Canberra Institute of Technology

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A study readiness program at Canberra Institute of Technology aims to ensure that apprentices progress successfully through their qualification.

Employers in the Building and Construction industry have recognised the importance of foundation skills for their apprentices. Foundation skills, particularly numeracy, are essential for the apprenticeship training process and for competent performance on the job.

The Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) has designed a program that addresses the foundation skills needs of new building and construction apprentices.

Historically CIT has accepted enrolments into trade courses as long as the student has a training contract. However, an educational review of apprenticeship programs at the Institute found that, despite additional support provided to apprentices, trade teachers were spending considerable time on basic foundation skills at the expense of covering the vocational content of the course, resulting in low qualification completion rates. The review recommended applying entry requirements based on language, literacy and numeracy levels which would ensure the prospective students had the foundation skills that would allow them to successfully complete their qualification.

The **ACT Regional Building and Construction Industry Training Council** (CITC) is the ACT's peak training advisory body for the building and construction industry. The Council is a not-for-profit organisation that brings together all of the players in the building and construction industry including employers, employees, licensing authorities and training providers.

The Industry Training Council is enthusiastic about the potential of the study readiness program to support successful apprenticeship outcomes for apprentices and their employers.

However, new entry requirements would close off apprenticeship opportunities for a cohort of already disadvantaged students. Instead, a study readiness program has been devised to provide students with additional foundation skills development to prepare for apprenticeships in the Building and Construction trades, including tiling, plastering, painting and carpentry.

The study readiness program, supported by the ACT Education and Training Directorate, commences at CIT in 2015. It will pilot the delivery of contextualised pre-vocational foundation skills for apprentices. An evaluation of the pilot will inform future funding arrangements for the provision of foundation skills to Australian Apprentices.

> *Compliance and safety are huge issues for employers in the construction industry. Including foundation skills, particularly literacy and numeracy, in apprenticeship training is essential for developing the right skills for the construction workforce.*
>
> **Vince Ball, Executive Director, ACT Regional Building and Construction Industry Training Council**

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Upfront identification of foundation skills is essential.

For apprentices to be successful they must have a solid foundation from which to start building their industry skills and knowledge. CIT encourages employers to check the study readiness of potential apprentices against the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) using a free online language, literacy and numeracy assessment tool.

ACSF assessment results can help employers and CIT determine how best to support apprentices through their off-the-job training. ACSF level 3 is regarded as the minimum level of skill to ensure a student has a reasonable chance of succeeding in their studies. CIT has a range of strategies to assist learners with skills below ACSF level 3, including participation in a pilot program for those with skills below ACSF level 2.

The **Australian Core Skills Framework** (ACSF) describes the skills of learning, reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy across five levels of performance. The framework can be used to consistently describe and compare the foundation skills required in workplace and training settings and the skills held by learners.

ACSF level	Your apprentice…	CIT will provide…
0 - 1	… will need significant additional support.	… up to six additional foundation skills units either integrated with trade training or before commencement.
2	… will need additional support.	… additional tutorial support or integrated classroom support throughout the Training Contract.
3	… is ready to go.	… additional tutorial support or integrated classroom support where required, such as for more advanced mathematical concepts required in some qualifications.

I see Numeracy as an ability to understand and communicate with numbers. Tradespeople rely on it as the absolute foundation with which to quantify the construction process.

Construction is a process of modifying raw materials in very specific quantities to create three dimensional structures. The process begins with tradespeople reading and interpreting two dimensional plans, then each trade skilfully applies the knowledge of how to use various tools and techniques to create objects to specific standards and tolerances which will be guaranteed to serve their intended purpose.

Building solid foundation skills, especially numeracy, underpins the ability of an apprentice to understand their place within the construction industry which inevitably sets them up to work as reliable professionals who can deliver what their clients expect.

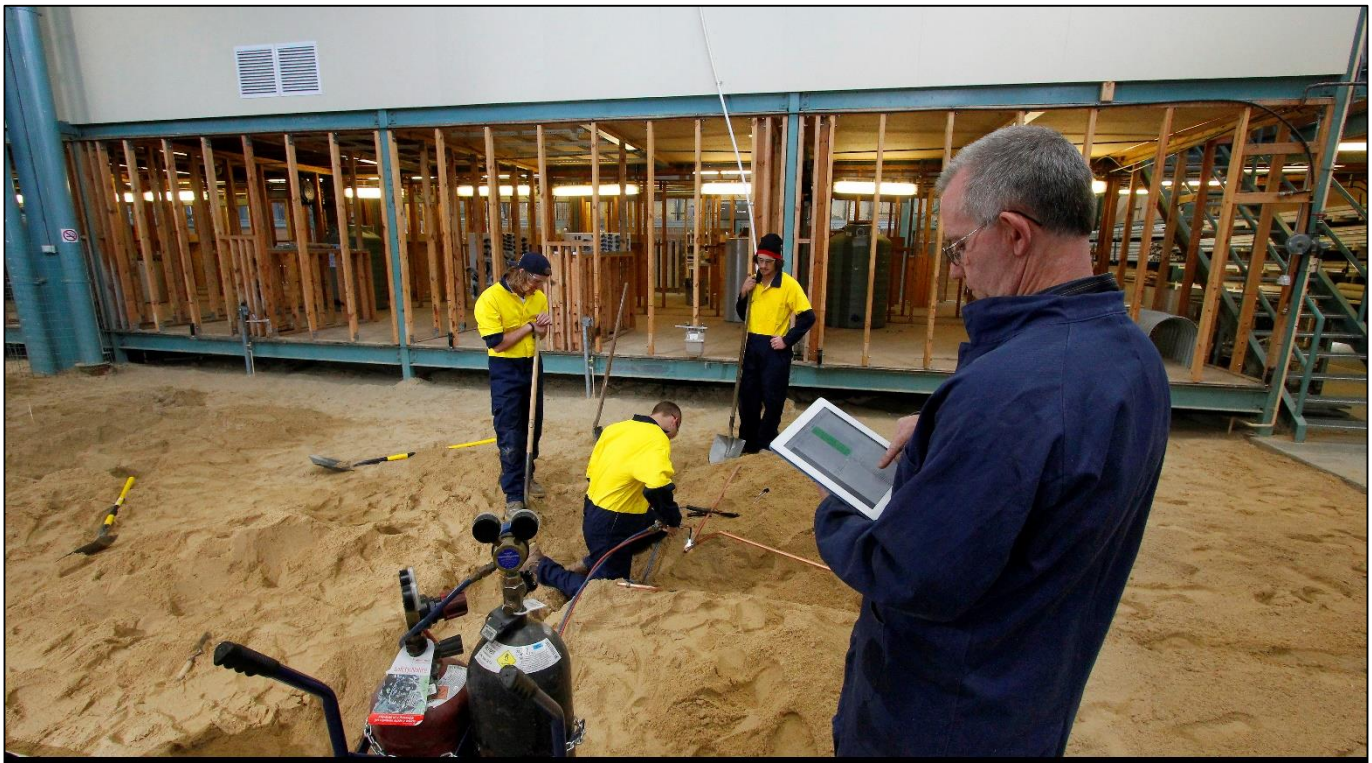
Martin Jud, Cabinet Making Stage 1 Coordinator, Canberra Institute of Technology

Options for providing foundation skills support

CIT uses a variety of program models depending on the specific foundation skills needs of the apprentice. These can include:

- **Preparation program** – apprentices undertake a focused foundation skills program before they commence trade training in their vocational qualification.
- **Additional time** – apprentices commence in their vocational qualification but attend additional foundation skills sessions each week.
- **Embedded delivery** – foundation skills delivery and support is embedded into the apprentices' trade training without requiring extra learning sessions.

The additional time model is being used for the pilot program. Apprentices in the pilot with foundation skills below ACSF level 2 will commence their trade training but spend additional time at CIT each week to undertake targeted foundation skills training.



Canberra Institute of Technology, Fyshwick Campus: Plumbing students being assessed by their teacher

Seven Workplace Champions have been appointed as public ambassadors for foundation skills

The Foundation Skills Workplace Champions aim to raise employer awareness of the benefits of addressing foundation skills in the workplace by sharing positive outcomes from their own organisations.

Foundation Skills Workplace Champions

- Anthony Kittel, Redarc Electronics Pty Ltd
- Victoria Jacques, Villa Maria Aged Care
- Yvonne Webb, CHARTTES Industry Training Advisory Council, NT
- Vince Ball, ACT Regional Building and Construction Industry Training Council
- Graeme Finlayson, Oak Training and Development, Tasmania
- Ro Coroneos, Lend Lease
- Kim Moore, Unitywater

Further information on individual champions is available on the website of the National Foundation Skills Strategy Project: http://www.statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/nfss

Support for the Workplace Champions is being provided by Michael Taylor from the Australian Industry Group, and the National Foundation Skills Strategy Project Team.

The National Foundation Skills Strategy Project (NFSS) 2014-2015 is a joint initiative by Australian governments to support priority action areas from the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults.

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