

IRB Regulation 4 - International Player Clearances

International clearances are a requirement under the IRB Regulations. A player is not eligible to play rugby in another country at any level until they have a valid international clearance. The requirement applies to all players - male and female, senior and junior, amateur and professional.

There are no exceptions to the requirement to have an international clearance before you are eligible to register or play. NZR has no discretion to allow players to play without a clearance.

It is the player's responsibility to ensure that they obtain an international clearance.

1. Clearance Process

Completed clearance applications should be emailed to New Zealand Rugby at clearances@nzrugby.co.nz *(By the Provincial Union (see below))*.

Player leaving New Zealand to play overseas:

1. The player must complete and sign the IRB clearance form (available [here](#)).
2. The player then needs to seek the approval of his/her current club, who will send the form on to the Provincial Union.
3. If all is in order, the Provincial Union will approve the clearance by signing the "Provincial Union" section of the clearance form and forwarding a copy to NZR.
4. NZR will record the information and finalise the clearance. NZR then sends the approved IRB clearance form to the new National Union and the departed Provincial Union.
5. Clubs can obtain a copy of the completed form from their Provincial Union.

Note: NZR processes the clearances in the order that they are received, on a Wednesday and Friday only. At peak times of the year there can be a significant backlog. Please do not expect that a clearance will be processed by NZR on the same day that it is received. Emailing or calling to follow up on the clearance will not advance it to the front of the queue.

Player arriving in New Zealand after playing overseas:

The process is generally quicker and smoother if this is initiated with the player's current International Union and completed before the player returns to New Zealand.

1. The player must complete and sign the IRB clearance form and seek the approval of the overseas club that they are playing for.
2. The overseas club will then forward the form onto its National Union, who will sign and stamp the "Current Union" section of the clearance and forward it to NZR.

3. NZR will finalise the clearance by signing and stamping the “New Union” section and sending a copy to the New Zealand Provincial Union and the departed National Union.
4. The new Provincial Union will inform the club that the player has been cleared.
5. The Club should notify the player accordingly.

A player cannot play until full clearance has been provided by NZR.

2. Reasons why a Clearance may be withheld

There are only two reasons why a clearance can be withheld:

- I. If the player has not fulfilled any of their obligations under their contract with the club or Union.
- II. If the player is under suspension on disciplinary grounds (unless the suspension is for five weeks or less and the new Union has confirmed that it will impose the balance of the suspension).

If a club and/ or Provincial Union wishes to withhold a clearance, the Provincial Union must advise NZR in writing. The Provincial Union must set out which of the reasons above apply (i.e. contractual obligations or suspension) and provide any supporting details or documentation required.

A clearance cannot be withheld for reasons relating to a civil dispute (e.g. the player owes the club money).

If there is a dispute relating to a clearance being withheld by another country, please complete the [Clearance Dispute](#) form and send this to NZR.

3. Reasons why a clearance may not be processed

If the clearance form has not been fully completed or has not been signed by the player, Provincial Union or National Union it will not be processed.

Clearances that do not state the new Club and Provincial Union will not be processed.

A clearance cannot be processed if a player has played in another country and returned to New Zealand without a clearance, and is seeking a clearance out of New Zealand. NZR is unable to process an outbound clearance for the player until that player completes the inbound clearance from their previous National Union.

4. Delays or disputes

There is no set time limit in the IRB Regulations for a National Union to sign off a clearance. However, if there is a delay or a dispute in obtaining a clearance from another country, NZR is able to assist by contacting the country in question, and if required, the IRB.

As it is the player's responsibility to ensure that they obtain a clearance, we request that players first use reasonable endeavours to obtain the clearance. NZR will intervene at the request of a Provincial Union provided that:

- The player has completed a clearance form and sent a copy of the form to the overseas club/ Provincial Union; and
- The player and/or the NZ club has followed up with the overseas club/ Provincial Union; and
- The player has been seeking his/her clearance for more than two weeks and has had no response.

If the player has been trying for more than two weeks to get a clearance from another National Union, and/ or there is a dispute regarding the withholding of a clearance please complete the [Clearance Dispute](#) form and send this to NZR. This information will be required if NZR needs to refer the matter to the IRB.

5. Clearance Queries - Communication line

- Player - please contact your Club.
- Club - please contact your Provincial Union.
- We request that only Provincial Unions or other National Unions contact New Zealand Rugby (NZR) directly.

Streamlining queries in this way will reduce duplication, which will free up NZR capacity to focus on processing the clearances (therefore speeding the process up).

6. Frequently Asked Questions

- **Do I need an IRB Clearance to play for a National Representative Team?**

No. If you are currently registered to play in New Zealand and you are leaving New Zealand solely to play for your National Representative Team you will not require an IRB Clearance.

Your National Union will correspond with New Zealand Rugby regarding the details of your release.

- **Do I need an IRB Clearance to play for an invitational team such as the Barbarians or the Asia Pacific Dragons?**

No. If you are currently registered to play in New Zealand and you are leaving New Zealand solely to play for an invitational team you will not require an IRB Clearance.

These teams should contact New Zealand Rugby to confirm that insurance requirements are met, and to ensure that there are no other issues.

- **I only played rugby at school, do I require an IRB Clearance?**

Yes. The requirement to get an IRB Clearance applies to all players - senior and junior. If you have played or been registered in one national union you require an IRB Clearance to play in another national union.

- **I have only played Rugby League overseas, but I am coming to New Zealand to play rugby. Do I need an IRB Clearance?**

No. If you have not played nor been registered to play rugby in another national union then you do not require an IRB Clearance to play rugby in New Zealand.

Similarly if you have not played nor been registered to play rugby in New Zealand then you will not require an IRB Clearance to play rugby overseas. New Zealand Rugby is able to provide you a letter to that effect if required by the national union that you are registering in.

- **I didn't get an IRB Clearance when I left New Zealand but I did play rugby overseas. Am I required to get an IRB Clearance to play in New Zealand again?**

Yes. According to IRB Regulations if you registered with a club overseas you need a clearance to play in New Zealand.

- **I have been playing in New Zealand for years now, but my club/ Provincial Union is now saying that I need a clearance before I am eligible to play again. Can they do this?**

Yes. Neither New Zealand Rugby nor your Provincial Union has discretion to allow a player to play without a clearance. Once the Provincial Union or club becomes aware that you require a clearance they do not have discretion to allow you to play.