

Value proposition

Degree apprenticeships in Aotearoa New Zealand – value proposition

Context

Degree-level apprenticeships involve people in employment undertaking a full-time programme of study leading to an undergraduate degree that embodies on-job and off-job education and training delivered in tandem.

The Construction and Infrastructure Centre of Vocational Excellence (ConCOVE) is exploring comparative pilots of degree-level apprenticeships in at least three contexts in the construction and infrastructure industry. ConCOVE wants to understand how the tertiary education system can change to better support the uptake of this model, particularly in relation to scalability, quality assurance and long-term sustainability.

What problem are we trying to solve?

Degree-level apprenticeships offer a way to provide people in employment with affordable advanced education and training opportunities that accommodate their life, work and social commitments.

The need for these kinds of options is clear. Half of all students are in paid employment alreadyⁱ, mostly in retail and hospitality roles that are presumably unrelated to their programme of studyⁱⁱ, and Ministry of Education data indicates that the number of part-time learners was 157,110 in 2022ⁱⁱⁱ, up 9.7 per cent from the 143,185 recorded in 2017.

Employers must also have a greater say in curriculum development and training processes. This will ensure that the skills apprentices acquire are closely aligned with industry needs, enhancing their employability and the overall effectiveness of the apprenticeship programme^{iv}.

Additionally, government and policymakers are interested in addressing constraints in the building and construction industry and improving tertiary education's responsiveness.

Is there demand for these programmes?

The most mature market internationally for degree-level apprenticeships is in England. In 2022/23, there were 71,590 enrolments, accounting for 21 per cent of all apprenticeships in that country^v.

While not directly comparable, 200,000 enrolments in New Zealand in vocational education and training programmes led to qualifications at level three or higher in 2022^{vi}.

Quantitative analysis of customised data from the 2018 census indicated that three construction and infrastructure industries had over 10,000 employees with level five or higher qualifications: engineering design and engineering consulting services, house construction, and architectural services.

Data from England relating to new enrolments by vocation between 2018/19 and 2022/23 provide a guide to possible demand. Almost half (48 per cent or 6,280) of new enrolments

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over the period were for Chartered Surveyor degrees, followed by Civil Engineering (24 per cent or 3,100) and Building Services Design Engineering (six per cent or 750)^{vii}.

What are we proposing to do?

ConCOVE is interested in partnering with industry and a tertiary education organisation (TEO) to design and deliver each of the three pilots.

TEOs and industry would be responsible for developing the detailed design of the programmes, including any apprenticeship standards and the necessary preparations for delivering them, such as obtaining programme approval.

ConCOVE's contribution to the pilots would be to fund a programme manager to work across the three pilots and with industry and government stakeholders. The support provided by ConCOVE is expected to include facilitating connections and relationships, preparing advice for the government about policy, funding and quality assurance settings, supporting strategic communications and synthesising insights from the projects about engaging with SMEs and solutions for underserved learners.

What are the potential benefits?

The benefits projected based on a review of the national and international literature and interviews with key informants include:

- Apprentices can obtain highly portable qualifications, combine theoretical and practical learning, enhance employment and career benefits, gain a degree while working, and have lower direct (fees and living costs) and opportunity costs (avoided debt and lower earnings). This creates new routes into higher-level work, upskill the workforce, and addresses skill shortages.

These benefits are likely to accrue particularly to Māori, Pacific and disabled people given their historically poorer access to undergraduate education when aged 18-24 years, the 65-70 per cent of construction and infrastructure industry employees who are 'career changers' and recent migrants.

- Employers gain greater influence over the academic and vocational education system, addressing concerns about the employability of new graduates, widening their potential talent pool and attracting better-skilled employees, enhancing the performance of employees, promoting innovative thinking in the workforce, upskilling staff and enabling recruitment from the existing workforce, aiding recruitment and filling skills gaps and motivating and retaining existing staff.
- TEOs gain access to new markets for learners, enriching the overall curriculum, building connections and networks with employers, providing research material, creating a strategic platform to develop innovative programmes, and in the 'creative disruption' of existing models of teaching and learning.
- Society as a whole, in terms of its potential to support social mobility, address skills needs, lift productivity and incomes, and boost regional economies.

Next steps

We welcome the opportunity to discuss your participation in a pilot with you. Please contact Brenden Mischewski on 021 994 808 or at brenden@mischewski.co.nz.

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ⁱ Pham, L. 2021. Working while studying: Young New Zealand domestic students. Ministry of Education. URL: [Working while studying: Young New Zealand domestic students | Education Counts](#)

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Education. 2021. Briefing Note: Students working while studying. New Zealand Government. URL: [2.-1271442-Students-working-while-studying_Redacted.pdf](#) (education.govt.nz)

ⁱⁱⁱ Ministry of Education. 2023. Provider-based enrolments (2022). New Zealand Government.

^{iv} Rowe, A. D., & Zegwaard, K. E. (2017). Developing graduate employability skills and attributes: Curriculum enhancement through work-integrated learning.

^v Sources: 2015/16 to 2017/18 data: Department for Education, Permanent data table 'Subjects and levels - detailed series' from 'Apprenticeships and traineeships', UK Government. Retrieved on 21 February 2024: URL: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/6682fd2a-fe26-4af9-c71e-08dc2e333b3f>

2018/19 to 2022/23 data: Department for Education, Permanent data table, Subjects - Starts, Enrolments by Age, Sex, Ethnicity, LLDD, SSA, Detailed level, STEM' from 'Apprenticeships', UK Government. Retrieved on 21 February 2024: URL: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/704ff79a-0f21-4184-c71d-08dc2e333b3f>"

^{vi} https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data/assets/excel_doc/0003/193539/1-Participation-in-Vocational-Education-and-Training-programmes-2013-2022.xlsx

^{vii} Source: "2018/19 to 2022/23 data available only: Department for Education, Permanent data table 'Subjects - Starts, Achievements, Enrolments by Age, Sex, Ethnicity, LLDD, SSA, Detailed level, Standard-framework name and code' for 6, Architect (Integrated Degree) (ST0533), Architectural Assistant (Integrated Degree) (ST0534), Bricklayer (ST0095), Building Control Surveyor (Integrated Degree) (ST0652) and 71 other filters in England between 2018/19 and 2022/23', UK Government. Retrieved on 21 February 2024: URL: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/2d65b4d1-d95d-40a5-6630-08dc0dea598f>"