

FINISHING TRADES

Advice to the Tertiary Education Commission
for training investment in 2026

November 2024



WAIHANGA ARA RAU

Construction and
Infrastructure

Workforce Development Council



KEY INFORMATION - 2026 TEC INVESTMENT ADVICE

This information is part of a suite of documents relating to the Waihanga Ara Rau advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) for investment in training for 2026 it should be read in conjunction with the following:

- ▶ **Introduction to the Waihanga Ara Rau advice to TEC for investment in training for 2026.**

This document includes the methodology behind the learner forecasts and industry narrative, including context and themes related to the advice.

- ▶ **The sector-specific advice summaries for the other 11 strategic industry sectors.**

These documents include sector data snapshot, industry-specific context information, learner number profiles, and 2024 Learner and Provider snapshot.

- ▶ **The complete Waihanga Ara Rau advice to TEC for investment in training for 2026.**

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

Overview of Finishing Trades: ⇄

- **Scope:** Finishing Trades contribute to the final stages of construction; includes painting, decorating, flooring, kitchen and bathroom design, tiling and plastering.
- **Economic Contribution:** 7% of GDP
- **Employment:** 29,270 people, mainly in Auckland, followed by Canterbury, Wellington, and Waikato.
- **Youth Attraction:** 19% growth in 15-19 year olds from 2013 to 2018, now 4% of the workforce.
- **Aging Workforce:** 30% increase in workers aged 65+.
- **Demographics:** Over two-thirds New Zealand born; 20% from Europe and Asia.
- **Common Trades:** Paints Trade Worker, Solid Plaster, Builder Labourer
- **Government Support:** Apprenticeship Boost and Fees Free; 98% of 4195 learners in work based-learning.
- **Apprentice Demographics:** Mostly career changers aged 25-30.
- **Challenges:** Labour and skills shortages, aging workforce, COVID-19 impacts, competition for skilled workers, slow immigration.
- **Gender Diversity:** Increase in women in trades by 71% from 2012 to 2022; ongoing efforts with MBIE, Te Pūkenga (BCITO), WIT, and NAWIC.
- **Regulations:** Follows safety, quality, and best practice policies (Building Act 2004, RMA, Building Code, immigration policies)

FINISHING TRADES NARRATIVE

The sector is a core component of the wider construction workforce. Its workforce and training trends tend to mirror that of the wider construction industry therefore based on the wider analysis of the sector, we are **forecasting 2026 training numbers to reflect 2023 numbers**.

Key issues facing Finishing Trades include:

- ▶ Immigration and visa issues especially for the flooring sector.
- ▶ Downturn in work opportunities due to the slowdown of the construction sector. However, this is expected to pick up again in 2025/26.
- ▶ Many workers are moving offshore to better opportunities due to the downturn of the economy.
- ▶ Lack of engagement at secondary school level as school career guidance staff are unaware of the different opportunities the Finishing Trades.
- ▶ Potential impacts on the change to the VET system under the new proposals - there may be a lack of programme delivery as it may be perceived as not viable for some training providers.
- ▶ The reduction in Apprenticeship Boost to employers from 24 months to 12 months will severely impact the number of employers wanting to take on apprentices. On average it takes at least 18 months for apprentices to be useful to the employer.

TEC INVESTMENT ADVICE

What is our baseline year and the training narrative/forecast?

We are using **2023 learner numbers as our baseline**, as this is the latest full-year training data.

Training interventions such as the Apprentice Boost and Fees Free influenced 2021/21 learner numbers significantly, where we saw historical highs for many sectors. The five-year project pipeline of work was also just coming off its all-time high of approximately \$300B total (\$251B construction-specific) in December 2022.

In 2023, learner numbers started to fall, which is almost a return to 'business as usual' pre-Government interventions. Learner numbers in most industry sectors have continued to fall in 2024, but we anticipate government investment indicators and a falling Official Cash Rate (OCR) will see 2024 as the bottom of the training volume trough in both the civil infrastructure and construction sectors with enrolments building in 2025.

The 2026 projected learners' numbers for construction reflect an expectation that 2024 will see the bottom of the trough and start to rebound in 2025 to be back to 2023 levels in 2026¹. **PGD is the only construction sector where a forecast graph is provided. For the other construction sectors, these are not included given any growth suggestions are not directly related to the project pipeline forecasting.**

Please note that 'Brick and Block Laying and Refractory Installation strands' are covered in the On Site Construction strategic reference group and their respective advice section.



Investment Advice Table

Level	Code	Qualification or credential name	Mode	Region	2023 Learners	2026 Advice Provision
3	2834	New Zealand Certificate in Construction Trade Skills (Level 3)	WBL Preference	National	80	80
	3903	Kitchen Installation (Micro-credential)	TBD	TBD	10	10
	-	¹ Introduction to Flooring Installation (Level 3) (Training Scheme)			35	35
	-	¹ Flooring Fundamentals			60	60
4	0756	National Certificate in Flooring (Level 4) with strands in Carpet Installation, Fine Sand and Finishes, Flooring Planning and Design, Resilient Flooring Installation, Substrate Preparation, Timber Overlay Installation, and Resin Flooring Application.	WBL Preference	National	395	0
	4296 ²	New Zealand Certificate in Flooring Installation (Level 4) with strands in Bonded Carpet, Conventional Carpet, Commercial Resilient Flooring, and Residential Resilient Flooring			185	375
	4297 ²	New Zealand Certificate in Flooring Planning and Design (Level 4) with optional strands in Estimation, and Site Assessment			5	75
	4298 ²	New Zealand Certificate in Resin Flooring Application (Level 4) with strands in Trowel Applied Resin Mortar, and Flow Applied Resin Finishes			15	65
	4299 ²	New Zealand Certificate in Flooring Surface Preparation (Level 4) with strands in Concrete Polishing, Mechanical Preparation, Moisture Treatment, and Underlayment Systems (with optional strand in Topical Coatings)			0	60
	4300 ²	New Zealand Certificate in Timber and Composite Flooring (Level 4) with strands in Bonded Installation, and Fine Floor Sand and Finishes			15	40
	3060	New Zealand Certificate in Proprietary Systems Installation (Level 4) with strands in Proprietary Partitions, and Suspended Ceilings			260	260
	3061	New Zealand Certificate in Interior Linings Installation (Level 4) with strands in Fixing, and Finishing (with optional strand in Fibrous Plaster Installation)			680	680
	3062 ³	New Zealand Certificate in Fibrous Plaster Manufacture (Level 4) with optional strand in Specialist Model and Mould Making			Suppressed	Suppressed
	3137	New Zealand Certificate in Trowel Trades (Level 4) with strands in Floor and Wall Tiling, Proprietary Plaster Cladding Systems, Ferro-cement Tank Manufacture and Solid Plastering (with optional strands in Fixing Cavities and Substrates, and Decorative Mouldings)			700	700
3568	New Zealand Certificate in Painting and Decorating (Level 4) with strands in Spray Systems, Wallcoverings, and Specialised Coatings	2,400	2,400			
5	3221	New Zealand Diploma in Design (Kitchen Design/Bathroom Design) (Level 5)			140	140
Total					4,970	4,970

¹ No NZQA code could be identified in the Nga Kete. The relevant programme name has been provided as a next best alternative.

² Qualifications **Ref:4296, Ref:4297, Re:4298, Ref:4299** and **Ref:4300** replaced *Ref:0756*, learners in the replaced qualification have been distributed across the replacement qualifications. *The scale of change reflects this distribution of learners not new learner numbers. The qualifications were reflected in our formal advice to TEC – noted by the highlight cells.*

³ The learner data is suppressed in Nga Kete. Our advice would be 'no change' based on the 2023 baseline (actual consumption).

2024 Learner Snapshot

Age		Region		Gender	
Under 25	43%	Auckland	19%	Female	13%
25 – 39	46%	Canterbury	19%	Male	87%
40 plus	11%	Wellington	13%		
		Waikato	10%		

NEW QUALIFICATIONS AND CREDENTIALS

Area of provision and/or qualification/ credential name (if known)	Level	Mode (if specific)	Qualification or micro-credential	Estimated date it will be available	Name of qualification or micro-credential this will replace (if relevant)
Floating Floors MC	TBC	TBC	Micro-credential	2025/2026	Has been approved for development.
Carpet Tiles MC	TBC	TBC	Micro-credential	2025/2026	Has been approved for development.
Suspended Ceiling Design credential	TBC	TBC	TBC	2026	Currently developing idea further with industry.
Internal Wet Area Construction (Tiling)	TBC	TBC	TBC	2026	Currently developing idea further with industry.
Introduction to Flooring Installation	Level 3	TBC	Qual	2026	Likely to result from review of training scheme
Flooring Fundamentals	Level 2	TBC	Micro-credential	2026	Likely to result from review of training scheme