

CONCO>E TŪHURA

Full Guide

Degree apprenticeships: What learners need to know

Brenden Mischewski | November 2025





ConCOVE Tūhura © Copyright material on this framework is protected by copyright owned by ConCOVE Tūhura. Unless indicated otherwise for specific items or collections of content (either below or within specific items or collections), this copyright material is licensed for re-use under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. In essence, you are free to copy, distribute and adapt the material, as long as you attribute it to ConCOVE Tūhura and abide by the other licence terms. Please note that this licence does not apply to any logos, emblems and trademarks or to the design elements including any photography and imagery. Those specific items may not be re-used without express permission.

CONTENTS

Welcome	4
Overview	5
Glossary	6
Degree Apprenticeships – At a Glance	7
Introduction	8
Align – Get system settings and partners working in sync	9
What are degree apprenticeships?	
Explore – Make the right decisions early	11
Would a work-based degree work for me?	
Design – Work together to make your solutions work for all	14
What are you signing up to?	
How does the hiring and admissions process work?	
Finding the right support	
Deliver – Create the right learning and support	18
Navigating a degree apprenticeship	
Learner experience swim lane	
Using evidence from the workplace	
Obligations and expectations	
Training agreements and training plans – overview	
Sustain – Learn, improve and grow your impact	24
How you can contribute	
Partner – Build partnerships that support shared goals	26
Extending your network	

LEARNERS

WELCOME TO THE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP TOOLKIT

A practical guide to designing, delivering, and supporting degree apprenticeships in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Degree apprenticeships are a powerful way to connect learning and earning. They combine a recognised degree with meaningful, paid employment, providing learners with valuable skills, employers with workforce-ready talent, and our country with a more resilient and equitable education system.

This toolkit has been developed to support all those involved in degree apprenticeships, and help make them a meaningful and successful experience.

Whether you're leaving school and embarking on a career, or an existing employee looking to upskill, we've created this resource with you in mind.

OVERVIEW

This guide is designed for learners to help you understand whether degree apprenticeships are right for you and how you can make the most of this opportunity.

It's one of the outcomes of work carried out by the Construction and Infrastructure Centre of Vocational Excellence (ConCOVE) to understand what is holding New Zealand back from adopting degree apprenticeships more widely.

Degree apprenticeship pilots were set up to promote the mainstream adoption of degree apprenticeships. This work resulted in four main reports:

- Guide for employers
- Guide for learners (this guide)
- Guide for tertiary education providers
- Enabling degree apprenticeships – a framework for policymakers

We acknowledge the many contributors to this guide.

GLOSSARY

Academic advisor (or programme lead)

The staff member who supports apprentices' academic progress at the education provider, helps align workplace evidence to assessment, and participates in reviews between the apprentice, employer and provider.

Block release / day-release

Scheduled off-job study time. Block release clusters learning into multi-day/weekly blocks; day-release reserves a regular weekday.

Degree apprenticeship

An earn-and-learn pathway where a person is employed and concurrently completes a recognised degree, with the majority of learning planned, supervised, assessed and credentialled in the workplace.

Degree-level apprenticeships involve study from level 5 (including New Zealand Diplomas), undergraduate degrees (Diplomas and Bachelor's degrees) or postgraduate level (Honours and Master's degrees).

Dual admissions

Two linked decisions: The employer hires the apprentice and the provider confirms academic readiness (often issued as coordinated, conditional offers).

E-portfolio / evidence log

The tool or space apprentices use to collect workplace artefacts (photos, reports, checklists, reflections), mapped to outcomes.

Off-job learning

Provider-led learning (online, hybrid or in-person) that complements and integrates with on-the-job tasks.

On-the-job learning

Planned workplace tasks, rotations and projects that generate authentic evidence for assessment.

Protected study time

Rostered, enforceable time within paid hours for apprentices to engage in off-job learning and assessment tasks.

Rotations / clustered placements

Planned movement across teams, sites or functions to ensure breadth of experience and coverage of all outcomes.

Training agreement

The legally binding agreement between apprentice, employer and provider that establishes the apprenticeship relationship, roles, duties, data-sharing, fees/costs, and dispute/variation clauses.

Training plan

The living schedule that maps graduate profile outcomes to workplace tasks and off-job learning, specifies evidence, rotations, supervisors and the assessment timeline; updated at tripartite reviews.

Tripartite review / three-way check-in

Regular apprentice–employer–provider meetings to monitor progress, adjust the training plan and resolve issues early.

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS – AT A GLANCE

How degree apprenticeships work and what they ask of you



What it is

You earn a degree while working in a related role

You, the tertiary education provider and your employer commit to work together to connect real tasks to course outcomes.



Your contribution

Managing your time across work and study

Open lines of communication

Keeping track of your evidence

Applying your learning in the workplace



How it runs

Four days per week on the job, one day per week off-job

Learning is organised around work, and evidence is captured as you go

Regular check-ins with your workplace supervisor and academic staff

Rotations and job shadowing provide breadth



What happens

You use your work as the raw material for your learning

You augment your learning on the job with learning and assessment curated by your tertiary education provider

You have regular check-ins with your workplace supervisor and academic advisor



What you get

Paid employment

A pathway to professional registration

The same qualification as your peers studying on campus but with lower or no student debt

INTRODUCTION

The decision about where to put your talents and energy is an important one.

Degree apprenticeships can form part of your future if you know how to make the most of them. This is where the guide can help you.

It provides you with the information you need to make a decision, along with advice along the way.

The guide describes six main phases of the degree apprenticeships lifecycle.



Align

Get system settings and partners
working in sync

[VEIW GUIDE »](#)



Explore

Make the right decisions early

[VEIW GUIDE »](#)



Design

Work together to make your
solutions work for all

[VEIW GUIDE »](#)



Deliver

Create the right learning and support

[VEIW GUIDE »](#)



Sustain

Learn, improve and grow your impact

[VEIW GUIDE »](#)



Partner

Build partnerships that support shared goals

[VEIW GUIDE »](#)

Each phase deals with a different aspect of the degree apprenticeship journey.

Let's get started.



Align

Get system settings and partners
working in sync

This phase is about ensuring you know what a degree apprenticeship is so you can make an informed decision about whether it's a good choice for you.

What you'll know by the end of this section:

- What a degree apprenticeship is (and is not)

Resources

You can use the following tools and resources to understand if they are the right choice for you:

1. [Degree apprenticeships in New Zealand: their place in the landscape](#)

WHAT ARE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS?

Degree apprenticeships fuse the lecture theatre with the workplace. Apprentices are employees first and foremost. They earn a salary while working towards a degree, with much of their learning embedded in their day job.

The key thing about degree apprenticeships isn't the name. It's the characteristics, which are:

- Where the learning takes place (mainly in the workplace)
- What the learning involves (a mix of technical, professional and research skills), and
- What the learner is doing (being in paid employment in their relevant profession or a related field).

These programmes aren't made up of traditional lecture-based learning that might have a small component in the workplace. Often, for those types of programmes, you might be working on an internship for free or for a token amount, while trying to balance work, family and community commitments.



Explore

Make the right decisions early

What you'll know by the end of this section:

- Would a work-based degree work for me?

WOULD A WORK-BASED DEGREE WORK FOR ME?

Degree apprenticeships - at a glance

How degree apprenticeships work and what they ask of you



What it is

You earn a degree while working in a related role

You, the tertiary education provider and your employer commit to work together to connect real tasks to course outcomes.



Your contribution

Managing your time across work and study

Open lines of communication

Keeping track of your evidence

Applying your learning in the workplace



How it runs

Four days per week on the job, one day per week off-job

Learning is organised around work, and evidence is captured as you go

Regular check-ins with your workplace supervisor and academic staff

Rotations and job shadowing provide breadth



What happens

You use your work as the raw material for your learning

You augment your learning on the job with learning and assessment curated by your tertiary education provider

You have regular check-ins with your workplace supervisor and academic advisor



What you get

Paid employment

A pathway to professional registration

The same qualification as your peers studying on campus but with lower or no student debt

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS – SHOULD I APPLY?

Use this quick checklist to work out if a degree apprenticeship is the right option for you

Career fit

- ☐ I have a clear idea about the job or profession I want to enter

Opportunity

- ☐ There are paid apprentice roles in the same industry, or I'm already employed in a related role
- ☐ I'm comfortable starting as an employee while studying

Readiness

- ☐ I'm confident in balancing work and academic learning

Learning

- ☐ Learning-by-doing suits me more than a campus-only start

Life

- ☐ I can sort transport, internet/tech, and (if needed) childcare for study and block learning
- ☐ My whānau/support network understands the commitment and can back me up

If you tick most boxes above, then we suggest you apply. If several are “no,” then look at other options that would give you a good grounding, such as an on-campus first year, employment or other education and training, and then revisit.



Design

Work together to make your
solutions work for all

What you'll know by the end of this section:

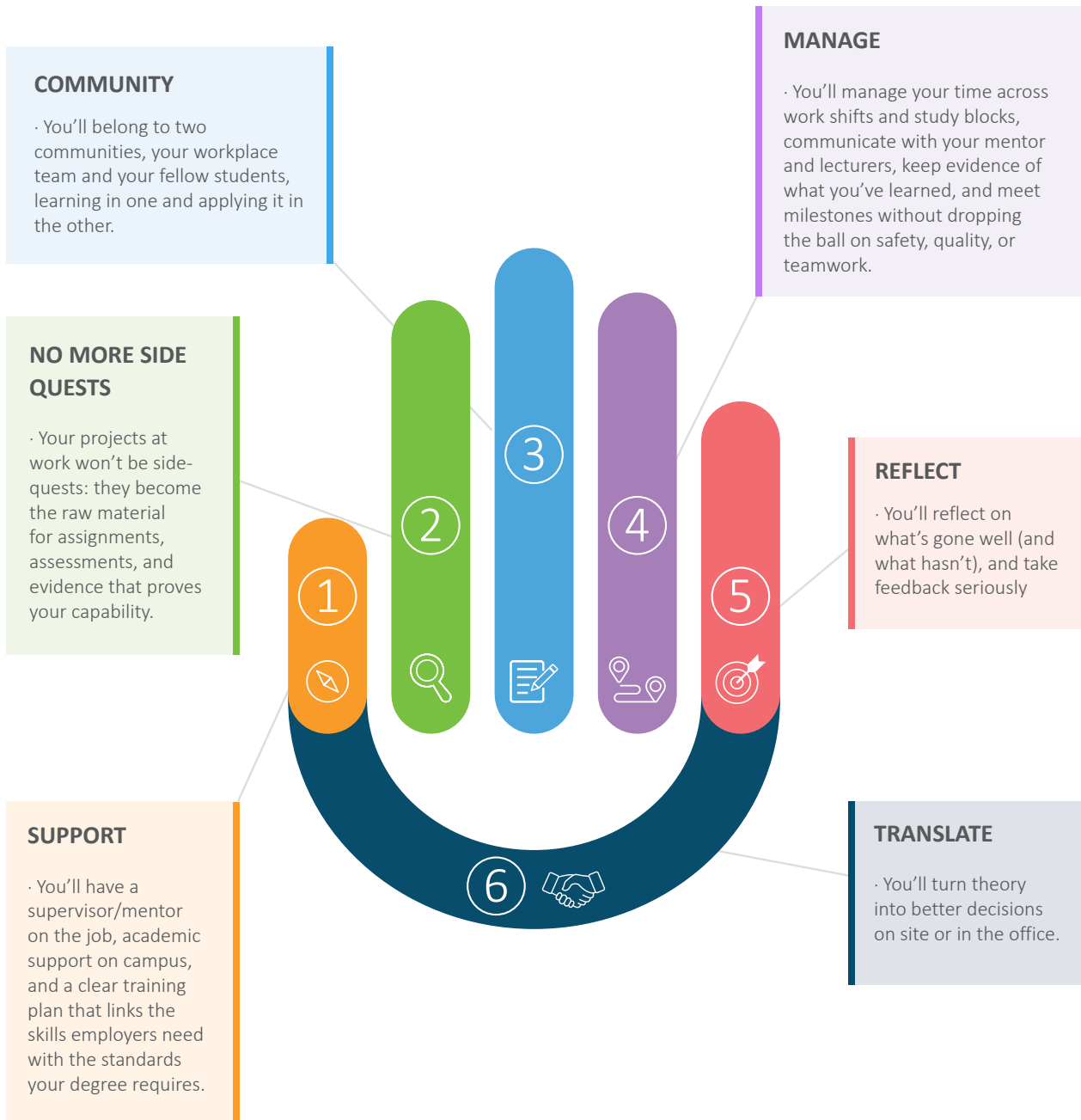
- What you're signing up for
- The right questions to ask.

Ideally, you'll be involved in the design of an degree apprenticeship programme that works for you. That might be more likely if you're already an employee, but it's more common that you'll need to advocate for yourself in a constructive way.

WHAT ARE YOU SIGNING UP TO?

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS – IN THE HANDS OF LEARNERS

You earn from day one, build experience that actually counts, and graduate ready to pursue professional registration or the next step up in your career.



WHAT DOES THE HIRING AND ADMISSIONS PROCESSES INVOLVE?

Once you've decided that degree apprenticeships are right for you, shift your thinking from "Is this right for me?" to "How will this actually work for me?"

The questions below are designed for interviews and admissions workshops. They'll help you understand how you'll be supported to succeed and what is expected of you.

Sidebar: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Use these once you're shortlisted or in an information session:

- **Supervisor & cover:** Who do I meet weekly? Who covers when they're away?
- **Protected study time:** When, where, and how is it rostered? What if workload clashes?
- **Work that counts:** Which first 90 day tasks map to current assessments?
- **Partners:** Who are your Māori partners for this programme? How are they involved?
- **Community:** How are involving and reflecting the needs of Pacific peoples and other communities incorporated in this programme?
- **Year calendar & peak periods:** When are block weeks and major assessments across the year, and how do these take account of peaks in the business?
- **Evidence & privacy:** What tool will we use for collating evidence, and how will we manage intellectual property and confidentiality?
- **Feedback cadence:** When are three-way reviews scheduled across the year?
- **Accessibility & wellbeing:** What adjustments or assistive technology are available if I need them? Who can I contact for advice and support?
- **Pay & progression:** What is the starting rate and how does pay change as I develop new skills?
- **Travel costs:** How are travel or block-course costs taken into account?
- **Professional registration:** How will workplace experience contribute to professional registration requirements?
- **Changes:** If my role changes or the business slows, how do we keep learning on track? And is there access to rotations, secondments, or another host employer if that's needed?

FINDING THE RIGHT SUPPORT

Once you start your degree apprenticeship, remember that you're not alone. Check out the Sidebar "Where support can come from" which shows the people who can help you succeed.

Use it as a map. Write down who you can go to or how to contact the relevant services and note how they can support you.

Your goal is simple: **know who to go to for what.**

Support source	What they provide	Who to contact
Workplace	Daily coaching, task sign-offs, safety	Supervisor: _____
Tertiary education provider	Academic requirements, learning support	Programme coordinator: _____
Professional bodies	Mentoring, networking, registration guidance	Early career contact: _____
Peers	Study groups, tips, moral support	Apprentice network: _____



Deliver

Create the right learning and support

What you'll know by the end of this section:

- How to navigate the two systems: work and education
- What evidence you can expect to use from the workplace
- What obligations you have as a learner and employee
- What you can expect to see in a training agreement and training plan.

NAVIGATING A DEGREE APPRENTICE

Once you start a degree apprenticeship, you need to recognise that work and education run on different timelines, use different language, and involve different people.

Sidebar: NAVIGATING TWO SYSTEMS

One calendar with two views

Merge your work roster with the teaching calendar.
Block protected study time and assessment dates.
Flag peak work periods early.

Maintain a steady cadence

Maintain regular catchups with your workplace supervisor, academic advisor and joint meetings so you all stay on track

Translate work to learning

Pick a real task, name the related learning outcome.
Agree what evidence will prove it.
Time it so it lands before the due date.

Capture evidence as you go

Use the tertiary education provider's learning management system to store photos, checklists, and brief reflections.

Get regular sign-offs from your supervisor.



EXPLAINER: What success looks like in your first 12 weeks

- You've got **two green lights**: a job offer and programme admission, both in writing.
- Your **study time is rostered** (not just "when there's time").
- You run **one calendar** (work + study) and one evidence log.
- You meet regularly with your **workplace supervisor** and **academic advisor** and know how to raise issues or concerns.

EXPLAINER: Common pitfalls (and fixes)

- **"I'll study when I can."** → Put study time in the roster; protect it like a meeting.
- **"I don't have time to collect evidence"**. → Add evidence little and often; such as a 10 minute Friday upload.
- **"I'm not sure if I'm on track with work and study"**. → Ask for expected turnaround times and book a 10 minute fortnightly catch-up slot.

See the Learner Experience Swim Lane to get an idea about how the various elements fit together. Remember, the exact details of who does what and when may vary depending on your employer and tertiary education provider.

LEARNER EXPERIENCE SWIM LANE

Stage	Learner	Employer	Tertiary education provider
Discover and Apply	Consider role fit and prepare CV Attend information session	Advertise roles Signal inclusivity and supports	Run briefings Programme calendar and entry criteria
Screening	Sit diagnostics, submit evidence of prior learning and ask questions	Joint interview (focus on job readiness)	Joint interview (focus on academic readiness), map prior learning.
Dual admissions	Accept joint conditional offers	Issue job offer	Approve degree admission Draft Training Agreement and Plan
Agreements and Plan	Sign Training Agreement Co-create Training Plan	Sign Training Agreement Co-create Training Plan Confirm release time and supervisor	Sign Training Agreement Co-create Training Plan Confirm academic schedule and advisor
Onboarding (week 1–2)	Attend work and study inductions Meet buddy/mentor, academic advisor and workplace supervisor	Arrange induction and work schedule and assign buddy/mentor	Arrange academic induction Provide learning and assessment resources
Early ramp (week 3–6)	Start tasks and capture evidence Attend off-job learning	Run early-briefs/debriefs, protect study time and check on wellbeing	Quick check-ins Monitor engagement and early progress
Week 6 fit check	Reflect on progress Suggest changes	Adjust workload and rotations Confirm supports	Monitoring and reflection
Term cycles (10–12 weeks)	Attend tripartite reviews, do–learn–reflect and submit assessments	Attend tripartite reviews Provide tasks mapped to outcomes Sign off, verify and assess evidence	Attend tripartite reviews, teach and assess, run reviews and monitor progress
Breadth and rotations	Complete planned off-job training and job shadowing	Swap rotations and enable placements if there are any gaps	Approve changes and assess evidence against course and programme outcomes
Capstone assessment	Deliver project and present learning	Release time for write-up	Assess per rubric Consult external experts as needed
Completion and progression	Graduate and seek provisional/ or professional registration (if applicable)	Consider offering permanent or different role and plan professional development	Confer degree, offer advanced learning opportunities and provide alumni support

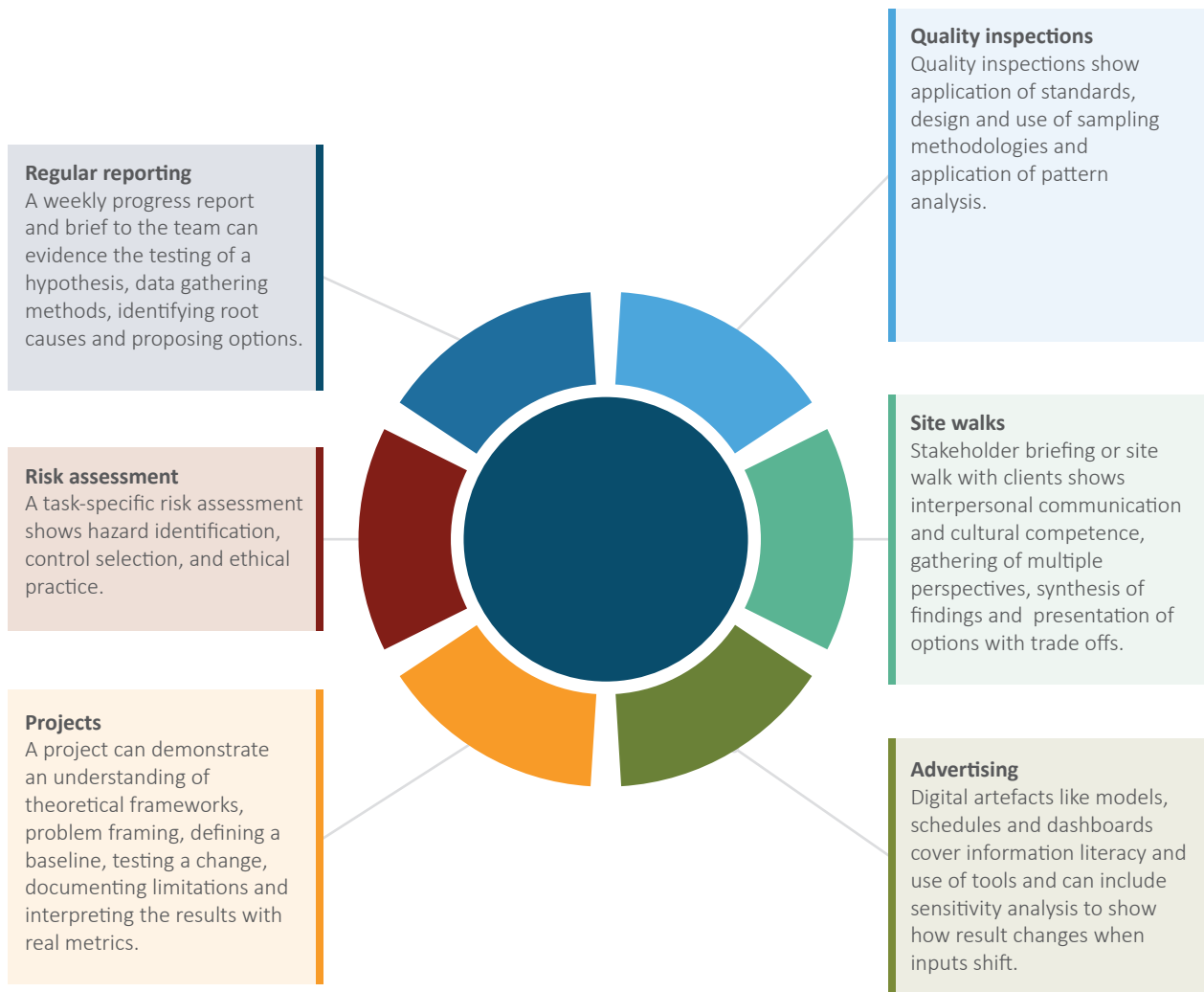
EVIDENCE

You'll use evidence from your previous work experience, studies, the workplace and from your off-job learning to show you have the full set of skills and knowledge expected from someone who finishes the degree.

We've prepared a simple guide to some examples of evidence from the workplace that you can use (see Sidebar).

Sidebar: EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Agreeing with the tertiary education provider on how evidence from the workplace will be used provides a firm foundation and helps you think about how your business will benefit from the new skills and competencies that the degree apprenticeships will develop.



EXPLAINER: Confidentiality and intellectual property

- You'll need to check in with your workplace supervisor and academic advisor about any limitations on the information you can use.

OBLIGATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

You're both an employee and a learner. That means you have normal employment rights and responsibilities, plus some study-specific commitments.

The aim is simple: do safe, quality work, keep up with learning, and use your job to generate evidence for assessment.

The details of how this works will be set out in your training agreement and training plan (see training agreements and training plans – an overview).

Use the points below to understand what that means for you day-to-day.

Sidebar: OBLIGATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS



Basic and minimum requirements

Apprentices will have an employment agreement, must be paid at least the minimum wage, and have paid and sick leave entitlement. You must follow workplace policies, turn up on time, and work in a safe, professional way.



You have rights too

You have the right to a safe workplace, fair treatment, rest breaks, and privacy. You can raise concerns and get support.



Training will matter

The training agreements and training plans will shape the employment of the degree apprentice (see Training Agreements and Training Plans – an overview).



Paid time off to study

You should have agreed and protected study time within your working week (e.g., day release or set hours). Use it well and flag clashes early so it can be rescheduled.



Opportunities

Expect chances to apply new skills on the job. Ask for tasks and rotations that match current assessments so one activity creates multiple pieces of evidence.



Align

Share evidence with your supervisor and assessor, agree what information is shared and how, and know the process if things change (role moves, timetable shifts, or issues arise).

TRAINING AGREEMENTS AND TRAINING PLANS – AN OVERVIEW

When you start your degree apprenticeship, you'll sign two key documents:

Training Agreement = The Contract

- Legal agreement between you, your employer, and your tertiary education provider
- Sets out everyone's rights and responsibilities for the whole apprenticeship
- Covers pay and conditions, protected study time, health and safety, fees/costs, what happens if things change
- Can only be changed if all three parties agree in writing

Training Plan = The Learning Map

- Working document that shows what you'll learn, when, and how
- Maps your degree outcomes to real workplace tasks
- Lists your supervisors, rotation schedule, evidence you need, assessment deadlines, support arrangements
- Gets updated every term at your three-way reviews

In practice:

- Your Training Agreement stays mostly the same throughout your apprenticeship
- Your Training Plan changes as you progress- tasks get updated, rotations shift, new evidence gets added
- Both documents work together: the agreement creates the framework, the plan fills in the detail

Your role:

- Read both documents carefully before signing
- Ask questions if anything's unclear
- Contribute to creating your Training Plan- you know what tasks you're doing at work
- Suggest updates at your three-way reviews
- Keep a copy of both documents handy



Sustain

Learn, improve and grow your impact

What you'll know by the end of this section:

- How you can share your experiences, contribute to improvements, and help shape the future of the model for others who follow.

HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE

Degree apprenticeships involve many changes to the way employers and tertiary education providers work together. As an apprentice, you'll have many insights into what works and what doesn't.

Ways to track your insights include keeping a note of things that went well, what was hard, what you'd change and how you were affected. Look for patterns like assessment peaks that collide with the busiest times at your job, or courses that aren't connected to the reality of your work.

Use the feedback channels available to you like course surveys or the contact people for your programme. Both your employer and the tertiary education provider will have complaints channels. Get advice about which to use and when, but always report unsafe, discriminatory or inappropriate behaviours through the formal channels.

Get involved and contribute to professional organisations as a student or associate member. They'll offer you opportunities to get involved in developing your networks and contributing to the wider profession. They're often involved in accrediting the degree you're doing, so will also be interested in your feedback.

You'll be representing your employer and tertiary education provider when you're at work and studying. That places obligations on you to represent them professionally, but also lends credibility to your views and opinions.

Put your hand up to participate in initiatives like '[Inspiring the Future Aotearoa](#)' which introduces young people to role models (like you) that help them to realise their potential.

You may supervise interns in your workplace, provide insights to campus-based students you share courses with and represent your employer and profession in the community.



Partner

Build partnerships that support shared goals

What you'll know by the end of this section:

- Who else you can work with to contribute to the development of your new profession.

PARTNER

This phase is about teaming up with the people and organisations who can help you reach your goals and using those relationships to make degree apprenticeships better for those who follow.

As a degree apprentice, you already have a network: your workplace supervisor and team, your tertiary education provider (lecturers, programme coordinator, learning and disability support), and your own communities and professional connections (see Deliver: “Where support can come from”).

You can also give back by participating in activities and events organised by these groups, particularly as you’re likely to be motivated by a range of factors beyond career progression and will have your own community and cultural responsibilities that influence your experience.

Look at how you can extend these relationships by joining and contributing to industry good organisations like the [National Association of Women in Construction](#), student associations and industry/professional associations.

There are some useful lists of [industry associations](#) and [professional bodies](#) available online.