



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Degree-Level Apprenticeships in  
Aotearoa New Zealand

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### Degree-Level Apprenticeships in Aotearoa New Zealand

The report identifies the significant gap between the current state and the envisioned future state of Degree-Level Apprenticeships<sup>1</sup> (DLA) in New Zealand. Absence of policies, limited resources, disconnected relationships, and prevailing mental models pose challenges. Bridging this gap necessitates policy development, resource allocation, relationship building, and mental model shifts to embrace DLA as a valuable education delivery method.

#### Key Themes and Recommendations from local and international considerations:

- **Learn as You Earn Pathway:** DLA can serve traditionally under-represented learners and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It provides an opportunity to balance work and study, offering a debt-free pathway.
- **Leadership:** Key agencies need to provide leadership, including Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), Workforce Development Councils (WDC), Industry, Centres of Vocational Education (CoVE), Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE), Te Pūkenga and other providers, and Universities NZ.
- **Public Awareness:** A public awareness campaign is crucial to inform parents, learners, industry, and the general public about the benefits of DLA.

<sup>1</sup> While the commonly adopted term 'Degree-Level Apprenticeships' has been utilised, the aim is to investigate the implementation of apprenticeships at higher levels, irrespective of the qualification's specific level.

### Next Steps and Proposals:

- Recognition by key agencies that DLA is a legitimate delivery mechanism worth funding.
- Leadership from key agencies to drive the development and acceptance of the DLA model.
- Agreement among all key agencies and providers that DLA is a valuable pathway.
- Dissemination of the full report to gather feedback.
- Collaboration with large employers, WDCs, and CoVEs to promote DLA.
- A pilot project to explore higher-level apprenticeships in New Zealand.
- Public awareness campaigns emphasising DLA opportunities and benefits.

This report navigates the landscape of Degree-Level Apprenticeships (DLA) within New Zealand's evolving vocational education system. Amidst reforms of the Review of Vocational Education (RoVE) and the establishment of Te Pūkenga, this paper conducts a system gap analysis to identify barriers hindering the establishment of degree-level apprenticeships as a recognised higher-level qualification delivery mechanism within the New Zealand education framework. The focus is on understanding impediments for tertiary providers, industry, and learners, and exploring necessary adjustments to bridge the gap between the current state and the envisioned future state of DLA.

Currently, New Zealand has limited utilisation of DLA compared to other nations. Internationally, DLA is acknowledged as a valuable delivery solution, with established benefits in post-study earnings and socio-economic advantages.

### Barriers (perceived and real) to DLA in New Zealand:

- Factors hindering DLA adoption in New Zealand include a preference for academic research-based degree study and a perception that apprenticeships are solely trades-based.
- TEC and NZQA processes present potential barriers, as they do not fund or approve DLAs as specific programmes and delivery mechanisms.
- Recent changes in the system have assigned the responsibility of establishing vocational education standards up to level 6 to Workforce Development Councils (WDCs). However, this excludes DLAs, creating an absence of clear authority for their establishment and management in terms of industry standards. This also raises concerns about the consistency of pathways with existing qualifications on the framework.
- Discrepancies in how key agencies view and manage apprenticeships contribute to difficulties in establishing DLAs as a recognized pathway.

In the context of RoVE and Te Pūkenga, this report scrutinizes the Education and Training Act 2020, highlighting its pivotal role in enabling DLA delivery. The Quality Assurance Framework, funding models, and the roles of TEC and NZQA are dissected to understand their implications on DLA implementation.

International models from Germany and the UK provide valuable insights. The German system emphasizes employer involvement, dual vocational education, and capstone assessments. The UK model introduces Degree-Level Apprenticeships as a pathway combining academic learning with practical experience. Examining these global models serves as a benchmark for potential implementation in New Zealand.



Addressing the gap requires recognition and funding for DLA, leadership from key agencies, and agreement on DLA's value among stakeholders. Public awareness campaigns, dissemination of the report, and collaboration with employers are proposed strategies. A pilot project is recommended to explore the feasibility of higher-level apprenticeships.

The gap between the current state and the future state in Aotearoa New Zealand's vocational education and training system regarding Degree-Level Apprenticeships (DLA) is multifaceted. The challenges include the absence of policies, lack of established practices, limited resource flows, disconnected relationships, undefined power dynamics, and prevailing mental models that don't align with DLA. Currently, there is no agency managing or funding DLA, making it difficult to establish this delivery option. Bridging this gap requires the development and implementation of policies, practices, funding mechanisms, and relationships that support and promote DLA. Key challenges involve testing the funding model and gaining acceptance from key stakeholders, including educational staff, industry, and policymakers.

This report envisions DLA as a transformative force, particularly for traditionally underserved learners. Emphasizing a "learn as you earn" pathway, it aligns with international trends, exemplified by the UK's success in incorporating apprenticeships into diverse industries. To propel vocational education forward in New Zealand, strategic leadership, collaborative efforts, and public awareness are crucial. The report stands as a catalyst for shaping the future of vocational education through the integration of Degree-Level Apprenticeships in Aotearoa New Zealand.