

Quick Guide

Degree apprenticeships: What learners need to know

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DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS: WHAT LEARNERS NEED TO KNOW

A quick guide for learners – see the full Learner Guide for more detail.

What are degree apprenticeships?

A degree apprenticeship allows you to work and study at the same time. You're an employee and a student from day one. Most of your learning happens in the workplace, supported by a university, polytechnic, wānanga or private training establishment, with your work time counting directly towards a degree qualification.

Degree apprentices can be new entrants to a profession direct from school or another career, or existing employees who want to upskill while earning.

What this means for you

- **Earn while you learn:** A paid role from day one, with dedicated study time agreed in advance
- **Real experience that counts:** Your day-to-day tasks generate evidence for assessments and build your portfolio
- **Faster career traction:** You graduate with a qualification as well as proven workplace capability
- **Two support systems:** A workplace supervisor/mentor and an academic team (programme lead, lecturers, learning advisors)
- **Reduced costs and stress:** You're earning full-time throughout your degree, not juggling part-time work on top of your studies

Your responsibilities

A degree apprentice is a three-way partnership between you, your employer, and your tertiary education provider. You will:

- Sign a training agreement and training plan: understand roles, rights, and how learning maps to work
- Manage your time: align calendars, protect study time, and keep a work log
- Meet regularly: short check-ins with your workplace supervisor and academic advisor; attend classes
- Work safely and professionally: follow workplace policies, respect confidentiality, and ask for help early
- Represent yourself constructively: share feedback through surveys and learner panels

Is a degree apprenticeship right for me?

Use this checklist to decide:

- **Career fit:** Does your degree clearly lead to the role I want?
- **Opportunity:** Is there a paid role now (or are you already employed) in a relevant team/industry?
- **Support:** Do I have access to named supervisors (work and academic), dedicated study time, and tasks that match assessments?
- **Logistics & wellbeing:** Can I manage transport, block courses, time away from home?
- **Readiness:** Can I balance work and academic commitments?
- **Plan B:** If a role falls through, what's my alternative (on-campus start, another employer, shorter training course)?

If you ticked most of the boxes, then a degree apprenticeship could be right for you.

What support can I expect?

You won't be left to figure this out alone. You'll get the following support:

- From your provider: teaching, assessment, rubrics/exemplars, supervisor training, templates, regular check-ins, learning/disability/pastoral support, and clear escalation routes.
- From your employer: a named supervisor (plus back-up), protected study time in the roster, access to tasks/projects that generate assessable evidence, safe work practices, and timely sign-offs.
- From your community: whānau, your apprentice and student peers, professional bodies (student membership, mentoring).
- Equity and accessibility: ask about learning support, assistive technology, flexible assessment timing, quiet spaces, and whānau-inclusive options.

What about the finances?

- You earn a salary. Many employers pay your course fees and reasonable training costs (eg travel to block courses).
- You avoid "lost income" from full-time campus study and unpaid professional placements and internships.
- You may be eligible for the Accommodation Supplement, Working for Families, and Disability Allowance, but you won't be eligible for student allowances since you're already in paid employment.

How do I get started?

- Apply for roles and programmes that meet your criteria. We prepared a short set of questions for you to ask in interviews for degree apprenticeships (See Full Guide for Learners). They will help you ensure that the programme is credible and your employer and tertiary education provider are well-positioned to support you.
- Map your support: write names and contact details next to your key contacts (workplace supervisor, academic advisor, peer buddy, wellbeing contacts).
- Set up your systems: combine work and study calendars, start your evidence log (your tertiary education provider will help you) and prepare short weekly updates to guide your conversations with your workplace supervisor, and prepare for your quarterly meetings with them and your academic advisor.
- Get involved: join professional organisations, industry groups like the National Association of Women in Construction or subject-area focused student associations.
- Offer your perspective: put your hand up for a learner advisory group or student-staff committees.
- Be an ambassador: volunteer with [Inspiring the Future Aotearoa](#) to share your pathway with schools, speak at open days or toolbox talks.
- Give feedback that lands: use "What happened → Why it matters → What to try (2-week trial)" for course and workplace improvements.

Final word

Degree apprenticeships won't be the right path for everyone. But if you want to earn, learn, and build a career with real momentum, they can be a powerful option.

Choose a programme and an employer that sets you up with clear expectations, accessible supports, and meaningful work.

For detailed guidance on each phase of the apprenticeship journey, see the Full Guide for Learners.