
Plumbing, Gasfitting & Drainlaying Benchmarking Evaluation (Stage One)

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*Interim Report – Summary version
For The Skills Organisation
April 2018*



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section 1

Background and methodology

About the project

The Skills Organisation Incorporated (Skills) is launching delivery of new plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying [PGD] qualifications in 2018.

Ongoing labour market demand and growth affords significant opportunities to take innovative approaches to training to ensure the PGD workforce is trained in a way that works well for learners, employers and training providers.

This summary report presents the findings of Stage One of the PGD benchmarking evaluation project. Stage One took a summary look at key issues impacting the effectiveness of current PGD training and benchmarked New Zealand PGD qualifications with those offered in Australia.

The overarching and long term aim of the project is to ensure the PGD workforce is trained in a way that works well for learners, employers and training providers.

Stage Two will include additional research, a comprehensive evaluation of current off-job training, as well as the implementation of a number of measures aimed at improving quality, consistency and outcomes of PGD apprenticeships.

The following is a summary of key findings and recommendations from Stage One of the project.

Project method

Stage One of the project included a desktop review and initial “toe in the water” consultation with industry stakeholders.

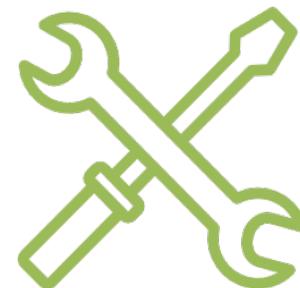
Consultation was undertaken with major industry bodies.

Several employers and apprentices were also canvassed for their views.

The purpose of interviews was to identify key current issues with training (as perceived by the various stakeholder groups).

A full report was provided to Skills in December 2017. This is a summary version of that final report.

An action plan to implement the recommendations from the review was put in place in April 2018.



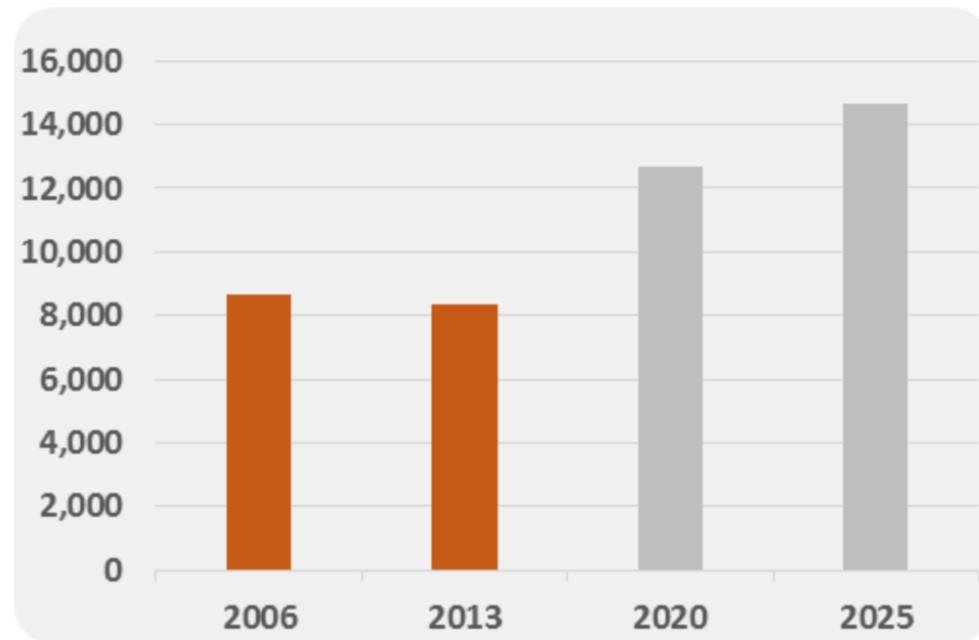
section 2

Industry, training & benchmarking
findings

The industry

Plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers are in high demand in both New Zealand and Australia.

Industry projections are that in the short to medium term there is likely to be a shortfall of certified plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers in New Zealand.



Source: Statistics NZ Census and MBIE projections

Plumber and gasfitter employment growth projections
(MBIE, 2017)

Current New Zealand off-job PGD training



The majority of New Zealand PGD apprentices complete their apprenticeships under the New Zealand Apprenticeship scheme with a smaller number completing 'managed apprenticeships'.

Until recently, to become a PGD tradesperson in New Zealand, a candidate needed to complete a National Certificate (Level 4) in the trade.

In 2018, National Certificates are being replaced by New Zealand Certificates in Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying (Level 4).

Benchmarking with Australia

Learning outcomes from the new New Zealand qualification were mapped against elements from the Australian CPC32413 Certificate III in Plumbing

Whilst the wording of learning outcomes in the two qualifications is quite different the content of the two qualifications is closely matched.

To reach PGD certifier level in New Zealand a candidate must work as a tradesperson for two years and pass the Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying Board [PGDB] certifier exam.

In Australia, a tradesperson is required to complete an additional qualification (Certificate IV) to reach certifier status.

The Skills Organisation Incorporated (Skills) is currently working towards introducing a New Zealand Level 5 qualification. This will align the New Zealand PGD certifier status more closely with Australia's process.



Benchmarking with Australia

In New Zealand (as of 2018) during the course of their apprenticeship, off-job training for plumbers will be between 15 and 18 weeks. In some states, Australian apprentices spend longer in off-job training (20-27 weeks).

Some key stakeholders would like New Zealand apprentices to receive more off-job training (in line with Australia).



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Key issues & stage one
recomendations

Dissatisfaction with current model

Key stakeholders would like to see significant changes to the current training model.



Some support exists for reducing the number of off-job training providers to two (a centre of excellence in each island).

Making good decisions for a substantial change to off-job PGD apprentice training is currently hampered by a lack of transparent and evidence-based information.

Data is needed to enable qualitative and quantitative assess of current provider performance and to determine exactly what is and isn't working from the viewpoint of all participating employers and apprentices.

Dissatisfaction with current model



Recommendation 1(a) Develop and implement tools for evaluation and review, to collect qualitative and quantitative feedback enabling reporting on the merits and failings of the current model (see also recommendation 2).

Recommendation 1(b) Research several overseas PGD apprenticeship models and their transferability to the New Zealand context.

Dissatisfaction with current model



Recommendation 1(c) Investigate the merits of alternative models for off-job training delivery (including the pros and cons of radically or moderately or not reducing the number of providers).

Recommendation 1(d) Review (and as appropriate suggest opportunities to improve) resources available to employers to assist with employer training of apprentices.

Dissatisfaction with current delivery

In general, stakeholder feedback indicates that New Zealand produces good plumbers.



However, many industry stakeholders also voiced the view that the delivery of off-job apprenticeship training needs to be improved.

Stakeholders perceive inconsistencies in the quality, consistency and currency of off-job training delivered by the different providers.

An overall lack of feedback, evaluation and review mechanisms is evident.

Dissatisfaction with current delivery

Stakeholders would like more time spent assessing rather than training on block courses.

Concerns have been voiced about out-dated and/or a variation in the quality of material, facilities and equipment used by training providers. Stakeholders say there are instances where off-job training is delivered in less than 40 hours, and apprentices receive poor quality teaching.

Changes implemented by Skills for 2018 are likely to improve or address some concerns. e.g. Skills have developed common teaching and learning resources, and schedules for delivery.

Stakeholders also note a lack of any formal mechanism to provide ongoing feedback to qualification developers and providers.

Regular collection of formalised apprenticeship and employer feedback would help provide the industry with an evidence basis from which to identify and address issues as they arise.



Dissatisfaction with current delivery



Recommendation 2 Develop a transparent annual apprentice and employer evaluation that includes evaluation criteria to address issues raised in this interim report, and time the first evaluation for the end of 2018. Enable key stakeholders to have input into evaluation parameters.

Recommendation 3 Develop and implement a system (with clear timelines and lines of responsibility) for taking action where feedback indicates changes are needed.

Dissatisfaction with current delivery



Recommendation 5 Devise (and update annually) a set of minimum standards required of all providers (that includes a set of minimum requirements for staff, equipment and facilities); and, enforce CMR requirements. Develop an enforcement strategy for instances of non-compliance.

Recommendation 10 Create a minimum pastoral care code to be followed by all agencies managing apprenticeships. This should include required parameters for initial contact and ongoing support.

Key issues and stage one recommendations

Dissatisfaction with consistency of provider performance

Some stakeholders perceive performance inconsistencies between off-job training providers.

Neither Skills nor PGDB collect success data for all apprentices according to off-job training provider.

This makes it difficult to assess the consistency of provider performance using apprentice success as a measure.



Recommendation 6 Enable the capture of student and apprentice success data according to provider.

section 03

Absence of apprentice feedback process

There is no centralised way for apprentices to provide feedback to the industry (and Skills) about their apprenticeship and off-job training



Recommendation 7 Establish a simple and transparent mechanism for apprentices to raise issues and provide feedback; and a clear system for dealing with issues raised.

Key issues and stage one recommendations

Currency of training and communication between training providers and industry

An ongoing challenge for New Zealand PGD training providers is to stay up to date with technological advances causing rapid change in the industry.

Key trends include the use of technology to improve personal comfort, green technology designed to improve efficiency and reduce environmental impact and innovation leading to healthier homes.

Having a formal and direct way for industry to provide feedback regarding qualifications and delivery would help ensure that the delivery of qualifications stays in step with industry.



Recommendation 4 Establish a mechanism for industry to interface with qualification developers (perhaps in the form of an industry advisory committee) and improve communication with providers.

section 03

Improving exam support

Some stakeholders perceive a lack of support given to apprentices around the PGDB exams.



Recommendation 9 Consider setting up peer online discussion groups and webinars to facilitate apprentice connectivity; and, consider formalising exam preparation courses and peer support groups in a range of centres (these could be facilitated face to face or online).

Key issues and stage one recommendations

Concern over growing demand for PGD tradespeople

All stakeholders see a challenge for the industry to meet growing demand for plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers.

There is a perceived lack of employers taking up apprentices. One possible reason for this is that the first year is financially tough.

Stakeholders see that school leavers of today (and their parents) are less likely to view apprenticeships as a favourable employment pathway.



Recommendation 11 Conduct a comparison with other trades to see how the financials for a potential plumbing apprentice stack up against other trade apprenticeships; and consider developing a business case for employer incentives to take to Government.

Dissatisfaction with current delivery



Recommendation 12 Develop a campaign to take to schools to re-establish plumbing and / or trades in general as a valuable pathway.

Recommendation 13 Communicate the inequity of the practice that sees providers failing to encourage students to take up apprenticeships during their level 3 programme of study to providers and raise this issue with TEC.

section 4

Next steps

Next steps

Where to from here

Skills is managing the implementation of actions recommended in this report with active input from the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and Master Plumbers.

An action plan has been developed to enable each of the recommendations from Stage One of the project.

One of these actions will include the collection of feedback from apprentices and employers near the end of 2018.

This feedback as well as additional research into overseas apprenticeship models will help inform future improvements to PGD apprenticeships.



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