

# Getting a National Security Clearance

A candidate's overview of the national security clearance vetting process



## Frequently asked Questions

### AM I ELIGIBLE

To hold a clearance you normally need to be a New Zealand citizen or hold a Residence Class Visa. If your organisation has concerns about your suitability they may decide not to submit a request for a clearance.

### WHAT CLEARANCE LEVEL DO I NEED?

Your organisation will decide which clearance level you need based on the highest classification of the information, assets, or work locations your role will need access to. There are four levels of security clearance:

- Confidential
- Secret
- Top Secret
- Top Secret Special.

### HOW LONG DOES THE VETTING TAKE?

The length of time to complete the process depends on your background and any issues that need to be explored. It can take several months.

### HOW QUICKLY DO I NEED TO COMPLETE MY QUESTIONNAIRE

You and your referees need to complete the online questionnaires within 2 weeks or this may delay your clearance.

### HOW DEEP DO YOU DELVE INTO MY LIFE?

The level of intrusion into your personal life increases with the level of clearance sought.

The vetting assessment looks at the following areas of your life:

- organisations or people you are loyal to, who may have influence over you, or who you are associated with
- personal relationships and conduct
- financial considerations
- alcohol and drug use
- criminal history and conduct
- security attitudes and violations
- mental health situation.

Each clearance level requires NZSIS to delve deeper into your background. For Confidential clearance you need to provide 5 years of history, for Secret and Top Secret you need to provide 10 years of history, and for Top Secret Special you need to be able to provide 15 years of historical information about yourself.

### WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED?

Depending on the clearance level you're being assessed for, the range of information you'll be required to submit will vary.

Information is gathered from you, and your referees if required, through questionnaires and interviews. Enquiries include, but are not limited to,

standard checks such as credit and police histories, international travel, and any security relevant information.

We suggest you collate all the required information prior to filling out the online forms and questionnaires. You will receive a guide to help you with this.

For vetting at a SECRET level or higher, you must provide four referees, each relevant to specific aspects of your life. Your referees are required to fill out an online questionnaire and may be interviewed in person or by telephone. If you are applying for a Top Secret/Top Secret Special clearance you will automatically be interviewed.

### WHAT ARE MY OBLIGATIONS ONCE I'M GRANTED A CLEARANCE?

Holding a national security clearance comes with some obligations. A security clearance holder must:

- comply with the New Zealand Government's rules for the protection of classified information
- comply with your employer's standards of conduct
- report any security breaches
- report changes in personal circumstances (e.g. divorce, a new partner, bankruptcy, foreign citizenship, etc.)
- report any suspicious contacts and behaviour
- be 'security aware'.

Your organisation will explain your responsibilities in more detail when you are granted a clearance.