



Contextualising vocational programmes to match institutional and industry settings

The Good Practice Guide

Sean Squires, Barry Dawe, Andy Kennedy, Tim Jagusch, Peter Sauer and Barry Patterson



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This Good Practice Guide accompanies a report describing the process and findings of an Ako Aotearoa funded Regional Hub Project conducted by four polytechnics delivering similar automotive education programmes throughout New Zealand. The *Contextualising vocational programmes to match institutional and industry settings* project had four interlinked objectives:

- *To identify barriers and solutions associated with delivering a particular programme package in different regions, institutional and industry settings*
- *To assist teaching staff understand ways in which they can tailor a programme to match their particular context*
- *To provide a resource for other vocational / trade education providers which will allow them to create the best possible learning environment for their learners*
- *To ensure quality and consistency of content delivery for long-term sustainability of the programme and relevant, career-focussed learning for the learners.*

The project team identified seven key areas of focus for good practice:

1. Benefits of the managed apprenticeship model

“Block courses are very helpful and important. Would not be able to pass the course without them as we do not do some of the work required in the workshop” (Student).

“Block courses are very helpful as some jobs that are hard to come by in the workshop are being set up and thorough hands on exercise is being done by us trainees. Qualified instructor gives us good training and ideas on technical areas” (Student).

Historical programme delivery, assessment styles and training methods, as much as geographical diversity across the regions (such as distances required to travel to night class and off-job training courses), have driven different delivery methods by each ITP. There has been a growing need for redevelopment of both workbooks and assessments (due to both the Targeted Review of Qualifications, and the evolving needs of the Automotive industry) and consortium members have eased into offering full time training programmes with BOPP resources, leading to managing their own apprentices as they have moved into employment. They are also still - to varying degrees - assessing MITO apprentices as well.



This has been a significant shift among ITPs: the traditional contracted support for the ITO distance learner required learners' attendance at facilitated theory-based night classes and then annually planned practical assessment block courses at their nearest polytechnic. In contrast, the BOPP automotive training resources for Levels 2 and 3 were developed with full time learners in mind. Therefore, they are integrated and follow an educationally-based training system where classroom theory and practical workshop training are interwoven. Observations and feedback from Bay of Plenty Polytechnic staff training ITO distance learning apprentices shows that students also benefit greatly from off job training where integrated learning takes place so we know this is optimal and embeds learning. However, this method is not as easy to apply for industry based learners because employers are often not able to give the time for an apprentice at work to integrate theory of a practical task due to output requirements.

The model adopted for ITP managed apprentices combines revision of theory with practical training before assessment ensuring learning is embedded. This is possible because we are able to manage our apprentices: they are enrolled with us and because of the relationship built, ongoing communication, and outcome reporting, we know what day release training they need. By the time learners - either full time or managed apprentice graduate with the Level 3 national certificate – graduate, they are ready for our online Level 4 programme where management and support of apprentices remains vital for success. As mentioned previously this need is greatest when moving from Level 3 full time to Level 4 managed apprentice study, so those who do graduate from our full or part time training at Level 3 have the advantage of previously developed relationships with their tutors as well as familiarity of resources where assessment styles carry through all levels.

2. A tailored approach to day release improves industry support

“Make night classes compulsory while doing an apprenticeship” (Employer).

“An introductory course on how the training programme works for non-school leavers would help” (Employer).



The two employer quotes above reflect the range of views about what training is needed, and how it should be structured. A major variation in management of apprentices regionally is to do with day

release. BOPP has modified the managed apprentice training model based on local industry needs: our focus and point of difference is to adequately staff the management of apprentices, whether a part time managed apprentice from the start point at level 2, from our full time level 2 or 3 programmes, or in fact at any stage before level 4 that employment is gained. This level of management is supported by the NMIT employer and EIT industry survey results. While the EIT employer survey was asking industry what they would like, the results were consistent to preferences and improvements suggested from NMIT and BOPP employers. All feedback from industry representatives related to delivery options indicated that one-on-one discussions with employers would allow ITPs to operate with minimal variation of resources.

This also allows each ITP to mostly schedule our apprentices into already timetabled assessment days with full time classes or even MITO courses. This tailored approach is based on a tri-party relationship between trainer, apprentice and employer/supervisor. The training agreement is front-loaded with direction for the apprentice to engage their employer/supervisor in identifying the practical work required for their year's enrolment and then identifying the practical work their particular workplace is unlikely or definitely will not be in a position to provide. This way, teaching teams and employers can start planning day release schedules as soon as possible.

The variation to this model was found to be the greatest in the Nelson Marlborough region where many apprentices across all levels, with different needs and from Picton to Takaka, required a different approach. This not only required resources to be much more flexible and adaptable but also required the tutors to be equally flexible and adaptable. We refer to this approach as a 'block course' rather than 'day release'. Some apprentices might be there for one day, others for a week.

In reflection it is the relationships and contact levels between all three groups of stakeholders that have the biggest impact on apprentice engagement and employer perception of support. In the experience of the research team, the Level 4 programme changes the relationship somewhat from



earlier levels of study provision as contact remains regular with apprentices but results and reporting are electronic or via text, and day release remains low. The reporting process to employers is key to maintaining the connection, and phone calls and/or visits are still required to some degree, in addition to electronic messaging, for relationship maintenance.

Since this project began, and in response to the employer feedback, BOPP have increased Level 2 and 3 apprentice numbers to the stage where one coordinator will be a full time position in 2016. This will start at around a 20 to 1 ratio with a monthly workplace visit regime and will remain closely monitored.

Summary statement: It is anticipated that the designation of a single individual with a fulltime commitment to the workplace component of the programme will further strengthen the provider-industry relationship.

3. Off job programmes can complement on job training models and allow apprentices to complete qualifications

“Night classes and block courses are very helpful” (Student)

There was a mix across the board of both employers and learners wanting increased off job training and night classes, citing increased training as beneficial to skills, knowledge and reducing time to qualify. This was reinforced as employers/ supervisors, apprentices and trainers discussed work scope in their particular business in relation to off job training.

Apprentices predominantly wanted more off job training, night classes and tutor-supported training. Apprentices very strongly agreed that off job training was needed to be able to actually complete the qualifications. This seems to be due to the scope of the on job work not covering all that is required to be learned. The research team agreed that this finding confirmed their own observations from running such courses that the learning without workplace pressure allows it to be better understood.



The research supported anecdotal perceptions from longer term industry relationships indicating that there remain some areas of training in the qualifications, such as engine strip down and reassemble, that are either not carried out in very many workplaces or are not given to apprentices by their employer at that stage of their training. Employers agree on its value as the understanding and hands on aspect of this training is fundamental to repair and diagnostic development. However, industry is not always able to apply the necessary time to an apprentice on such tasks that could have expensive consequences if it is not done correctly.

Summary statement: Strong tri-party relationships, mutually-agreed training agreements and clear expectations allow development of tailored training plans.

4. Boosting trainee support through clear communication

“[The apprentice coordinator] will drop into work and check how I’m getting on and always keen to help” (Student).

“[X] is very helpful, very much appreciated. Very approachable and easy to talk to. Guides me to proper understanding of the assessments and tasks” (Student).

Apprentice management, communication strategy with apprentices and frequency of visits were identified as important by all three participant groups. BOPP have Tuesday nights all year available for night classes, with additional tailored day release and monthly visits for apprentices and employers scheduled. The levels of contact developed by the programme’s lead organisation should not be taken as anything other than a guideline, but staff should regularly seek industry and trainee feedback on tutor visits and progress reporting satisfaction.

Summary statement: Agreed communication strategy adhered to by all ITP automotive consortium members.



5. Transparency of reporting, consistency and clarity is essential to good learner outcomes

“Looking forward to be able to view all details on line” (Employer).

“More frequent student progress updates for me to help manage my apprentice” (Employer).

Reporting on progress of apprentices to employers was raised as an area that could be improved. Currently with assessment either on paper or an on line programme that does not feed into the resulting programme, reporting is manual and very time consuming. The process has in the past been personal with text message to learners and email to employers. Gathering data and developing reports is also not in a very clear format. Graphics would be an advantage rather than numbers. There is a system under development which is aimed at improving that process and it will be necessary for efficiencies as apprentice numbers grow.

Progress and result reporting to apprentices, especially in the on line Level 4 environment requires a strategic approach which considers how important feedback is and consistency in marking. This model is quite different from marking classes of learners and the same assessment. There are more likely circumstances where apprentices meet and discuss results for the same assignment submitted at different times. As numbers increase the possibility of plagiarism also increases. It would be good practice to advertise the anti-plagiarism software available with on line submissions.

Summary statement: Up to date reporting, feedback and consistency for learners and simple clear progress reports for employers.



6. Important to improve tutor training for on-line programmes

“One suggestion - Improve self – help training section” (Tutor).

The printed and online resources were reported as positively received and helpful in training from those surveyed at BOPP, however that was not the case across the board with the online resources

being used in other regions. It would appear there are three areas which could be improved. Firstly training and use of the online resources needs to be consistent at trainer level. There is currently nothing that indicates this is the case. Secondly learners need to be trained on the use of the same to simplify submissions of assessments. Thirdly the gap between Level 3 and Level 4 online use and understanding needs to be closed. Currently Level 3 is paper-based, and while it has some online potential, apprentices especially are still working on paper-based course books and assessments so the gap to a fully online programme is significant, and the transition for many learners and staff could probably be managed better. Then too, for full time learners, while the gap is not as large because of tutor support and guidance, moving into full time employment becomes more of a challenge.

Summary statement: Consistency in trainer’s knowledge of resources for delivery, pre delivery.

7. Resource modification and management

“I can go onto the website and see what I have sent in” (Student)

*“Progress is fairly easy to track as it’s all posted on BOP Poly page when it’s been uploaded”
(Student)*

*“I am given updates, on line or text messages and even sent me a hard copy of progress report”
(Student)*

Students were happy with the programme, and with the management of delivery which enabled ready access and reference, wherever they were studying. The material used during the period of this study was that provided by BOPP and the Memorandums signed by all acknowledged that the other regions



would be using BOPP material, within an agreed framework that recognised the original developer's intellectual property. However, to maintain integrity, the tutors and employers in the regions felt that each ITP really needed to be able to roll out the programme as if it were its own. This is important if learners are to buy into the programme they are enrolled into, believing that their trainers have control over their material and know what they were doing; having another institution's name on training resources may not inspire confidence.

This thinking added a new level to the shared, cloud-based resource management, and changes were made to address this as soon as the issue was recognised. Firstly, the master word versions needed to be opened up to the consortium members for adaptation to their delivery models. Second the resulting modified resources developed by each institution needed to be resubmitted to a different area of the shared repository while the original versions would remain as 'clean' templates. Finally, administration of all internal and external moderation to update all masters available for all consortium members is required. This management process is quite likely to grow rapidly once this month's meeting in Nelson has improved Google doc use for the other members, as currently there are some gaps in staff understanding, inhibiting use. Also as growth occurs in the number of regional providers offering the programme, permissions may need to be directed to administrative staff at each institution so as to maintain accuracy. This administrative oversight and management role is also expected to grow exponentially as our consortium continues to grow and redevelopment takes place.

Summary statement: Identify a robust and secure storage system and resource the workload of managing moderation, modification, updates and communication.