CONCORE
TŪHURA

Full Guide

Degree apprenticeships: What tertiary education providers need to know

Brenden Mischewski | November 2025

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TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS

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 Aotearoa New Zealand 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.

OVERVIEW

This guide is designed for staff at tertiary education providers to help you understand whether degree apprenticeships are right for your organisation, and how you can best work with employers and apprentices to make them a success.

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.

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

We acknowledge the many contributors to this guide.

GLOSSARY

Academic advisor (or programme lead)
The provider's staff member who supports apprentices' academic progress, helps align workplace evidence to assessment, and participates in tripartite reviews.

Accommodation Supplement / Working for Families / Disability Allowance
New Zealand income supports that some apprentices may be eligible for while earning, depending on circumstances.

Account manager (employer-facing)
A designated contact at the provider who manages the overall relationship with an employer who hosts apprentices.

Assessment (dual / workplace-integrated)
Assessment that combines provider-marked academic tasks with verified workplace evidence (logs, observations, attestations, portfolios).

Attestation/verification
A workplace supervisor's formal confirmation that the submitted evidence is the apprentice's own work and meets the described standard.

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

Calibration/moderation
Quality assurance steps that align judgments across assessors (provider and workplace) to ensure consistency and fairness.

Capstone assessment/project
A culminating, workplace-anchored piece of work that demonstrates the integrated achievement of programme outcomes.

CPL / RPL / RCC (Credit for Prior Learning / Recognition of Prior Learning / Recognition of Current Competency)
Processes that credit existing knowledge and skills, so apprentices don't repeat learning they can already evidence.

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 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.

Employer readiness checklist
A screening tool that helps businesses test whether roles, supervision, systems and resourcing are in place to host a degree apprenticeship.

End-point / final assessment
The final, often externally-calibrated judgement (frequently via a capstone) that the apprentice meets graduate outcomes or professional standards.

Equity & accessibility (UDL, reasonable adjustments)
Design and delivery practices (e.g., Universal Design for Learning) that ensure inclusive participation, with agreed supports, assistive tech and flexible assessment where needed.

Graduate Profile Outcomes (GPOs)
The knowledge, skills and behaviours a graduate must demonstrate by completion; the anchor for curriculum, workplace mapping and assessment.

Health, safety and wellbeing
Shared employer–provider responsibilities that set minimum site standards, induction, supervision ratios and escalation pathways.

Industry Skills Board (ISB) / professional body/industry association
External partners that represent industry skill needs, set or influence standards and pathways, and often validate programme alignment with practice.

Intellectual property (IP) & confidentiality
Rules for handling workplace information used as evidence, including redaction, secure storage and permissions.

Learner experience swim lane
A visual map of who does what, when, across the apprentice–employer–provider journey from recruitment to completion.

Mentor / workplace buddy
Named colleagues who provide day-to-day coaching, safe practice guidance and help translate work into assessable evidence.

Minimum wage (vs training minimum wage)
Degree apprenticeships are employment; apprentices must be paid at least the adult minimum wage. The training minimum wage doesn't apply to degree apprenticeships.

Moderation plan (work-based learning)
A provider plan describing how reliability of workplace assessment is maintained (e.g., assessor training, sample reviews, co-assessment).

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 of GPOs.

Pastoral care
Supports for wellbeing and success (e.g., study skills, disability services, cultural safety, escalation routes) consistent with NZ codes and good practice.

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

Quality assurance (work-based)
The combined systems (agreements, site vetting, supervisor preparation, moderation) that assure the credibility of workplace-integrated assessment.

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

Supervisor (workplace)
The named person responsible for day-to-day direction, verification/attestation of evidence and contributing to review and assessment processes.

LMS
Learning management systems that support teaching, learning and assessment.

TEC / NZQA
The Tertiary Education Commission and New Zealand Qualifications Authority are New Zealand government agencies responsible for funding and quality assurance of tertiary education.

Tertiary education providers
Any organisation that is accredited to offer a degree or higher qualification in New Zealand. These organisations include universities, polytechnics, wānanga and private training establishments.

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.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
An approach that builds multiple means of engagement, representation and action/expression into programme and workplace learning by default.

WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) spectrum
The continuum from short exposure and live projects through internships/practica and co-op, up to degree apprenticeships, where most learning occurs in paid work.

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS – AT A GLANCE

How degree apprenticeships work and what they ask of you

What it is

Your learners earn a degree while working in a related role

You work with the apprentice and their employer to connect real tasks to course outcomes.

Your contribution

An academic coordinator

Off-the-job learning and assessment

Assessment of on-the-job learning

Academic and pastoral support

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 it is developed

Regular check-ins with the apprentice and their workplace supervisor

Employers help with work rotations and job shadowing to provide breadth

What happens

You work with the employer to organise the curriculum, assessment and progress reporting

You undertake recognition of prior learning and current competency assessments

What you get

Deeper alignment between your curriculum and the workplace

Learners with insight into how learning and research is applied

Access to new markets

KEY DECISIONS FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Degree apprenticeships – 90 second decision

These questions will help you decide whether a degree apprenticeship will work for your organisation

Is there genuine employer demand?

Which roles, how many apprentices over how many years, and which employers will commit (e.g., MoUs) to co-design, co-assessment, and supervision?

Do we have sufficient workplace capacity and quality assurance?

How many placements are available, what supervision/ training-advisor model will we use, and how will we ensure safety, wellbeing, and consistent assessment across sites?

Do we meet regulatory and accreditation requirements?

How will the programme align with the standards of the relevant professional body, quality assurance standards and NZQA guidance on work-integrated learning?

Is curriculum and assessment designed "from the job outward"?

How are graduate profile outcomes mapped to real work, and can learning be modularised? How will RPL/RCC be handled, what is the on/off-job balance, and what will the capstone/portfolio assessment look like?

Is the funding model sustainable?

What is the mix of TEC funding, tuition, employer contributions, and learner costs, and how will you fund the start-up costs (new engagement and teaching and learning models)?

Can we meet our equity, Te Tiriti and learner support obligations?

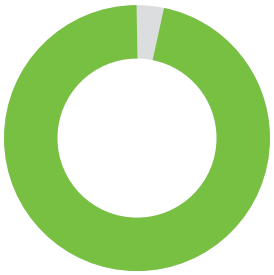
How will we enable access and retention for women, Māori, Pacific peoples and others, provide regional delivery, ensure academic and pastoral supports and measure progress and outcomes for continuous improvement?

REAL RESULTS

EMPLOYERS

99%

say that degree apprenticeships positively influence the performance of their businesses



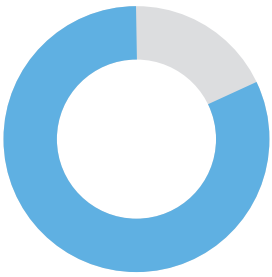
89%

credit degree apprenticeships with improving staff retention

84%

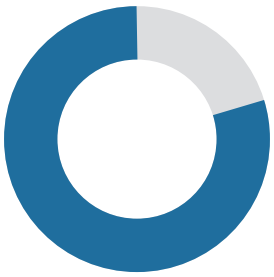
say that degree apprenticeships contribute to diversifying their workforce

APPRENTICES



82%

say that degree apprenticeships facilitate their career progression



80%

say that they are able to bring academic knowledge and skills into their workplace

78%

say that degree apprenticeships have been helpful in giving them the knowledge they need to excel at work

Source: Nawaz, R (et al). 2024

INTRODUCTION

For tertiary education providers, the challenge of meeting the needs of employers and accommodating the needs of learners who are more likely than ever to be employed has never been greater. And it's just one of several challenges that many of you face.

Degree apprenticeships can form part of your strategy, but you need to know how to make the most of them. This is where the guide can help you.

It provides tertiary education providers with the information you need, along with a structured set of strategies to help you make the most of this option.

The guide describes six main phases of the degree apprenticeship 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 focuses on ensuring all partners involved in degree apprenticeships work together in sync.

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

- What a degree apprenticeship is (and is not)
- How your existing systems and processes can support degree apprenticeships
- Who the right people are inside your organisation to lead or contribute
- How to build early-stage relationships with key partners
- How to make sure you have a shared purpose and expectations

Resources

You can use the following tools and resources to support alignment conversations:

1. Degree apprenticeships in New Zealand- Building for success

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)
- 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 (see Sidebar). Often, for those types of programmes, learners might be working on an internship for free or for a token amount, while trying to balance work, family and community commitments.

WHY WOULD DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS WORK FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS?

There are ten reasons why degree apprenticeships are a good choice for tertiary education providers in New Zealand:

1. **Mission and distinctiveness:** They deliver on access, equity and regional development priorities while clearly demonstrating that degrees create work-ready graduates. That's a clear differentiator in a crowded market.
2. **Strong employer partnerships:** They require co-design of curriculum, assessment and projects with employers, which deepens relationships, opens pipelines for placements/research, and connects your teaching and learning to both the cutting-edge research you are known for and the real needs of workplaces.
3. **Better learner outcomes:** Earn-and-learn models have in-built advantages in terms of engagement, progression and employment outcomes. Evidence from authentic work boosts the relevance of tertiary learning and reduces "theory–practice" gaps.
4. **Curriculum currency:** Workplace projects and "prac-academic" staff keep content current (digital, sustainability, safety, regulation), feeding continuous improvement and external credibility.
5. **New and diversified demand:** You reach school-leavers who need income or might be reluctant to take on student debt, and learners that traditional on-campus, full-time delivery often misses, such as career-changers and employed 'up-skillers'.
6. **Financial resilience:** Growing work-integrated learning helps to hedge your business against risks associated with the economic cycle. On-campus enrolments tend to fall when the economy is buoyant, so making sure you have a more balanced portfolio allows you to benefit from either side of the economic cycle.
7. **Research and impact:** Degree apprenticeships often involve applied workplace projects. These projects can generate industry datasets, case studies and practice-based research outputs, and can demonstrate impact, the application of 'academic' research and support innovation in the economy.
8. **Quality assurance strength:** Tripartite design (learner–employer–provider) gives funders, professional organisations and quality assurance bodies more confidence about the quality and relevance of your education and training.
9. **Talent pipeline for staff:** Degree apprenticeships create clear pathways for teaching staff with strong professional practice backgrounds and help to ensure that other staff are exposed to current industry practice, which lifts the credibility of their teaching and research.
10. **Strategic fit with policy:** They align with system priorities (productivity, regional skills, equity, work-based learning) and position your organisation for future funding and regulatory settings.

Sidebar: WHAT TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS NEED TO KNOW

- Don't think of degree apprenticeships as a bolt-on option. You need to make sure that they're treated as a mainstream delivery mode.
- Timetabling and assessment design can't be left to work around the dominant pattern of on-campus learning. People in employment aren't likely to be able to attend classes, laboratories, and tutorials spread out across the working week.
- You'll be more reliant on employer capacity than you might initially anticipate. Making sure you're prepared to help employers step up with high-quality placement design, mentorship, and supervision will be crucial.

OKAY, I'M CONVINCED. WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

Great question. It's essential to understand what you're getting yourself into (see Sidebar).

We developed this checklist to help you gauge your organisation's readiness to offer degree apprentices.

It's not pass–fail; it surfaces what's in place and what needs work so you can plan a realistic pathway.

The checklist will give you a clearer sense of your current readiness to develop a degree apprenticeship. Once you've answered the checklist questions, you can then think about priorities for change, initiating conversations with partners, building staffing capability and developing a readiness plan.

A: GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGY

1. Has your governing body formally endorsed degree apprenticeships as aligned with your organisational strategy?

Degree apprenticeships can require significant organisational change. You might need to redesign existing processes and systems, and commit resources over an extended, multi-year period. Formal endorsement ensures the work is prioritised, resourced, and integrated into broader institutional goals rather than treated as an isolated pilot.

2. Do degree apprenticeships align with regional workforce needs, industry priorities, and your equity and Te Tiriti commitments?

Degree apprenticeships succeed when they respond directly to employer demand and regional skills shortages. For some partners, the concept may be a new one. Having a set of initial conversations will help you understand whether there's an appetite or interest in the concept, and what information or other barriers might exist. They also need to advance equity for Māori, Pacific, women, and underrepresented groups, consistent with government expectations and Te Tiriti obligations.

B: EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

3. Have you established employer demand and confirmed that sufficient apprenticeship opportunities exist to sustain a programme?

Without enough employers offering apprenticeships, programmes risk being too small or unsustainable. Testing demand across large, medium, and small firms helps to ensure sufficient volume and diversity of opportunities.

4. Are employers and professional bodies willing to co-design, co-deliver, and co-assess the programme, including support for structured workplace learning?

Degree apprenticeships, when done well, involve a dynamic and sustained collaboration between all partners. Critically, they depend on sustained collaboration, not one-off advisory input.

Employers will need to be deeply involved because the workplace is the primary place of learning and assessment, and they'll want to make the most of their apprentice. Professional bodies are key because they can facilitate access to employers and provide assurance of the alignment of the programme with professional standards.

C: SYSTEMS AND CAPABILITY

5. Does your organisation have staff with expertise in work-integrated and apprenticeship-style learning, or access to training advisors to support employers and learners?

Degree apprenticeships are the most intensive form of work-integrated learning. They require specialist expertise in blending on-job and off-job learning, and often dedicated training advisors who can support employers and apprentices throughout the journey.

Talking to academic and other staff who are engaged with Work-Integrated Learning NZ (WILNZ) is a good place to start, but you should also connect with the former work-based learning divisions of Te Pūkenga that specialise in apprenticeship-type programmes in New Zealand. There are also numerous international networks and advocacy groups for degree apprenticeships you can tap into.

6. Can your student management and academic support systems handle employer-driven recruitment, multiple start dates, flexible study patterns, and dual employee–student status?

Most learning during a degree apprenticeship happens during day-to-day work activities. Your role will be to help employers give structure and support to this learning, so it aligns with the graduate outcomes for the relevant degree. But this is a two-way exchange.

Traditional systems are often designed for full-time students on a single annual intake. Degree apprenticeships require much greater flexibility, including employer-led recruitment, rolling enrolments, and academic support geared to people already in the workforce. Briefing as many groups as you can internally about the opportunity will help you understand what is possible with your systems already and what changes might be required.

D: PROGRAMME DESIGN AND QUALITY

7. Have you mapped the programme to NZQA approval requirements and ensured it meets professional body accreditation (where relevant)?

Any degree apprenticeship must meet NZQA's approval standards for programme quality and graduate outcomes for advanced programmes of learning. Where the qualification leads to a regulated profession, early engagement with professional bodies ensures alignment with accreditation pathways.

8. Can learning outcomes and assessments be delivered consistently across diverse workplaces while maintaining degree standards?

Each employer offers a different environment, but graduate outcomes must remain consistent. You'll need to be able to fit around the working arrangements and workforce development needs of a given employer, while also ensuring that the apprentice is prepared for other employment and learning opportunities in the future.

9. Do you have systems in place to recognise prior learning and workplace training (RPL/CPL) as part of programme delivery?

Many apprentices will bring prior experience and in-house training. Efficient recognition of prior learning ensures fairness, avoids duplication, and makes the programme attractive to both learners and employers.

E: FUNDING AND RESOURCING

10. Have you modelled funding arrangements (TEC eligibility, employer contributions, learner fees) and potential costs?

Degree apprenticeships offer new markets and make it possible for new cohorts of learners to access tertiary education. While the capital costs of degree apprenticeships may be lower than other programmes, they may have higher operating costs because of the tailoring that is required.

Tuition subsidies with the appropriate cost category and funding rates are available (subject to TEC's approval of your investment plan). However, programmes leading to qualifications at level 5 and 6 on the NZQCF may attract the lower 'work-based' funding rate (no such distinction is applied to programmes at level 7).

Tuition fees may also be charged, and normally, apprentices will be liable for student services fees.

11. Is your organisation prepared to invest staff time and resources to support apprentices and employers over the full programme duration?

Apprenticeships typically span three to four years and require intensive relationship management. Providers must plan for dedicated staff capacity to support employers, apprentices, and internal academic teams throughout the lifecycle. You should consider partnerships with others to support these initiatives, such as working with specialist work-based learning providers.

F: POLICY AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

12. Are you prepared to adapt your model if the government introduces new rules or funding settings for degree apprenticeships?

Degree apprenticeships currently have no special legal status in New Zealand, but this may change. Organisations should be ready to adjust to new requirements and opportunities without losing momentum or disrupting learners.

Next Steps After Completing the Checklist

Completing this checklist should give you a clearer sense of your organisation's current readiness to develop a degree apprenticeship. The next steps may include:

- Identifying priority gaps: Which questions did you answer with uncertainty or concern? These areas should guide your early planning.
- Engaging partners: Initiate conversations with employers, professional bodies, and potential industry partners to test demand and explore collaboration models (see Sidebar: Who do we need around the table).
- Building capability: Consider whether you need to recruit staff with apprenticeship or WIL expertise, or establish roles such as training advisors.
- Developing a readiness plan: Map a phased approach that sets out how your organisation will address governance, programme design, funding, and quality assurance over time.

By working through these steps, your organisation can build a realistic pathway to readiness, ensuring that when you do move forward with a degree apprenticeship, it's sustainable, high-quality, and delivers genuine value to employers, learners, and communities.

Sidebar: ROLES OF TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS

DESIGN

· Co-create programmes with employers.
· Take the lead in designing a qualification structure that integrates work-based learning, supports diverse learners, and maintains academic integrity.

DELIVER

· Deliver academic content, provide learner support, monitor progress, and maintain the integrity of the qualification, while working in partnership with the employer.

EXPLORE

· Identify how work-integrated learning can best support industry and learners.
· Work through how you need to change your delivery model and support systems to accommodate degree apprentices.

SUSTAIN

· Evaluate the effectiveness of your delivery model, support systems, and academic structures and embed degree apprenticeships into long-term planning.

ALIGN

· Ensure that increased work-integrated learning fits well with your organisational strategy and mission.
· Work with employers and system agencies to align standards, funding, and regulation with industry demand.

PARTNER

· Build enduring partnerships with employers, industry bodies, iwi, communities and government.
· Share responsibility for apprentice success, ensuring degree apprenticeships are co-owned and responsive to industry change.

Sidebar: WHO DO WE NEED AROUND THE TABLE?

Your partners are going to have their own motivations and incentives. Being aware of these going into the initial conversations is crucial.

Business owners

Setting direction and backing it with governance, accountability, and resources.

· Strategic talent pipeline, productivity gains, and ROI Brand/reputation as an employer of choice
· Clear governance, risk management, and compliance confidence
· Evidence of impact (retention, performance, progression)

Managers and supervisors

Coach apprentices day to day, plan meaningful work, give feedback, and protect time for study.

· Reliable capacity on the floor and quality work output
· Clear training plans, assessment timelines, and support from the provider
· Time and recognition for coaching/mentoring
· Simple processes for feedback and problem-solving

HR

Recruit and onboard for the apprentice, and align policies, integrate existing training, and consider partnerships with other employers.

· Recruitment pipelines and workforce diversity/equity goals
· Fit-for-purpose contracts, policies, and pay/progression pathways
· Onboarding, pastoral support, and performance frameworks for learner-employees
· Data on retention, safety, and wellbeing

Tertiary education providers

Responsible for organising the overall teaching and learning experience.

· Mission fit (learners, industry, communities) and regional/sector focus
· Volume-driven funding → pilots are OK if a pipeline follows
· Compliance certainty (NZQA/CUAP), shared supervision, clear schedules
· Co-design access to real workplaces and outcome data

Professional bodies & industry groups

Make sure that the programme aligns with accreditation/registration frameworks

· Alignment to competency/accreditation frameworks and ethics
· A dependable workforce pipeline and member value
· Consistent supervision and assessment standards
· Evidence of graduate readiness, safety, and retention

Community Partners

Involving iwi, Pacific peoples, women's, and disability organisations can widen talent pipelines

· Equity, local jobs, and culturally safe workplaces
· Fair recruitment, living wages, and accessible learning
· Wrap-around support (mentoring, transport, childcare)
· Early involvement and reporting by group (participation, completion, progression)

WHO DO I NEED TO CONVINCE?

Degree apprenticeships are relatively new in New Zealand, even if they're widely used overseas.

You can advocate for this opportunity by.

1. Talking to industry skills boards.

   These groups are responsible for representing the training needs of industry to the government and advising on funding. Explain how degree apprenticeships will make a difference to the employers you work with and ask those employers to do the same. This will help to ensure that the TEC gets good advice on priorities for investment.

2. Engaging with professional bodies and industry associations.

   These groups set professional standards and, crucially, the education pathways for registration. Many of them are already thinking about how best to integrate work and learning and will be keen to understand how you think this could best work.

3. Approaching employers and encouraging them to work with you to develop solutions that meet their needs and allow learners to earn while they learn.

4. Contacting our degree apprenticeship champions (see Sidebar). They can help you navigate the system and find the right people for you to talk to.

5. Raising the idea with political leaders.

   Ministers and your local Member of Parliament need to hear about how the system isn't working, and most importantly, practical solutions like degree apprenticeships.

Sidebar: KEY MESSAGES

Your voice matters and carries real credibility with employers and policymakers. You are part of a global shift to make tertiary education more connected to real work, and degree apprenticeships are a practical way to show that your programmes deliver what industry needs.

You won't get every partnership right the first time. You'll need to test designs with employers, and refine timetables, assessment, and supervision until it works well.

Working through professional bodies and industry associations will help you validate need and demand and amplify your impact on policymakers.

Key messages for political leaders

New Zealand's competitiveness will be won by how quickly we turn learners into productive, registered professionals in the jobs that matter, like construction, infrastructure, health, tech, and regional services.

Degree apprenticeships do exactly that. They combine paid work with degree study, so people apply theory on real projects from day one. Time-to-competence falls, productivity rises, and wage growth matches real skills.

Many of our major trading partners are moving faster to take advantage of this opportunity, and we can't afford to be left behind.

If we want faster growth, better value for money, and fairer access to high-skill jobs, degree apprenticeships are the most direct route: they lead to faster productivity, tighter alignment with real-world work, and lower overall system costs.

Because employers co-invest and learners earn while they learn, degree apprenticeships produce more productive workers, faster, at lower cost to the country as a whole.

This is a practical productivity reform, not a new bureaucracy. With a few targeted signals, degree apprenticeships can scale quickly.

What we're asking for is straightforward:

- treat degree apprenticeships as a legitimate, high-status option in the degree system;
- instruct TEC and NZQA to publish enabling guidance this year;
- extend Apprenticeship Boost to these pathways;
- back a national community of practice and sector/regional hubs to get partnerships moving;
- consider light-touch legislative recognition so degree apprenticeships are visible in statute; and
- use procurement and student visa settings, where appropriate, to remove practical barriers.

Employers will meet the government with co-investment, pilot sites, transparent data, and clear commitments on supervision and safeguarding.

These tweaks align funding with outcomes the government cares about. Getting people into employment, developing our people and growing the economy.

The earn-and-learn model also reduces underemployment and student support costs, keeps talent in regions, and lessens our reliance on importing skills.

All at a lower cost to the government than other forms of degree study.

Sidebar: KEY MESSAGES FOR PARTNERS CONTINUED

Key messages for employers

We want to partner with you to build the people your business needs, faster, with stronger evidence of capability and less hiring risk.

Degree apprenticeships let employees learn in paid roles while completing a full degree. From day one, they apply theory to live projects, so time-to-competence decreases, and productivity gains appear where they matter: on your sites, with your clients, and in your quality metrics.

This is not a shortcut degree, it is the same academic standard delivered through authentic work. We will co-design the programme so that the curriculum, rotations, and projects reflect your workplace.

Workplace evidence, including observed practice, supervisor sign-offs, client feedback and a jointly governed capstone, counts for credit alongside academic work, mapped to graduate outcomes and any registration.

Delivery fits operations: block or day-release, published timetables, regional or on-site options, and rapid RPL or RCC for experienced staff. You will have a single front door: a named Employer Account Lead and training advisors who support mentors, with light-touch admin, e-portfolios and dashboards.

Quality assurance is shared and auditable, aligned with NZQA and professional bodies, and backed by MoUs on release time, supervision and escalation.

The commercial case is straightforward. Apprenticeships reduce recruitment churn, bring targeted skills, and generate measurable impact from projects. We'll help you report outcomes you care about, including progression, retention, time-to-competence, registration, equity participation and project ROI.

What we ask from you is practical and proportionate:

- nominate supervisors and protect release time,
- join a short design sprint to align competencies with courses and assessment, and
- provide appropriate rotation opportunities

If you are an SME, we can broker rotations across your supply chain or sector to make hosting feasible. In return, we bring multi-year cohort commitments, trained mentors, wrap-around learner support and transparent data you can trust.

This is a way to do well and do good. Degree apprenticeships widen access for women, Māori and Pacific peoples and for regional talent, while building a pipeline of registration-ready professionals who stay and grow with your organisation. Together, we can convert potential into performance sooner, with lower system cost and higher confidence in capability.

Degree apprenticeships deliver excellent educational outcomes at a lower overall cost to government, employers and the economy as a whole. They will also help you reach new cohorts so you can contribute to efforts to broaden access.

Our report '<u>Enabling degree apprenticeships - a framework for policymakers</u>' builds on these talking points.

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP CHAMPIONS

You can talk to our degree apprenticeship champions to support your alignment conversations:

Hana Cadzow, Principal Lecturer, Otago Polytechnic
Phone: 027 469 4599 Email: hana.cadzow@op.ac.nz

Mike Crossan, Strategic Advisor, Open Polytechnic
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Emmolina May, Academic Staff Member, Toi Ohomai
Phone: 07 557 6076 Email: Emmolina.May@toiohomai.ac.nz

Brenden Mischewski, Managing Director, Mischewski Consulting
Phone: 021 994 808 Email: brenden@mischewski.co.nz

Eve Price, Director, Solutionary
Phone: 021 166 0419 Email: eve.price@solutionary.co.nz

Robert de Roo, Portfolio Manager, Ara Institute of Canterbury
Phone: 021 474 758 Email: robert.deroo@ara.ac.nz

Josh Williams, Head of Consulting, Skills Organisation
Phone: 06 929 1809 Email: josh.williams@scgnz.org

Karsten Zegwaard, Associate Dean/Associate Professor, University of Waikato
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Explore

Make the right decisions early

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

- Where to look for opportunities
- How to think strategically about your market position
- How to understand the market
- How to organise the qualification and training

Resources

You can use the following tools and resources to support alignment conversations:

1. Degree apprenticeships in New Zealand: their place in the landscape
2. Employer survey
3. Quantitative analysis of market demand

WHERE TO LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES

Our market needs checklist is a practical self-assessment for tertiary education providers, employers and system leaders in New Zealand to judge whether a degree apprenticeship will meet a genuine market need before investing in design or rollout.

The checklist frames enquiry across five domains and offers diagnostic questions, with an emphasis on authentic demand from employers and learners.

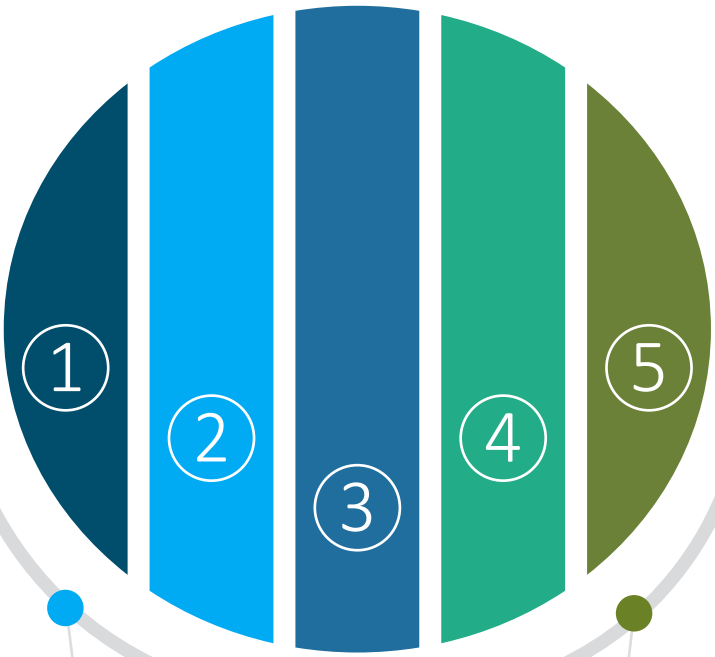
Some key questions you should ask include:

- Is a degree required to meet the professional registration or licensure needed to operate in the industry?
- Do workforce data and trends show persistent skills shortages?
- Is there evidence of underemployment or underqualification in the industry?
- Have you consulted employers and professional bodies, and do they support the concept?
- Have you got commitments from employers to host apprentices?
- Do you understand the capacity of employers and what you might need to do to support them?
- What do you know about the learner cohorts that might benefit from degree apprenticeships?
- Are there 'ready-made' markets for degree apprenticeships?

Your prospective, current and past learners are an important potential market for degree apprenticeships for several reasons (see Sidebar – Degree apprenticeships – learner cohorts).

Some simple strategies you can use include asking your current learners if they're in employment and what those jobs entail, identifying how many learners have obtained a lower-level exit qualification and understanding whether you have a presence in communities that offer a base for you to build on.

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS – LEARNER COHORTS



Many of them will be in employment anyway

Most undergraduate students engage in some form of work. For those employed in relevant roles, the opportunity to use their experience on the job as part of their learning is likely to be very appealing. For those providers considering graduate pathways, many learners will be in professional employment and will benefit from work-integrated learning options.

Some may obtain relevant employment during their studies

Programmes that allow learners to transition to a predominantly work-integrated mode will make it more realistic and achievable for people to continue their studies while pursuing their careers.

Employers we spoke with often told us that they were looking to employ apprentices with some core skills that could be obtained with some initial academic learning.

You may have some learners who have completed part or all of a degree programme

You may have some learners who have completed part or all of a degree programme

Some learners are reluctant to take on student loan debt

Often this can be a rational decision based on the variable returns to degree level study. Degree apprenticeships flip the conversation about these returns because they allow people new to tertiary education to avoid the opportunity costs of being out of the labour market while studying.

Some may be unable to travel or move to be closer to your main campuses

A distributed learning model like degree apprenticeships allows learners to stay in their community and still get a degree. These options support regional economic development and reduces costs for learners and their families.

THINKING STRATEGICALLY ABOUT YOUR MARKET POSITION

You'll also want to think strategically about where to start with degree apprenticeships, and our screening rubric will help you work out which industries and professions to target.

Most existing degree apprenticeships in New Zealand are in relatively niche areas, but you might also want to consider those that offer the potential for scale. These industries or professions include ones where:

- A single or large employer predominates, e.g., Health New Zealand.
- There's a predictable intake, e.g. New Zealand Police College.
- There are de facto or de jure professional registration requirements, e.g. the teaching profession.
- The industry has a track record of using work-integrated learning that you can build on, such as the engineering industry. (see Sidebar – Looking for the quick wins)

Just because an industry or profession has these characteristics doesn't mean it'll be the best option.

Some professions still have tightly prescribed educational requirements that mean paid work-integrated learning before graduation isn't permitted. Others may have resource constraints that mean supervision opportunities in the workplace are scarce.

At the same time, developing a portfolio of niche options for learners and employers might be a viable strategy. Sitting behind all of these considerations are decisions about how best to balance your mission as an organisation and the demand-led funding system.

Degree apprenticeships done well require you to change how you deliver teaching and learning and the systems that support your staff, which all come with a cost.

Being able to amortise these costs across one or two major portfolio areas or many smaller offerings with similar delivery models is likely to be essential.

Sidebar: LOOKING FOR THE QUICK WINS

Criterion	Weaker	Moderate	Stronger	Examples
Employer concentration	Many small employers	Mix; some medium employers, industry association	One or a few bigger employers	**Weaker:** sole-trader trades; cafés; boutique creative studios. **Moderate:** sector networks (e.g., Civil Contractors NZ, Registered Master Builders), PHO/GP networks, early childhood services chains. **Stronger:** Half of all jobs in New Zealand are with 2,200 businesses. Examples include Health NZ, KiwiRail, NZ Police, NZDF, Transpower, Air New Zealand Tech Ops, NZ Post, Fonterra, Watercare, Tier-1 contractors (Downer, Fulton Hogan, Fletcher).
Intakes	Sporadic	Steady, but small in number	High and predictable	**Weaker:** seasonal tourism/hospitality; small subcontractors hiring "as needed". **Moderate:** regional councils or lines companies hiring 2–10 grads/yr; mid-sized ICT MSPs with annual intakes. **Stronger:** national recruiters running cohort intakes (e.g., NZ Police colleges, KiwiRail trainees, Air NZ Tech Ops, Tier-1 construction graduate/apprentice programmes).
Degrees are required	None	De facto – based on industry norms	De jure – professional bodies set standards	**Weaker:** warehouse/logistics ops, contact centres, many entry-level digital roles (portfolio/certs acceptable). **Moderate:** construction management, quantity surveying, business analysis, cybersecurity (degree often preferred + vendor certs). **Stronger:** regulated professions (Teaching Council – teachers; SWRB – social work; Nursing Council; HPCAA allied health, such as medical imaging, paramedicine, occupational therapy).
Familiarity with work-based training	Ad hoc, uncredentialled	Some use is made, such as work experience hours, or the employer has internal training and staff development programmes	Professional and clinical practice courses are commonly used	**Weaker:** informal job-shadowing in SMEs; ad-hoc internships. **Moderate:** business/IT programmes with 100–200-hour internships or industry projects; hospitality practicums. **Stronger:** health clinical placements, teacher practicums, social work professional placements, engineering co-op/industry projects.

UNDERSTANDING THE MARKET: IS THERE A DEMAND OR A NEED?

Use this self-assessment checklist to understand how best to determine whether there is a need or demand for degree apprenticeships in a given industry. Grounded in local and international best practices, it helps tertiary education providers and employers work together to understand the opportunities that degree apprenticeships present.

This self-assessment checklist is designed to support tertiary education organisations (tertiary education providers), employers, and system leaders in New Zealand who are exploring whether there is a market for degree apprenticeships in a given industry.

Degree apprenticeships combine paid employment with academic study, typically in a three-way partnership between the learner, employer, and tertiary education provider. Before investing in programme development or rollout, it's essential to identify whether there's a genuine market for this model, both from the perspective of industry needs and learner interest.

This checklist guides employers, education providers, and system leaders through the process of understanding market need across five key domains: industry skills demand, employer readiness, learner demand, system capacity, and international relevance. Each section includes diagnostic questions and brief explanations to inform practical decision-making.

Identify skills demand in industry

Understanding whether degree apprenticeships address real gaps in an industry's workforce is a foundational step in programme development. This theme looks at whether the roles, skills, and qualifications needed in the sector are aligned with what degree apprenticeships can offer.

Have critical roles in the industry been identified that require both theoretical knowledge and practical experience?

Degree apprenticeships are ideally suited to occupations that sit at the intersection of technical complexity and operational responsibility. These are roles where theoretical foundations must be applied daily in dynamic, real-world contexts. In the construction and infrastructure sector, this includes positions such as civil engineers, quantity surveyors, architectural technologists, construction managers, and infrastructure asset managers.

These roles are often regulated or carry significant safety and compliance obligations, meaning that employees are expected to both understand complex design, planning, and regulatory frameworks and operate effectively in fast-paced, project-based environments. The combination of academic knowledge (e.g. structural mechanics, procurement law, sustainability principles) with the ability to work on active job sites or lead teams makes them particularly well aligned with the apprenticeship model.

Moreover, these roles frequently face a "work readiness" gap: traditional graduates may have the theoretical foundation but lack experience in applying it under real-world constraints such as working with subcontractors, managing cost overruns, navigating health and safety incidents, or using proprietary construction technologies.

Degree apprenticeships are designed to close this gap by embedding learners in the work environment from the outset, allowing them to develop applied competencies and professional judgement over time. Identifying such roles, especially those with projected skill shortages or ageing workforces, provides a strong foundation for assessing degree apprenticeship viability.

The presence of defined competency frameworks or professional registration standards can also help structure the academic and workplace learning requirements, ensuring graduates meet both industry expectations and regulatory thresholds.

Do workforce data and trends show persistent skills shortages in the relevant roles?

Reliable workforce data is essential for establishing a credible case for degree apprenticeships. Labour market intelligence from sources such as Immigration New Zealand, MBIE, Stats NZ, Workforce Development Councils/ Industry Skills Boards, and industry associations can highlight where shortages exist and how they are evolving over time.

For example, data from the 2018 Census shows that while construction managers are a growing occupational group, only around 20% hold qualifications at level 5 or above despite the increasing complexity of the roles they perform. This signals both a shortage of qualified professionals and a potential misalignment between job demands and workforce capability, reinforcing the case for upskilling pathways that combine learning and work.

Degree apprenticeships are uniquely positioned to respond to these shortages because they allow workers to gain higher qualifications without exiting the workforce. This is an important factor in sectors where the costs of people exiting the workforce to train have an outsized impact on industry-level productivity.

If labour market trends indicate growing demand for degree-qualified professionals, and employers report difficulty finding work-ready graduates, it suggests a structural issue that traditional education pathways may not fully address.

Degree apprenticeships can help build a pipeline of talent by attracting new entrants and supporting existing staff to step into higher-skilled roles. Moreover, where data show an ageing workforce, degree apprenticeships provide a mechanism for succession planning and knowledge transfer, ensuring that mid-career workers can advance into leadership roles while new apprentices are trained alongside them.

Identifying these trends early enables tertiary education providers and employers to design programmes that are responsive, targeted, and aligned with the realities of workforce development.

Tertiary education providers and employers will need to think about what support they need and how best to arrange that support (see Is your organisation ready for degree apprenticeships?). For example, some tertiary education providers here and overseas offer resources to employers and can sometimes step into the HR function, while some employers, particularly larger ones, will want to manage the process themselves to the greatest extent possible.

Is there evidence of underemployment or underqualification in the industry?

Understanding underemployment and underqualification trends provides valuable insight into mismatches between education and employment in the sector. In many industries, it's not uncommon for degree-holding graduates to enter the workforce lacking the practical skills, contextual knowledge, or behavioural competencies required to perform confidently on site.

Employers may report that while these individuals possess technical understanding, they are not yet "site-ready," leading to additional onboarding, training, or supervisory overheads. At the same time, many experienced workers, such as forepersons, estimators, or technicians, may have developed substantial competence through years of practice but lack formal qualifications to access more senior or regulated roles.

This creates a form of skills underutilisation, where valuable talent is not being fully leveraged due to credential gaps.

Degree apprenticeships offer a targeted solution to both sides of this equation by integrating academic learning with real-world performance. For degree-holders, a degree apprenticeship model can embed practical experience throughout the learning journey, reducing the transition time from graduate to productive employee. For existing workers, degree apprenticeships offer a pathway to formal recognition and career progression without requiring them to leave the workforce.

In industries where both overqualification and underqualification are present, this dual approach helps align workforce capability with role demands, enabling better deployment of talent. Identifying where these mismatches exist through employer surveys, graduate outcomes data, or occupational analysis can help confirm whether a degree apprenticeship model would fill a structural gap in the existing education and employment landscape.

Testing Employer Readiness and Appetite

Degree apprenticeships require employer buy-in. This theme focuses on whether employers are interested and capable of hosting apprentices, and what support they need to participate meaningfully.

Have employers been consulted about the idea of degree apprenticeships, and do they support the concept?

Employer consultation is a foundational step in determining whether a degree apprenticeship programme is viable and valuable in a given industry. While data may suggest skills gaps or qualification shortfalls, employers provide on-the-ground insight into current workforce challenges, such as difficulty recruiting work-ready graduates, limited internal upskilling pathways, or concerns about employee retention.

For the ConCOVE pilots, we established implementation groups that brought together employers, industry associations and tertiary education provider staff.

These conversations help establish whether the degree apprenticeship model aligns with their business goals and operational realities. In many sectors, employers are open to degree apprenticeships once they understand the potential for structured learning, a tailored curriculum, and embedded mentorship. However, support is often conditional on having the right programme features such as flexibility, minimal administrative burden, and meaningful input into curriculum and assessment design.

International experience demonstrates that employer buy-in is essential for scale. In the UK, degree apprenticeships grew rapidly once large and small employers could reclaim training costs through the levy system and participate in co-designing standards. Similarly, in Germany's dual study system, employers are integral to programme structure and delivery.

In New Zealand, early degree apprenticeship pilots have shown that employers value the opportunity to shape training pathways but need confidence in the provider's delivery model, learner support, and the regulatory clarity around funding and assessment. Meaningful engagement should explore not just the willingness to host apprentices but also the readiness to act as a co-educator, including defining workplace learning outcomes and supporting assessments.

Without this, degree apprenticeships risk being mismatched to industry needs or struggling to attract host organisations.

Have professional regulatory bodies been consulted, and are they supportive of the degree apprenticeship model in principle or practice?

Professional regulatory bodies play a critical role in determining whether degree apprenticeships are a credible and recognised pathway into a given profession. Many of these bodies set or approve the conditions under which qualifications are delivered, accredit academic programmes, and assess candidates for registration or licensure. Their support can lend legitimacy to a degree apprenticeship and ensure that graduates are not only qualified in theory but also eligible to practise.

Early engagement with these bodies is essential to understand their expectations, identify potential barriers, and explore opportunities for co-design or endorsement.

In some cases, regulatory bodies may have rules that restrict learners from being in paid employment while training, particularly in fields where independence, impartiality, or supervision requirements are tightly controlled, such as architecture, healthcare, or law. These rules can conflict with the core degree apprenticeship principle of "earn while you learn," and may require negotiated solutions.

Regulatory bodies may also be concerned with maintaining academic integrity, ensuring consistent assessment, or upholding the standard of public safety.

For degree apprenticeships to succeed in such environments, it's vital to involve these organisations in defining appropriate safeguards such as supervised practice scopes, independent capstone assessments, or phased progression models. In turn, professional bodies can help ensure that the degree apprenticeship meets the standards required for graduate recognition and future registration.

Their role is not just to approve or reject, but to help shape a delivery model that aligns with both educational innovation and professional accountability.

Are there employers willing not only to host apprentices in the next 2–3 years, but also to co-design and contribute to the programme?

Assessing employer readiness involves more than confirming interest in hosting apprentices—it requires understanding the depth of their commitment to shaping and supporting the programme. Expressions of interest, formal letters of commitment, or survey responses indicating intent to participate are useful indicators of immediate market viability. This includes interest in both recruiting new entrants (such as school leavers) and upskilling existing staff through the degree apprenticeship model.

For example, this template survey allows you to understand how employers would like to be involved and whether they would support apprenticeships. Link to the survey in the resources section.

Equally important is whether employers see themselves as active partners in the programme's design and delivery. In strong degree apprenticeship systems overseas, such as those in the UK and Germany, employers play a central role in co-developing curriculum, advising on skill standards, mentoring learners, and even participating in assessment.

Willingness to engage at this level reflects a healthy demand ecosystem where industry is invested not just in access to talent, but in ensuring that graduates meet real-world performance expectations. Testing for both intention to host and readiness to collaborate is essential when evaluating whether a degree apprenticeship programme can be sustained and scaled across an industry.

Have the capacity constraints of employers been identified, and have the necessary support conditions been explored?

Understanding employer capacity is essential to designing a viable degree apprenticeship programme, particularly in sectors like construction, where small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) dominate the landscape. Hosting a degree apprentice requires more than just offering a job; it involves mentorship, structured learning support, administrative coordination with the provider, and flexibility to release the apprentice for study.

Many smaller employers lack dedicated HR teams or training infrastructure and may see the additional workload as a barrier to participation unless offset by tangible supports. These might include wage subsidies, help with candidate recruitment, supervisor training, or reduced paperwork.

Employers may require financial support, guidance for in-house supervisors, and reduced administrative burden as conditions for participation. These practical realities must be factored into feasibility assessments. A degree apprenticeship model that assumes all employers are equally resourced risks excluding smaller firms, which in many cases represent the majority of potential host organisations.

Mapping these constraints early through surveys, interviews, or pilot engagement allows tertiary education providers and system leaders to design enabling mechanisms (e.g. intermediary organisations, shared mentorship models, or group training schemes) that make degree apprenticeship participation viable across a diverse employer base.

Gauging Learner Demand and Accessibility

Understanding who might benefit from degree apprenticeships and whether they would enrol is essential. This theme considers learner motivations, barriers, and existing access routes. Understanding the information needs of prospective learners for what novel options may be is essential for tertiary education providers and employers to craft appealing and accessible training solutions.

Are there learners (or potential learners) seeking earn-while-you-learn options in this industry?

Degree apprenticeships are particularly attractive to learners who need to balance education with paid employment, whether due to financial constraints, family responsibilities, or a preference for applied learning over traditional academic pathways. This includes school leavers who might otherwise choose immediate employment over full-time study, as well as adults already working in the industry who are seeking to advance their careers without stepping away from the workforce.

In industries like construction and infrastructure, many prospective learners value hands-on experience and are motivated by clear job outcomes rather than abstract academic credentials.

International experience shows that competition for degree apprenticeship places can be intense, with some employers selecting less than one per cent of all applicants, and pilots in Australia reporting almost 200 high-quality applicants for fewer than 20 places.

Degree apprenticeships offer a compelling alternative - the ability to gain a degree, earn a salary, and become embedded in their chosen field from day one. However, prospective apprentices will have many questions, such as how the workload will be balanced between work and study, whether they'll receive adequate support from both their employer and education provider, and (where applicable) if professional bodies will recognise the qualification for registration or further progression.

They may also want to understand how the model compares to traditional degree routes in terms of career prospects, flexibility, and financial cost. For older learners or those returning to study, concerns about academic readiness and digital literacy may arise, while school leavers may be unsure how to navigate dual application processes or secure a host employer.

Addressing these questions through clear, coordinated information and outreach ideally co-branded by employers and tertiary education providers, is crucial to building learner confidence and enabling informed participation. When done well, these pathways can unlock access for those previously excluded from higher education, offering a structured, supported, and financially viable route to a degree qualification.

Is the model appealing to groups underrepresented in higher education?

Degree apprenticeships offer a significant opportunity to address longstanding equity gaps in higher education by providing a more accessible, practical, and financially sustainable pathway to a degree. For many women, Māori, Pacific Peoples, disabled learners, and older adults, traditional full-time study presents barriers, whether due to cost, family and cultural responsibilities, unwelcoming academic settings, or limited flexibility in delivery.

In contrast, degree apprenticeships enable learners to earn while they learn, remain embedded in their communities and workplaces, and see a clear connection between study and real-world career outcomes. This can be especially powerful for learners who may not see themselves reflected in universities or who have previously disengaged from formal education.

By valuing practical skills and enabling structured entry into professional roles, degree apprenticeships can create new access points for those typically underrepresented in degree programmes.

Currently, degree graduates are drawn disproportionately from higher socio-economic backgrounds, reinforcing patterns of inequitable access to higher education. Degree apprenticeships have the potential to shift this dynamic by creating new, community-embedded pathways that do not rely solely on school-based academic achievement or traditional entry routes.

If these groups are already active in the workforce, particularly in trades, technical roles, or support positions, but are absent from higher-level qualifications, degree apprenticeships can help bridge the gap between experience and advancement.

Tertiary education providers will want to understand which learner groups are represented in the relevant industry or profession, what their existing skill levels are and whether these groups have needs that are distinct from other learners. Employers can also provide insight into how the actual and potential capability of their staff maps to the opportunity that degree apprenticeships represent and what systems are in place to identify, support and nominate high-potential staff from underrepresented backgrounds.

Are there ‘ready-made’ markets for degree apprenticeships?

One of the most important indicators of degree apprenticeship viability is the presence of identifiable learner cohorts who are qualified, motivated, and ready to benefit from earn-while-you-learn opportunities. In many industries, a substantial pool of learners already exists in the form of workers who hold sub-degree qualifications (e.g. level 5 or 6 diplomas) but lack a pathway to a bachelor’s degree.

These individuals may be underemployed or unable to access senior or regulated roles without further study, yet returning to full-time education is often impractical due to financial or family obligations.

In some cases, parallel or precursor models already exist, such as traditional sub-degree apprenticeships, internships, co-op degrees, or work-integrated diplomas.

Tertiary education providers and employers must consider: what additional value a degree apprenticeship brings. Is it full-time employment during study, guaranteed sponsorship, structured mentorship, or a pathway to professional registration? If the degree apprenticeship doesn’t offer a distinct value proposition, it may struggle to attract learners already enrolled in or considering similar options. Equally, in industries where no such applied or work-based degrees exist, degree apprenticeships may fill a critical market gap.

HOW COULD YOU ORGANISE THE QUALIFICATION AND TRAINING?

There are several models that can work for degree apprenticeships. These will depend on the needs and preferences of employers and professional bodies.

Some options that you might consider include:

- A single undergraduate or graduate-level qualification. These are the most common types of degree apprenticeships, like the Bachelor of Construction Management and the Bachelor of Engineering Technology.
- A concurrent dual technical and undergraduate qualification. Click here for an example of how apprentices can graduate with a degree and a trades professional registration.
- A foundation on-campus year or initial period of study that prepares degree apprentices with the critical technical skills they need to be productive once they start employment.

These aren't exhaustive, but are a good reminder that you don't need to repurpose an existing qualification.

You should also think about how training is delivered. For example, in Germany, apprentices can learn at one or more of the following: a higher education institution, a company, vocational schools and cross-company vocational training centres.

The key thing is to link vocational and academic learning; share responsibility for the integration of learning and for each partner to support each other.

Design

Work together to make your solutions work for all

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

- How degree apprenticeships fit into the wider range of work-integrated learning options
- What you'll need to consider in terms of how degree apprenticeships will change your organisation's approach to:
  - Curriculum
  - Delivery
  - Recognition of prior learning
  - Support systems
  - Admissions and enrolment
- How to use training agreements and plans

Resources

You can use the following resources to support this phase:

1. Capstone assessments

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

New degree apprenticeships are coming on stream steadily (see Degree apprenticeships in New Zealand: building for success), but there are still many gaps in coverage.

Degree apprenticeships allow individuals to earn a degree while gaining practical work experience. They're the most immersive form of work-integrated learning: planned, supervised, assessed and credentialled in the workplace.

Work-integrated learning is "an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that intentionally integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum".

Work-integrated learning spans a spectrum from short industry projects and clinical placements to full employment-based pathways. Most learning about a job still happens in the workplace after graduation; the difference with work-integrated learning is that it's structured, assessed and credentialled (see Sidebar – Models of work-integrated learning).

You should start by working with employers on what they want to get out of the work-integrated learning you'll be offering.

Sidebar: IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS

Academic learning is on the same level as vocational learning.

On-the-job training is focused on the vocation or profession as a whole.

Practical and theoretical learning form a holistic package, leading to academic competence and professional relevance.

Sidebar: WORK-INTEGRATED MODELS AT A GLANCE

Model (ascending intensity)	What it looks like	Employment status	Assessment & sign off	Best suited to
1) Career exposure (talks, site visits, simulations)	Guest speakers, virtual site tours, job shadow days embedded in academic courses	Not employed (student)	Low stakes reflections, quizzes; no supervisor input	Early year orientation; broad disciplines
2) Industry/live projects (on campus)	Real client brief delivered in class (team project, hackathon, studio)	Not employed	Artefacts (report, prototype), client feedback, academic marking	Design, computing, business, creative
3) Micro internships/ externships (2–6 weeks; part-time or block)	Short, scoped placement; single supervisor	Not required to be employed	Portfolio + supervisor verification; academic rubric	First authentic taste without a major timetable change
4) Internships / light practicums (6–12 weeks; 1–3 days/week or 6–10 week block)	Planned placement aligned to course outcomes	Not required; paid or unpaid	Dual inputs: supervisor evaluation + academic assessment; moderation light	Programmes wanting clear workplace evidence without re-timetabling the degree
5) Co-operative education (co op) / sandwich year	Alternating full-time work terms (e.g., 2×12–16 weeks) or a 9–12 month placement year	Employed or fixed-term contract	Weighty portfolio, employer attestations, academic viva; structured moderation	Engineering, IT, business, design; employers with cyclical projects
6) Regulated practicums / clinical / teaching placements	Mandatory supervised practice with specified hours/ratios and site standards	Not necessarily employed (often supernumerary)	Competency checklists, logbooks, OSCEs/observations; external standards; strict moderation	Health, education, social work—where councils/ authorities prescribe
7) Degree apprenticeship / WIL majority	The majority of learning at work, ~1 day/week off job or block release; tripartite agreement formalises roles	Employed throughout	Dual assessment (workplace and academic) against GPOs/ standards; calibration/ moderation; may involve an end-point assessment	Providers serving in work upskillers; sectors with structured on-job training, roles with clear standards, safety, or licensure

WHAT CHANGES DO WE NEED TO MAKE?

Done well, degree apprenticeships involve changes to how you design, deliver and support learners.

Some of the major levers you have are:

- **Curriculum:** how you'll integrate authentic workplace tasks into your assessment, including exploring disaggregation of courses into discrete recognisable competencies.
- **Delivery arrangements:** how you'll need to change course timetabling and the sequencing of learning and assessment.
- **Support systems:** how you'll adapt pastoral, academic and learning support to recognise the needs of people in work and of employers.
- **Admissions and enrolment:** how you'll collaborate with employers and better account for the knowledge and skills apprentices bring with them.
- **Quality:** recognising that your accountability for reliable assessment extends in a meaningful way to the employers you work with.

We've identified several areas that you'll need to consider under each topic (see Sidebar – Practical Design Considerations).

Sidebar: PRACTICAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Curriculum design and assessment
  - Look at your current portfolio. Establish whether you have an existing degree or a New Zealand Diploma already offered that you can adapt or refresh, or whether you need to create a new qualification.
  - Work with employers, industry associations and professional bodies to make sure that the graduate profile outcomes align with industry expectations of people in employment.
  - Align the graduate profile outcomes with authentic workplace tasks.
  - Define what evidence from work will demonstrate each outcome. Work through the privacy and intellectual property implications for what information you seek to collect and how you use it.
  - Look to redesign your course structure so it's disaggregated by breaking courses into discrete modules, micro-credentials and assessment standards like industry competency frameworks and professional standards.
  - Shift assessment to the workplace, making more use of portfolios, supervisor attestations, observations, professional conversations and capstone assessments.
  - Involve workplace supervisors and industry experts in assessment and adapt your moderation plans accordingly.

- Support systems
  - Look at what you can reasonably apply from the Code of Good Practice for Apprenticeships. This code also helps you navigate the interface with the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.
  - Understand and resource your engagement with the workplace. You'll need to consider dedicated account managers for employers, apprenticeship coordinators for the programme as a whole and academic advisors with portfolios of apprentices and workplace supervisors.
  - Think through your employer onboarding. Each employer is likely to have different characteristics (size, capacity, scope of work) and will need a tailored solution.
  - How you monitor learner success will likely need to change with different kinds of early-warning analytics.
  - Think about what you need to do if things go wrong. Agree on a plan with employers in the event of health and safety incidents or if the apprentice's employment situation changes.

- Admission and enrolment
  - Make sure you coordinate the academic admission and employment offer so each party is clear about how roles are advertised, recruitment decisions are made, and how academic entry requirements are met.
  - Put in place systems for billing employers directly for student fees.
  - Code degree apprentices in your student management system for internal and any future external reporting.
  - Maximise the use of competency-informed recognition of prior learning. You want to become much more targeted in guiding the development of specific competencies. Focus on gap filling rather than a linear lecture-based model.

Sidebar: PRACTICAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS CONTINUED

- Quality assurance
  - You need to be explicit about the work-based learning pedagogy you use and how you'll ensure the reliability of assessment and quality assurance of work-based learning.
  - Think about supervisor induction. Depending on your model, you might contract these staff as practitioner educators and/or offer specific professional development.
  - Degree apprenticeships are an opportunity to lift the engagement of employers, industry associations and professional bodies. Think about how your advisory group structure might evolve.

Sidebar: INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS

Degree apprenticeships normally require full-time paid employment, which most student visa holders cannot meet (student visas generally allow up to 20 hours/week in term time, increasing to 25 hours/week from 3 November 2025; full-time work is allowed only during scheduled breaks).

It may be possible for people who hold an Accredited Employer Work Visa to be enrolled in a degree apprenticeship; however, this study must be required by the employer as part of their employment, and the employer must pay the costs of that work-related study.

This is general guidance, not formal immigration advice. Always confirm individual visa settings before enrolment.

TRAINING AGREEMENTS AND TRAINING PLANS – AN OVERVIEW

These documents are the cornerstone of apprenticeship systems worldwide.

Training agreements - A legally binding agreement between the employer, apprentice, and tertiary education provider that creates the apprenticeship relationship and sets the ground rules. It's like a terms and conditions document.

Training plan - A living document that maps the degree curriculum to real work, sets the rotation/learning schedule, evidence requirements, assessment tasks, and support arrangements. It maps out how you'll deliver the learning.

Aspect	Training agreement	Training plan
Core purpose	Creates the apprenticeship arrangement. Clarifies legal responsibilities and rights.	Operationalises learning: who learns what, where, when, and how evidence is gathered.
Legal status	Contractual (signed by all three parties).	Non-contractual (or an annexe/schedule).
Typical contents	Parties and roles Paid release time principle Health, safety and wellbeing duties Privacy/data-sharing IP/confidentiality Fees/costs Misconduct and dispute resolution Termination/withdrawal/variation clauses	Learning outcomes mapping; on-the-job tasks/projects Rotations/placements Supervisor(s) and supervisory arrangements, including in vulnerable contexts Off-the-job hours schedule Assessment timeline Evidence types (logs, observations, portfolios) RPL/RCC use Support and reasonable adjustments
Time horizon	Whole apprenticeship (with formal variations if needed).	Current term/semester or year; reviewed every 10–12 weeks.
Change process	Formal variation (sign-off by all parties).	Iterative updates at tripartite reviews Recorded and shared.
Enforcement	Employment/contract law.	How the tertiary education provider will make sure the training and assessment are fair, consistent and meet national standards. Performance management/escalation via the agreement.

How they work together:

- The agreement references (and usually attaches) the training plan as a schedule.
- Day-to-day tweaks (e.g., swap a rotation, add a project, adjust evidence) → update the training plan.
- Structural changes (e.g., reduce paid hours, change employer, alter who pays fees, end the apprenticeship) → vary the agreement.

There are currently no minimum standards or requirements for a training agreement or training plan for a degree apprenticeship in New Zealand.

You will have agreed the specification for each document with employers in advance, and you will each actively contribute to and sign off on these documents.

Deliver

Create the right learning and support

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

- What the learner experience looks like
- How you can support the recruitment and admission of a degree apprentice
- How your delivery model might change
- How you could assess learners
- How best to support the degree apprentice throughout their journey

Resources

You can use the following resources to support this phase.

1. Code of Good Practice for New Zealand Apprenticeships

LEARNER EXPERIENCE SWIM LANE

Stage	Learner	Employer	Tertiary education provider
Discover and Apply	Consider role fit and prepare a CV Attend information sessions	Advertise roles Signal inclusivity and support	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 a 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 a permanent or different role and plan professional development	Confer degree, offer advanced learning opportunities and provide alumni support

RECRUITING AND ADMITTING A DEGREE APPRENTICE

Degree apprenticeships require the apprentice to hold both a job and a place in a degree programme.

A good recruitment and application process supports this dual requirement, ensuring that candidates are selected through fair, transparent, and coordinated procedures.

Some good practices to consider include a joint or unified application, co-branded promotional material, and shared screening tools such as interviews, aptitude tests, or diagnostic assessments.

This kind of coordination requires effort, but makes the whole process easy to navigate and gets better quality candidates.

You should think about:

- Clearly defining the roles of the employer and the tertiary education provider
- Making sure that the academic and employment requirements are advertised together
- Coordinating the interview and selection process with the tertiary education provider and other employers
- As part of recruitment, the training provider may check what skills or knowledge the candidate already has from past work or study. If they can prove it, they won't need to repeat that part of the degree.

Sidebar: RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS MODELS

There is no one-size-fits-all model for recruiting and managing the admission of a degree apprentice.

Group Training Scheme

Handles initial recruitment, assessment and matching with host employers before passing candidates on to the tertiary education provider.

A centralised model that ensures consistency and streamlines the experience for learners and employers, making it well-suited for people new to the industry.

Workshops

The tertiary education provider organises admissions workshops or days for multiple employers, utilising simulated activities where employers can select candidates who are a good 'fit' for their organisation.

This model is well-suited for school leavers or those entering the industry. Examples from Australia show that these approaches can generate very high levels of industry from prospective learners and be exceptionally competitive.

Matching services

Connects individuals seeking apprenticeship opportunities with employers looking for apprentices.

New Zealand has several examples of these kinds of approaches from work-based learning, and many tertiary education providers that require professional and clinical practice or work-integrated learning will have existing networks to draw on to facilitate these opportunities.

This model can work well if the tertiary education provider has good networks with employers and employers are looking for support with the selection and recruitment of apprentices.

Go it alone

Employers can nominate their own staff to develop their careers and qualifications through degree apprenticeships.

This works well for existing employees who are already embedded in the organisation and ready to upskill into higher-level technical or professional roles.

It also reduces recruitment effort, ensures cultural fit, and supports workforce development goals within the business, but it may require sound systems for recognising current competency.

Sidebar: PLANNING THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Co-design

Admission criteria should be designed collaboratively to reflect both academic and workplace needs.

In general, candidates must have a university entrance or the equivalent, but some degrees have other specific requirements.

Employers will also each have their own requirements.

Dual admissions

A dual admissions approach ensures that both employers and tertiary education providers approve a candidate's readiness and suitability at the same time.

This approach simplifies the candidate's experience.

Joint offer letters

A joint offer letter or coordinated notification process helps reduce confusion and ensures clarity from day one.

Training agreement

These agreements are a critical tool for degree apprenticeships, formally capturing the shared responsibilities of the learner, the employer, and the tertiary education provider.

HOW MIGHT THE DELIVERY MODEL YOU USE CHANGE?

Degree apprenticeships done well require a tertiary education provider to deliver education and training in different ways.

We've identified some areas where change is likely to be required:

- Adopting employer and apprentice-friendly calendars. Time your off-job learning opportunities, so they take place in regularly scheduled blocks or provide for a day-release (a regular day each week) arrangement.
- Vetting employers and workplaces for minimum standards relating to exposure to a range of learning opportunities, supervision, apprentice support and health and safety.
- Developing and agreeing tripartite agreements between the apprentice, the employer and the tertiary education provider that clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party.
- Relying more on individual training plans to guide what each apprentice is doing over standardised curriculum documents.
- Configuring your learning management system so e-portfolios and dual-assessment models are supported.
- Providing for regular catch-ups with the apprentice and their workplace supervisor, including on-site visits.

Make sure you're familiar with the advice we provided to employers about how workplace activities can be linked to learning outcomes and their contribution to assessment, as they provide clues to how your delivery will change.

HOW SHOULD I ASSESS LEARNERS?

Degree apprenticeships combine academic study with work-based learning, requiring innovative assessment models that satisfy university standards and industry competencies.

It is essential to start with an understanding of the competencies that need to be demonstrated. It is preferable to define these competencies with a higher level of resolution than the graduate profile outcomes required for qualifications normally allow. Some options include:

- agreeing knowledge, skills and behaviours that graduates must demonstrate, which is a model required in the UK system and one we employed successfully as part of the ConCOVE pilots (with tailoring to local conditions).
- directly referencing the competency standards of professional organisations, particularly where they have a registration pathway. In some cases, it might be necessary to work with these bodies to augment their standards to introduce an entry-level competency requirement.

There are many ways that you can approach assessment but it is essential look for ways to validate both theoretical knowledge and practical competence. Some examples include:

- Oral and Discussion-Based Assessments
- Simulation and Practical Task Assessments
- Work-Based Evidence and Portfolio Assessments
- Knowledge and Scenario-Based Testing.

Your choices will be influenced by employer preferences and the learner context, as well as your ambition and capacity to approach assessment differently or build on models you already use. There are several options within each of these broad categories (see Sidebar – Assessment models) which all provide opportunities to integrate evidence from the workplace.

Sidebar: ASSESSMENT MODELS

Oral and Discussion-Based Assessments	Simulation and Practical Task Assessments	Work-Based Evidence and Portfolio Assessments	Knowledge and Scenario-Based Testing	Reflective and Analytical Assessments
Viva An oral exam using a realistic scenario or case study	Simulations Short, controlled tasks or scenarios, typically under direct observation	Work-Integrated Portfolio A curated collection of evidence from the apprentice's real work that enable a holistic assessment of work-based learning.	Knowledge Test Formal test or exam to sample the apprentice's grasp of theory, principles, regulations, or technical information relevant to the occupation.	Critical Incident Analysis A structured reflection on a significant event or challenge experienced in the workplace.
Professional Discussion A structured, mapped interview that uses the apprentice's portfolio as the primary evidence base.	Digital / VR Simulation Interactive virtual environments mirroring complex work situations.	Work Output Sampling with Witness Testimony A selection of the learner's work products is sampled and bolstered by verification.	Situational Judgement Test Specialised type of written (or online) test that assesses decision-making and ethical or interpersonal judgement.	Reflective Learning Log A reflective log or diary is a regular record of learning experiences.
Case-based discussion Structured oral examination of real cases the learner has handled.	Assessment Exercises Standardised simulation exercises designed to demonstrate professional behaviours in real-time scenarios.	Work-based report A work-based project is a capstone-style assessment where the apprentice undertakes a significant, authentic project in their workplace towards the end of the apprenticeship.		Assignments and Technical Reports Authentic and work-relevant analysis that demonstrates the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge.
Design review: Discussion of the intent and trade-offs inherent in a design or work product.	Direct Workplace Observation The assessor watches the learner performing their actual job tasks in the real work environment.	Multi-Source (360°) Feedback: Multi-source feedback gathers performance input from a range of people who work with the apprentice.		

SUPPORTING DEGREE APPRENTICES

Depending on your delivery model, there may be a wide range of people in your organisation involved in supporting degree apprentices.

Effective degree apprenticeships rely on a tripartite support structure involving the apprentice, the employer and the tertiary education provider. Some of these people and their specific contributions include:

- **Academic Staff (Provider):** Universities and training providers typically assign academic tutors or coordinators to oversee the apprentice's progress and ensure academic requirements are met. In some models "work-based academic tutors are the keystone of successful degree apprenticeship delivery".
- **Workplace Supervisors (Employer):** Employers designate experienced employees to mentor apprentices on the job. The workplace mentor's role is to provide daily guidance, ensure the apprentice learns requisite practical skills, and foster the apprentice's professional development within the company.
- **Account managers:** Business to business marketing and engagement are a critical element of degree apprenticeships. It isn't something that you can leave to chance because it is a foundation of an environment that supports the apprentice's success.
- **Industry Advisors:** In some cases, additional support roles bridge the gap between academia and industry, and can act as effective intermediaries. Industry training advisors (common in New Zealand's traditional apprenticeship system) or sector-specific mentors can provide an outside perspective to ensure the apprenticeship delivers industry-relevant experience.
- **Student support staff:** Degree apprentices need access to the same support and resources as on-campus learners, such as academic counselling, pastoral care, student health services and recreation facilities.

Tertiary education providers will need to think carefully about choreographing this support and making sure that staff are familiar with the distinctive needs and pressures on degree apprentices.

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS— THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

- 19% of degree apprentices in the UK in one survey, only felt highly integrated within the student body of their training provider, with over 22% not feeling integrated at all.
- 30% of degree apprentices in the same survey perceived insufficient time for off-job training, and the same percentage felt employers lacked understanding of these requirements.

Sustain

Learn, improve and grow your impact

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

- How you can best track the outcomes that apprentices gain, particularly those that matter to employers
- How you can expand your impact.

Resources

You can use the following resources to support this phase.

1. Intervention logic

SUPPORTING DEGREE APPRENTICES

Degree apprenticeships will invite you to think more broadly about the outcomes that you track and what really matters.

These offerings aren't just about educational performance indicators, but some of the examples of the broader benefits that accrue to different stakeholders include:

- **Businesses:** Degree apprenticeships are associated with higher staff retention and higher productivity, because staff are applying new skills that they've largely developed on the job to actual problems in businesses.
- **Learners:** Degree apprenticeships increase access, particularly for older learners who are much less likely to enrol in higher-level programmes, people who live in areas without easy access to a campus and for whom taking on student loan debt is a disincentive or for whom economic pressures mean that time out of the labour market isn't an option.
- **Tertiary education providers:** Degree apprenticeships increase resilience and strengthen connections to industry. This means that providers can hedge against changes in the economic cycle by offering options for people in employment and those out of the workforce, and help to ensure that their research is informed by current practice in industry.
- **Government:** The government benefits from a lower overall cost and the benefits that come from more people being employed earlier. The government saves around $4,700 each year for each degree apprentice compared to an on-campus student, and benefits from more people in employment contributing to the tax base and avoiding the costs of time out of the labour market.

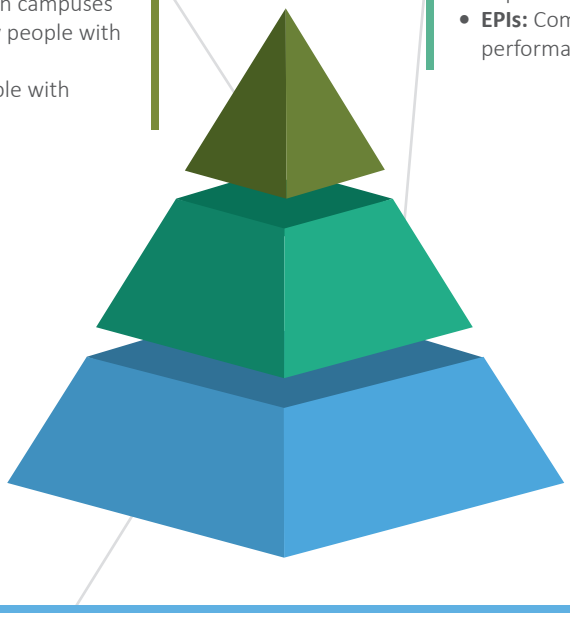
You might consider including new performance commitments that reflect this initiative (such as participation by older learners), gathering retention data from employers, understanding the impact of more work-integrated learning on your financial position and commissioning research into the broader impacts of degree apprenticeships.

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS— TRACKING OUTCOMES

TRACKING OUTCOMES

Access
- **Completion rate:** percentage of apprentices completing each year.
- **Age:** Participation by age group.
- **Regional development:** Participation by learners in areas away from main campuses
- **Opening doors:** Participation by people with no prior tertiary achievement
- **Pathways:** Participation by people with lower-level qualifications

Achievements
- **Collating data on employer results:** retention rates, examples of productivity improvements or innovation
- **EPIs:** Compare your education outcome performance to comparable learner groups



Finances
- **Savings to the Government:** Tracking the cost efficiency of the option.
- **Earnings:** Monitoring the earnings of degree apprentices.
- **Resilience:** Calculating the contribution to your bottom line of provision that is 'countercyclical.

EXPANDING YOUR IMPACT

You're likely to find that many people and organisations are interested in what you're doing in relation to degree apprenticeships.

Some opportunities to extend your impact include:

- Presenting at industry conferences about the work that you're doing.
- Joining the local and international networks we've identified earlier in the document.
- Establishing internal communities of practice or establishing national ones either on a discipline, sub-sector or national basis.
- Developing a programme of research that'll help you rigorously interrogate and interpret the evidence you're collecting about what works.
- Talking to professional bodies about the contribution that degree apprenticeships can make.
- Keeping policy makers, funders and quality assurance bodies updated on the progress you're making.

Partner

Build partnerships that support shared goals

This phase involves collaborating with others to help you achieve your goals.
These partnerships also offer an opportunity to rethink how we deliver education and employment by including the voices and leadership of communities historically excluded from degree learning.

Resources

You can use the following resources to support this phase.

1. Crown Engagement with Māori- Guidelines
2. Ako Aotearoa resources
3. Universal Design Guidelines
4. Ōritetanga Learner Success Framework

OPPORTUNITIES

Partnerships are a critical way to support degree apprenticeships.

Talk to your apprentices and employer partners about how to activate these relationships, but we have identified some ways that these different groups can contribute and some important engagement principles to consider (see Sidebar).

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS— ENGAGEMENT

Engagement principles

- Engage early and maintain regular communication
- Observe appropriate tikanga Māori (protocols)
- Think about reciprocity
- Treat engagement as part of a long-term relationship
- Tailor your approach

Possible partner	Possible roles and contributions
Learners and whānau	*Your voice isn't an add-on. It's a source of design insight, quality assurance, and leadership.* Ask questions about cultural safety and accessibility when considering a degree apprenticeship programme or employer. Share feedback, good and bad, with providers and employers so they can adapt. Connect with trusted advisors (iwi, Pacific support staff, disability services) to help you navigate your journey. Know your rights and entitlements, and don't be afraid to advocate for them.
Employers	Co-educate, don't just employ. Engage early with iwi, Pacific, and disability organisations when developing roles, pathways, or recruitment plans. Train supervisors and managers in cultural safety, disability awareness, and inclusive supervision. Co-create work experiences that reflect diverse worldviews and accommodate different learning styles. Be flexible with workplace arrangements—hours, location, job design—to support diverse needs.

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS— ENGAGEMENT CONTINUED

Possible partner	Possible roles and contributions
Industry Skills Boards, Professional Bodies, and Industry Associations	Qualification–occupation alignment: does the degree apprenticeship reflect current practice, industry standards, and emerging skills needs? Equity in access and outcomes: are Māori, Pacific peoples, and disabled peoples represented and supported throughout the programme? System-level insights: are there policy, regulatory, or funding settings that need adjustment to support inclusive degree apprenticeship delivery? Partnership promotion: are you encouraging members to form genuine partnerships with iwi, Pacific communities, and disability advocates? Sharing learning: are you capturing and promoting case studies, promising practices, and lessons learned from pilots and delivery?
Iwi Māori	*Mā te huruhuru ka rere te manu — Adorn the bird with feathers and it will fly.* Co-design the kaupapa: ensure degree apprenticeships are grounded in Māori aspirations, values, and models of success. Create pathways into iwi-led industries: degree apprenticeships can strengthen succession in sectors such as infrastructure, trades, environmental management, and hauora. Support ākonga Māori holistically: provide cultural, pastoral, or financial support through iwi trusts or partnerships. Advocate for system accountability: ensure providers and employers uphold their responsibilities under Te Tiriti and advance Māori outcomes.
Pacific peoples' communities	*O le ala i le pule o le tautua — The pathway to leadership is through service.* Design for relationality: build learning journeys that reflect Pacific values—family, community, respect, and service. Strengthen cultural safety: ensure providers and employers understand Pacific learners' contexts and embed inclusive practices. Involve Pacific leaders: engage with Pacific educators, community groups, and workforce champions in both the public and private sectors. Support transition and navigation: use trusted advisors or community connectors to guide learners into and through degree apprenticeships.

Sidebar: DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS— ENGAGEMENT CONTINUED

Possible partner	Possible roles and contributions
Disabled peoples' organisations	*Nothing about us, without us.* Apply the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to both curriculum and workplace learning. Co-design with disabled learners and advocates—not just "consult". Ensure accessibility of systems—application, enrolment, course materials, workplace environments. Address ableism in both education and employment through training, policies, and monitoring.
Tertiary education providers	*You are not just delivering content. You are creating the environment that determines who succeeds.* Partner with iwi and Māori organisations to ensure Te Tiriti is upheld through governance, pedagogy, and learner support. Co-design with Pacific communities to ensure values like alofa, tautua, and vā are reflected in delivery. Implement universal design principles and embed disability voice into the programme, systems, and supports. Shift from learner deficit to institutional accountability—the burden of inclusion should not rest on the learner.