

ETITO TRAINING UPDATE

LOOKING FOR A 'WORK READY' NEW APPRENTICE? WE KNOW WHERE TO FIND THEM!

START THE YEAR OFF BY TAKING ON SOMEONE WHO'S READY TO GET STUCK-IN TO AN APPRENTICESHIP RIGHT AWAY. HOW? TALK TO YOUR LOCAL POLYTECHNIC ABOUT THEIR PRE-TRADE COURSE GRADUATES.



Pre-trade courses are run at polytechnics across the country and provide students with a head-start in the off-job component of an electrotechnology apprenticeship – before they begin a formal workplace training arrangement with an employer. Generally a pre-trade graduate completes the off-job component of the National Certificate in Electrical Engineering at Level 2 and some of Level 3 while attending six months or one year of full-time classes at their local polytechnic. Some students may even complete Level 4, which means they only need to complete the workplace component in order to become fully qualified.

“As a result of the recession we’ve seen an increase in pre-trade enrolments,” says Paul Hollings, ETITO Industry Manager. “These pre-trade students have chosen to gain some valuable skills while the job market’s down – in the hope that it’ll help them find an apprenticeship in the near future. This means there’s now a skilled base of potential

apprentices that employers can choose from, and we encourage them to do so.”

John Lamb, Programme Director – School of Electrical Engineering and Trades at Manukau Institute of Technology believes that by taking on a pre-trade graduate as an apprentice, employers may be able to eliminate some of the risk associated with training. “With an apprentice straight from school employers can’t be sure that the candidate is serious about a career in electrotechnology or that they’ve got the academic ability to deal with the theory component. With a pre-trade graduate you can be sure that they’re capable and serious about what they want to do.”

As a way of helping develop practical skills, polytechnics usually encourage pre-trade students to spend one day a week with local employers gaining on-the-job experience. In many cases this is voluntary work and, according to Ian James, Programme Director – Electrotechnology at Unitec, can be a great

way for employers to conduct a ‘working interview’. “If you take someone on for free and they impress you with their work-ethic, then they’re obviously the sort of person you want to employ as an apprentice.”

So what traits and skills can an employer expect a pre-trade graduate to have? “Employers should expect a mature-minded and focused candidate,” says John. “They’ll have excellent communication and time-keeping skills, a good understanding of how the industry operates, a sound foundation of electrical theory, and the ability to work on-the-job with a useful set of skills from day-one.”

Ian echoes this sentiment. “Employers should be able to ask them to carry out a task once, and the apprentice will be able to complete it. Graduates from our course will have passed the practical assessment for EST A, they just need the work hours to gain that registration. These students will be ‘work ready’ in every sense of the word.”

WHAT PRACTICAL SKILLS DO PRE-TRADE STUDENTS GAIN?

Think that pre-trade courses are all about electromagnetism theory and Ohm’s law? You’re wrong! Practical skills are seen as a key part of pre-trade courses.

At Manukau Institute of Technology, course lecturers are committed to a philosophy of ‘blended delivery’ where classroom sessions are split between 80% practical activities and 20% teacher directed learning. With one half-day per week dedicated solely to practical skills, MIT has also recently completed a new modern installation workshop which simulates much of the work students will encounter on-the-job. “Though it’s obviously an artificial environment, we try our best to prepare them for what they’ll encounter in the initial stages of their apprenticeship while at the same time instilling the pride in good

workmanship that’s such a central part of being a tradesperson,” says John Lamb, Programme Director – School of Electrical Engineering and Trades at MIT.

Unitec follows a similar ethos. In the last semester of the year pre-trade students build battery powered go-karts from scratch before racing them at the end of term. “Not only does this engage the students, it works great, and covers most of the basic tool skills that apprentices need. Plus it also serves as a practical application of many of the underlying principles the students cover,” says Ian James, Unitec Programme Director – Electrotechnology, who adds that since a 2008 update, the lead tutor Philip Clague, has ensured that the course is about a 50/50 split between theory and practical learning.

STAY UP TO DATE!

ETITO’s first e-newsletter went out to all electrotechnology assessors, apprentices and their employers late last year. This newsletter, which will be issued regularly throughout the year, is a simple way for you to stay up to date and get easy access to value-adding resources and information on our website.

If you didn’t receive our previous issue and would like to be added to our distribution list, send an email to antonyg@etito.co.nz

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