

Te Pū Hono

Frequently asked questions

How is the cadetship different from the NMIT Trainee Ranger programme?

The cadetship is a workplace-based development programme that focuses on gaining practical skills and hands-on fieldwork experience. You will gain some unit standards as well. It does not offer a formal qualification like a diploma or degree. The NMIT Trainee Ranger programme is a tertiary qualification combining academic coursework with practical experience. If you're seeking a formal qualification, the NMIT programme or other tertiary options may be more suitable.

I already have a conservation qualification, is this programme for me?

Yes! Even if you've studied conservation before, this programme can still offer valuable hands-on experience. Some training may overlap with what you've already done, but if you're open to refreshing your skills and learning in the field, we'd love for you to apply.

Am I guaranteed a permanent job at the end of the programme?

You'll be employed on a permanent contract from the start. In your third year, the Programme Leader will look for a suitable permanent Ranger role for you based on your skills and interests and on the needs of Department of Conservation (DOC). You'll be offered a permanent ranger role somewhere in the country. If you choose not to accept the role offered, it will be treated as a resignation. If DOC is unable to offer you a role, you may be eligible for redundancy.

Do I have to live in Renwick? Will I be travelling or living elsewhere too?

Yes, you'll need to live near Renwick (near Blenheim) and arrange your own accommodation there. Three times over the course of the programme, you'll also spend up to three months working in different regions across Aotearoa. When you're away from your home base, DOC will organise your travel and accommodation. Flexibility is key – the work can take you anywhere, anytime.

Do I get paid? What about leave, allowances and a uniform?

Yes, you'll receive a salary and full DOC employee entitlements. This includes a range of allowances (for example, for clothing, equipment, overnight stays and backcountry work). You'll also be provided with DOC's standard ranger uniform.

How do I know if I'm fit enough?

A good benchmark is being able to comfortably carry a 10 kg pack over rough terrain with up to 1,000 metres of elevation gain. But it's not just about fitness – you'll also need to be resilient. You might spend up to 14 days on the side of a mountain, in all weather, living in a tent and cooking your own meals. If you've done a lot of tramping, hunting, or backcountry work, you're probably on the right track.

What kind of work will I be doing?

You'll get a taste of the full ranger experience. One week you might be using a chainsaw to clear a track, the next you could be laying trap lines and the next week you might be learning how to catch and weigh lizards or setting up trail cameras. The work is varied, hands-on and designed to build your skills across different areas of conservation.

Can I apply if I'm still studying?

The programme isn't designed to be done alongside other study, so you'll need to be ready to focus on Te Pū Hono.

Is there an age limit?

There's no formal age limit, but the programme is best suited to people who are ready to live and work independently, manage time away from home and take on physically demanding fieldwork.

Who will I be working with?

You'll be part of a group of up to 10 Kaihonoa Taiao (cadets) and supported by a Pou Tūhono (Programme Lead) who looks after your training, work planning and wellbeing. You'll also spend time working with other DOC teams around the country, gaining experience and building connections.

Can I choose where I work or what training I do?

Some parts of the programme are fixed, but there's room to explore your interests. You'll complete core modules and placements, and you'll also get to choose elective modules, for example conservation technology, marine monitoring, or cultural heritage.

What happens if I get injured or can't complete the programme?

If something unexpected happens, we'll work with you to find the best solution. That might mean adjusting your work plan, pausing your participation, or exploring other options within DOC. Your safety and wellbeing are always a priority.