



19 June 2023

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Kaizu via FYI

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Tēnā koe Kaizu

OIA request 22/23 0871 Request for Citizenship Timeframes

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 19 May 2023.

You requested –

- *1. Could I please request the following data for citizenship application by grant (submitted online in January 2023 only)?*

1.1 Total applications submitted

1.2 Number of applications passed the automated checks

1.3 Number of applications failed the automated checks and percentage breakdown (e.g. 20% failed photo, 30% failed presence requirements, etc.)

1.4 Number of applications that have been approved

1.5 Number of applications that are being processed

1.6 Number of applications that are waiting to be allocated to a case officer

1.7 Number of applications in each bucket

2. Regarding the buckets

"Bucket 1 – Applications from Bucket 2 that were not automatically able to go to Buckets 3, 4, 5 or 6, and that have been pre-assessed by an administrator for completeness.

Bucket 2 – All applications begin in this queue and are filtered to other queues using system logic. Applications that have not automatically able to go to Buckets 3, 4, 5 and 6 remain in this queue until they are picked up by an administrator and pre-assessed for completeness, before then being moved to Bucket 1."

2.1 Does this mean applications that aren't able to go to bucket 3, 4, 5 or 6 will go to bucket 1?

Or only applications that are incomplete will go to bucket 1.

2.2 Can applications in bucket 1 be moved to another bucket (for some reasons, e.g. system error that has been fixed/corrected by an administrator) or will remain in bucket 1 until a case officer is assigned?

2.3 Are applications in bucket 1 checked by the automated checks every week (like the ones in bucket 2)?

3. Sharing the results of automated checks

Before the implementation of the automated checks, applications were process based on the principal of "first come first served".

However, now the ones that pass the automate checks will be processed/approved fast (within one month or every faster). The ones that fail will have to wait for around 10 months to be allocated.

This reduces the process time for many applications by sacrificing the ones that failed the automated checks.

3.1 Can you please confirm if the above is correct?

If so, do you care about the fairness for the applicants whose applications failed (or will fail) the automated checks?

Or it doesn't matter as long as DIA can process the vast majority of the applications fast to make DIA look good.

3.2 By sharing the results of the automated checks (e.g. failed photo requirements) the applicant would be able to submit a new one, which might speed up the process.

Why is this (sharing the results of the automated checks) not considered by DIA?

'Bucket' is an internal word we use. Essentially it means workstream. When you apply, your application is triaged into a workstream with similar applications. Putting applications into workstreams is an internal process which allows the Department to assign LISOs to process similar types of applications based on their skills. Given this, we have replaced the word bucket with workstream in the answers to your response.

I have attached Appendix A with this letter, which shows the following tables with information as at 7 June 2023:

- **Table one:** Citizenship by Grant applications submitted online between 1 January and 31 January 2023 by status.
- **Table two:** Citizenship by Grant applications received online between 1 January 2023 and 31 January 2023 by workstream.
- **Table three:** Citizenship by Grant applications received online between 1 January 2023 and 31 January 2023 by automated check results.
- **Table four:** Citizenship by Grant workstream definitions.

These tables provide responses to questions 1-1.7. Responses to the rest of your questions are provided below.

Question 2 response

Background

All applications begin in workstream 2 and are filtered to other workstreams using system logic. The applications that are not automatically able to go into workstreams 3, 4, 5 and 6 remain in workstream 2 until they are picked up by an administrator and pre-assessed for completeness, before being moved to workstream 1.

Question 2.1 response

The pre-assessment process is a temporary one intended to get applications to a 'complete and correct' state so that when a Life and Identity Services Officer (LISO) picks up an application, they have all the information and documents required to be able to assess it. This means applications can be assessed more quickly. Once a pre-assessor has done what they can to prepare an application for processing they will transfer it to workstream 1. The LISO's who are assigned to workstreams 1 and 2 will pick up the oldest application regardless of what workstream it is in. Workstream 1 and 2 applications are the same except some will have had some basic processing done. No assessment of eligibility is applied to these applications before they are assigned to a LISO.

Question 2.2 response

No, applications that have been transferred to workstream 1 will remain there until they are assigned to a LISO for processing.

I can also clarify that pre-assessors do not fix or correct system errors. They only look at applications to do things like:

- making sure they have all the required documents,
- checking that the personal details match the documents provided,
- checking that the photo is suitable.

Question 2.3 response

Yes, the system logic is run over all workstreams each week. The processing done by pre-assessors will not change the outcome of any of the checks as it is purely administrative.

Question 3 and 3.1 response

Most LISO's are assigned to workstreams 1 and 2. There are fewer than 10 LISOs processing the other workstreams, but they can process these applications in a much shorter time due to the reduced number of manual checks required (including not needing to contact applicants for further information). Being able to process a higher number of applications means the overall unallocated applications have been reduced. Applications in each workstream are processed on a first-come-first-served basis.

The pre-assessment work was introduced to also reduce the amount of time applications in workstreams 1 and 2 take to process. Pre-assessment means a LISO does not have to do the administration associated with an application, for example, contacting applicants to confirm information, which saves time.

Question 3.2 response

In some cases, applicants cannot influence this process. Photo requirements, for example, refers to the system being able to match photo records with Immigration New Zealand which does not involve the applicant.

Providing specific information about a person's checks would also require a LISO to manually review an application, which is something that does not happen until an application is assigned for assessment. We do not have the resource or capacity to do this for all applicants who ask us to manually review their application while in the queue.

Next steps

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, the Department has decided to proactively release a copy of this response on its website. All requestor data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release. The released response will be made available here: <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Official-Information-Act-Requests-2>.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KARAGGETT', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kate Raggett
Manager Operational Policy and Official Correspondence
Service Delivery and Operations