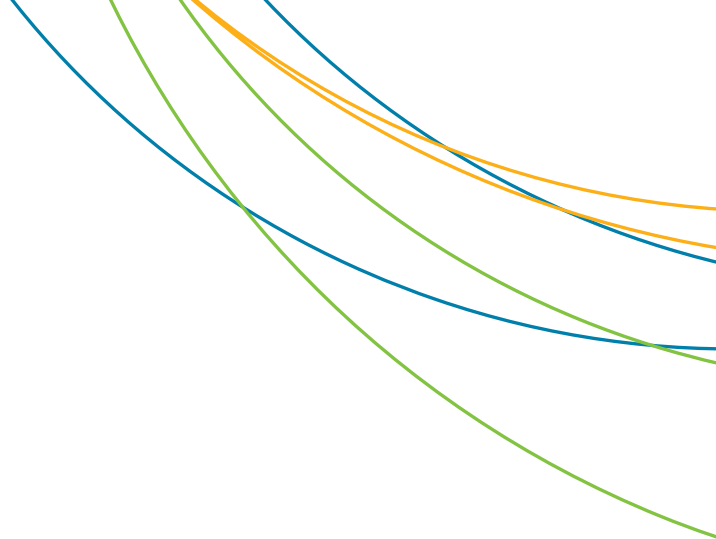
## Postgraduate studies

1.  **Create** financial awards or grants for postgraduate RB learners.

    › In New Zealand, the only targeted financial award available to some RB learners is the Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship (for young RB women).

2.  **Design** postgraduate admission pathways for RB learners.

    › For example, reserve slots in postgraduate programmes for RB learners, or potentially waive/lower admissions requirements for RB learners.

    › Ensure that those who have waived/lowered admissions requirements have strong reasons for doing so (e.g., have the learner take a subject-specific assessment test) to ensure that the learner is/will be capable of succeeding within the programme.

3.  **Recognise** RB learners' previously earned tertiary qualifications.

    › Many RB learners will have acquired tertiary qualifications in their home country. It is always better to fully honour previously earned tertiary qualifications, but even recognising achievement and waiving the need to take certain courses (depending on area of study) can go a long way in making tertiary education more accessible/attainable for RB learners.

4.  **Host** a postgraduate orientation event specifically for RB learners, which can sit alongside the more mainstream orientation events (see **Participation: transition, engagement and progression – RB learners' connections**, point 1).

5. **Require** cultural competency training for supervisors and others to enhance RB learners' academic and social outcomes, including clear supervision agreements.
   › Co-generating aspirations and expectations early in an RB learner's research trimester/ year can help the working relationship between supervisor and supervisee flourish.

6. **Host** writing retreats, writing workshops, lab groups, or postgraduate social events that are geared toward postgraduate RB learners.
   › Postgraduate degrees can often feel isolating for any learner, especially ones with heavy independent research components. These events can help build camaraderie and collegiality between learners of similar backgrounds.

7. **Create** targeted employment opportunities for RB postgraduate learners, including:
   › teaching assistant, research assistant and/or tutoring positions
   › funded postgraduate placements.

8. **Host** interactive workshops that focus on work placements, job readiness, and "soft skills" such as teamwork, professional interaction, and presentations (see **Participation: transition, engagement and progression – RB learners' connections**, point 1).

9. **Provide** funds to support RB learners' attendance at conferences, symposia and other professional gatherings.

10. **Consider** advocating for the wider creation of a postgraduate student allowance.
   › The lack of a postgraduate student allowance affects all New Zealand tertiary learners, but has an acute impact on RB learners and other learner equity groups.

11. **Create** a submission or final trimester stipend/financial award for RB learners nearing the completion of their programmes of study.
   › These submission stipends can provide relieve financial pressures, enabling learners to complete their qualification more easily.

# Concluding thoughts

Refugee-background learners are diverse and resourceful, and want to achieve in tertiary study. They come with an array of strengths and characteristics that TEOs in Aotearoa New Zealand can learn from, build on and augment. They also continue to face structural barriers accessing and progressing through tertiary study.

These Best Practice Guidelines provide specific, targeted actions, which have been generated from research, practice and the lived experience of RB learners and education professionals across the tertiary sector. They will make a difference to RB learners' experiences and educational outcomes if implemented in a context where all stakeholders are responsible and accountable, and where concepts, responsibility and actions are communicated clearly, systematically and deliberately.

A strong, unified tertiary voice remains necessary to recognise RB learners as an equity group in educational policy and to promote best practice to effect change.

For more detailed insights and evidence, please refer to the accompanying research report available on the Tertiary Education Commission's website, **www.tec.govt.nz**, Refugee-background learners page.

To get more involved, please join the **Aotearoa New Zealand National Tertiary Network to Support Refugee Background Learners (NTN)**.

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