

Trades

Te Ara Ringa Rehe

2027

STUDY GUIDE

- Carpentry
- Joinery
- Painting & Decorating
- Electrical Trades
- Plumbing, Gasfitting & Drainlaying
- Automotive Trades
- Engineering Trades

**GET
SET**



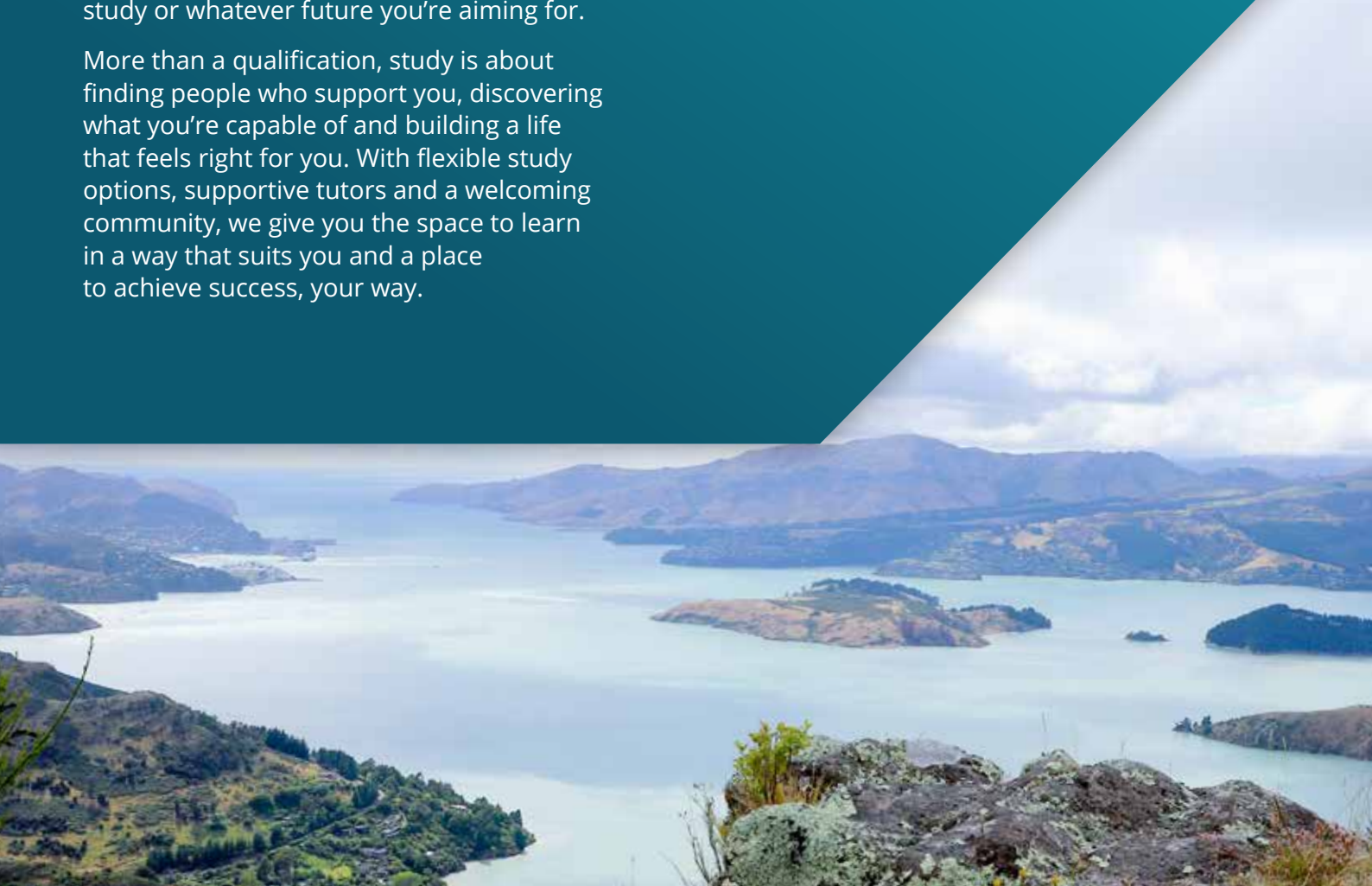
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KIA ORA

Choosing what comes next can feel exciting, daunting and full of pressure — but it's also full of possibility.

We believe education should open doors, build confidence and lead somewhere meaningful. That's why our learning is grounded in the real world: practical, hands-on and shaped by industry, so you graduate ready to step into work, further study or whatever future you're aiming for.

More than a qualification, study is about finding people who support you, discovering what you're capable of and building a life that feels right for you. With flexible study options, supportive tutors and a welcoming community, we give you the space to learn in a way that suits you and a place to achieve success, your way.



Disclaimer The information contained in this document is correct at the time of production (July 2026). Ara reserves the right to cancel or postpone any of the programmes, and shall not be liable for any claim other than the proportion of programme fees that the cancelled portion bears. Some programmes may be dependent upon formal approval from NZQA (New Zealand Qualifications Authority), TEC (Tertiary Education Commission) funding allocation, and the number of enrolments. Fees, programmes, entry and selection criteria, and dates, are subject to change. Please check the relevant programme pages at ara.ac.nz for up-to-date information and full entry requirements before applying to enrol. Information regarding English language requirements is available on each programme page at ara.ac.nz.

**SUCCESS ISN'T
ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL.**

**AT ARA,
SUCCESS IS SHAPED
AROUND YOU.**

**YOUR GOALS,
YOUR PACE,
YOUR LIFE.**

**SUCCESS.
YOUR WAY.**



CARPENTRY

Carpentry is a key building trade focused on constructing, repairing and altering buildings, especially homes. Carpenters read drawings and specifications, measure and cut materials, assemble frames, install cladding, joinery and roofing, and complete interior linings, trim and hardware. Work is carried out on building sites and in workshops, using hand and

power tools and coordinating with other trades. Safe work practices, accuracy and meeting timeframes are essential. All work must meet the New Zealand Building Code, and many carpenters progress towards becoming a Licensed Building Practitioner (LBP).

Would this suit me?

Carpentry suits people who like practical work and want to see results at the end of the day. You'll do well if you're reliable, safety-minded and proud of doing a tidy job. An eye for detail, basic maths skills and steady hands help, along with enjoying teamwork and working outdoors in all conditions.

Career Pathways

Entry Level

- Carpentry apprentice
- Construction labourer
- Hammer hand
- Pre-nail worker
- Building site assistant

Intermediate

- Qualified carpenter
- Residential builder
- Commercial carpenter
- Renovation carpenter
- Formwork carpenter
- Interior fit-out installer

Advanced

- Leading hand
- Foreman
- Site supervisor
- Project manager
- Licensed building practitioner (LBP)
- Business owner

NB: Advanced roles may require experience and/or further study.

WHAT will I learn?

- Tools, materials and construction methods
- Drawings, specifications and calculations
- Site set-out and preparation
- Concrete and timber substructures and floors
- Wall framing, beams and roof structures
- Weathertight cladding, joinery and roofing
- Interior linings, insulation, trim and hardware
- Workplace safety and site requirements

HOW will I learn?

- Hands-on workshops in trade facilities
- Practical projects in simulated building spaces
- Classroom sessions for theory and planning
- Online and blended learning support
- Workplace learning on real building sites
- Tutor visits, assessment and feedback in context

Industry connections

Whether you study on campus or through an apprenticeship, you'll learn with strong links to the construction industry. Our tutors are industry-qualified builders with extensive experience and strong connections to Registered Master Builders and other industry organisations. On campus, you'll build

a house from start to finish on site, giving you real-world experience across the full build process. As an apprentice, you'll earn while you learn – working for an employer, learning on the job and completing part-time study at Ara.

Study options

	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
New Zealand Certificate in Construction Trade Skills (Carpentry)	3	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 1 year	February, May [^] , August [^]
New Zealand Certificate in Carpentry (Apprenticeship)*	4	On-the-job, South Island-wide	Part-time 4 years	All year

* Flexible study arrangements mean you can undertake your apprenticeship anywhere in the South Island and only need to attend an in-person class once a month in Christchurch. Ara staff will visit your workplace at regular intervals to assess your progress.

[^]Christchurch only

Starter options

Trades Primer*	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
	2	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 6 months	February [^] , July

*Available free through Youth Guarantee. Conditions apply.

[^]Christchurch only



Scan for more information on this subject



JOINERY

Joinery is the work of designing, making, assembling and installing timber and composite products for homes and commercial spaces. Joiners produce items such as cabinetry, kitchens, doors and windows, stairs, benchtops and custom furniture. The job blends practical skill with precision, using measurements,

drawings and specifications to achieve a quality finish. Work may happen in a workshop, on-site during installation, or across both, often alongside other trades, suppliers and clients to meet timeframes and requirements.

Would this suit me?

This area suits people who like making things and take pride in accuracy. You might enjoy hands-on work, using tools and machinery, and following plans to create a finished product. Patience, problem solving, steady focus, reliability and good teamwork help, along with a strong safety mindset and a willingness to keep building your skills.

Career Pathways

Entry Level

- Joinery labourer
- Workshop assistant
- Joinery apprentice
- Production assistant
- Machinery operator

Intermediate

- Qualified joiner
- Cabinetmaker
- Cabinetry installer
- Shopfitter
- Stair builder

Advanced

- Workshop supervisor
- Joinery project manager
- Production manager
- Technical representative
- CNC programmer
- Business owner

NB: Advanced roles may require experience and/or further study.

WHAT will I learn?

- Timber, board and composite materials
- Hand tools and power tools
- Measurements, calculations and set-outs
- Reading drawings and job specifications
- Machinery set-up and basic maintenance
- Joinery manufacturing, assembly and installation
- Job planning, scheduling and costings
- Workplace health and safety practices

HOW will I learn?

- Hands-on projects in workshop settings
- Demonstrations and supervised practice
- Industry-standard tools and machinery use
- Work-based projects and evidence portfolios
- Tutor support, site visits and check-ins
- Online resources to support theory learning

Industry connections

Whether you study on campus or through an apprenticeship, you'll learn with strong links to the construction industry. On campus, you'll learn from tutors who are Certified Builders and members of Registered Master Builders and other industry groups. You'll work on projects with real deadlines and clear quality expectations, so you're better prepared for

the pace and standards of the workplace. You'll also connect with industry groups such as the National Kitchen Bathroom Association and take part in visits to suppliers. As an apprentice, you'll earn while you learn - working for an employer, learning on the job and completing part-time study at Ara.

Study options

	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES	NOTES
New Zealand Certificate in Construction Trade Skills (Joinery)	3	Christchurch	Full-time 30 weeks	February, May	
New Zealand Certificate in Joinery (Apprenticeship)*	4	On-the-job, South Island-wide**	Part-time 2.5 to 4 years, depending on your chosen specialisation	All year^	Available in: • Timber Stairs • Cabinetry • Craftsperson • Laminate Fabrication • Timber, Doors and Windows

*Complete your apprenticeship anywhere in the South Island. Christchurch learners attend weekly classes, while learners outside Christchurch study by distance with tutor support and attend one annual one-week block course in Christchurch. Ara staff will visit your workplace at regular intervals to assess your progress.

**Canterbury, West Coast, Marlborough

^One night class a week and one block course a year

Starter options

Trades Primer*	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
	2	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 6 months	February^, July

*Available free through Youth Guarantee. Conditions apply.

^Christchurch only



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PAINTING & DECORATING

Painting and decorating is the trade that gives buildings their final polish and long-term protection. Work spans new builds, renovations and maintenance across homes and commercial sites. Painters and decorators measure up, read plans and specifications, and choose products that suit the surface and conditions.

They then prepare surfaces and apply paints, finishes and wall coverings so spaces look good and stand up to daily wear. Painters and decorators are responsible for safe and tidy work practices and often coordinate with other trades on busy sites.

Would this suit me?

This area suits people who like practical work and want to see results. You may enjoy working with your hands, taking pride in neat finishes and following instructions. It helps to be reliable and patient, with an eye for colour, texture and detail. The work can be physically demanding, so good fitness is important.

Career Pathways

Entry Level

- Painting assistant
- Apprentice painter
- Site labourer
- Paint shop assistant
- Trainee wall coverer

Intermediate

- Painter and decorator
- Spray painter
- Wallpaper installer
- Colour consultant
- Team leader
- Paint company sales rep

Advanced

- Foreperson/supervisor
- Business owner
- Contracts manager
- Estimator
- Project manager
- Trade trainer

NB: Advanced roles may require experience and/or further study.

WHAT will I learn?

- Trade calculations and measurements
- Reading plans and specifications
- Tools, equipment and materials
- Surface preparation and repair
- Paint and coating application
- Spray application basics
- Teamwork and workplace communication
- Workplace health and safety

HOW will I learn?

- Hands-on practical workshops
- Tutor demonstrations and guided practice
- Interior and exterior project work
- Online and self-directed study tasks

Industry connections

You'll build links with industry through real projects, work experience opportunities and input from people working in the trade. Guest speakers share what's happening on sites and what employers look for.

Where available, project briefs may come from community clients. Industry connections can include Resene and Dulux, helping you understand expectations and pathways into work.

Study options

	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
New Zealand Certificate in Construction Trade Skills (Painting and Decorating)	3	Christchurch	Full-time 6 months	February, July

Starter options

Trades Primer*	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
	2	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 6 months	February^, July

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^Christchurch only



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ELECTRICAL TRADES

Electrical trades professionals install, maintain and repair the systems that power homes, workplaces, industry and infrastructure. Their work ranges from wiring new builds to upgrading switchboards, connecting motors, setting up lighting and control circuits, and finding faults when things stop working.

Professionals in this field read plans, measure and mark out runs, select the right cables and fittings, and test their work to confirm it's safe. They often work on-site, sometimes in tight spaces, and need to stay focused and organised.

Would this suit me?

This area could suit you if you like practical work and enjoy how things operate and connect. You might be science minded, methodical, and keen to solve problems step by step. It helps to take safety seriously, follow rules, and take pride in doing a tidy job. Reliability and good communication are important too.

Career Pathways

Entry Level

- Electrical apprentice
- Electrical trade assistant
- Electrical labourer
- Electrical storeperson
- Data cabling trainee

Intermediate

- Registered electrician
- Fire alarm technician
- Security systems technician
- Data communications technician
- Industrial electrician
- Lines technician

Advanced

- Electrical supervisor
- Site foreman
- Electrical project manager
- Electrical inspector
- Automation specialist
- Electrical business owner

NB: Advanced roles may require experience and/or further study.

WHAT will I learn?

- Electrical workplace safety, first aid and ethics
- Direct current (DC) circuit fundamentals
- Alternating current (AC), magnetism and isolation
- Tools, test instruments and safe work practices
- Cables, fittings, testing and fault finding
- Supply systems, earthing and bonding
- Electrical drawings, protection and switching circuits
- Installations, motors and transformers

HOW will I learn?

- Practical workshops and wiring simulations
- Hands-on use of tools and test equipment
- Lectures, tutorials and small-group learning
- Teamwork on applied projects and tasks
- Practical and written assessments and tests
- Closed-book capstone examination

Industry connections

You'll learn with input from industry guest speakers and visits to electrical workplaces, giving a clearer view of day-to-day work across different parts of the trade. Learning is shaped by industry expectations and aligned

with current safety, compliance and professional standards, ensuring that the skills you build transfer well into apprenticeships and entry-level roles.

Study options

	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
New Zealand Certificate in Electrical (Pre-Trade)	3	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 1 year	Various
New Zealand Diploma in Engineering (Electrical)	6	Christchurch	Full-time 2 years Part-time up to 5 years	February

Starter options

Trades Primer*	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
	2	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 6 months	February^, July
New Zealand Certificate in Study and Employment Pathways (Engineering pathway)**	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
	4	Christchurch	Full-time 19 weeks Part-time available	February, July

*Available free through Youth Guarantee. Conditions apply.

**If you don't meet the academic requirements for the diploma, you can gain them via this Level 4 starter course. Please note: completing the starter course doesn't guarantee entry to the higher-level qualification as other criteria may apply

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PLUMBING, GASFITTING & DRAINLAYING

Plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying is about protecting health, safety and property through well-built water, gas and drainage systems. Tradespeople install, service and repair pipework, fixtures and appliances, and build drainage that moves stormwater and wastewater where it needs to go. They read plans, take measurements, do basic calculations and choose materials suited to each job.

The work is practical and varied, often on active sites or in occupied buildings. Because mistakes can be serious, the job demands safe work practices and compliance with legal and ethical requirements.

Would this suit me?

If you like hands-on work, practical problem solving and using tools, this area could be a good fit. You'll need patience, a positive attitude and the ability to follow instructions carefully. Taking pride in doing a job well, communicating clearly and working well with others will also help you succeed.

Career Pathways

Entry Level

- Plumbing apprentice
- Gasfitting apprentice
- Drainlaying apprentice
- Trade assistant
- Maintenance assistant

Intermediate

- Plumber
- Gasfitter
- Drainlayer
- Maintenance plumber
- Service technician

Advanced

- Senior plumber
- Drainage supervisor
- Gas safety supervisor
- Site supervisor
- Business owner

NB: Advanced roles may require experience and/or further study.

WHAT will I learn?

- Tools selection, use and maintenance
- Simple drawings and sheet metal patterns
- Trade calculations for common tasks
- Excavation, trenching and backfilling basics
- Water basics, pipework and sanitation fundamentals
- Essential safety skills and first aid
- Confined space entry and asbestos safety
- Regulatory, legal and ethical requirements

HOW will I learn?

- Hands-on practical workshops and tutor demonstrations
- Tutorials and short lectures to build theory
- Simulation exercises and role plays for safe practice
- Projects and applied tasks in pairs or small groups
- Independent study

Industry connections

Industry helps shape what you learn, with regular input from local employers and business owners. You'll work on practical tasks that reflect everyday plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying jobs, often in pairs or small

teams. Work and education visits can add extra real-world context. You'll also be encouraged to organise your own work experience to build contacts and improve job prospects.

Study options

	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES	NOTES
New Zealand Certificate in Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying	3	Christchurch	Full-time 19 weeks	January, June	

Starter options

Trades Primer*	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
	2	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 6 months	February^, July

*Available free through Youth Guarantee. Conditions apply.

^Christchurch only



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AUTOMOTIVE TRADES

Automotive trades cover the practical and technical work that keeps vehicles – everything from cars and motorbikes to trucks and heavy machinery – operating safely. Tradespeople inspect vehicles, identify faults, repair or replace components and check performance before the vehicle returns to the road. Work may involve mechanical systems like engines, braking and steering, as well as electrical and electronic systems

that are now a major part of the job. Collision repair is another pathway, involving removal and refitting of components and completing minor repairs before refinishing. The work is practical, methodical and guided by workplace procedures, safety standards and manufacturer instructions.

Would this suit me?

Automotive trades may suit you if you like tools, technology and seeing a job done properly. It's a good fit you're practical, methodical and you enjoy solving problems. You also need to be able to work within a team, follow safety rules and keep learning as vehicles and technology changes.

Career Pathways

Entry Level

- Automotive apprentice
- Workshop assistant
- Parts assistant
- Trainee service technician
- Collision repair remover and refitter
- Refinishing preparer

Intermediate

- Automotive technician
- Diagnostic technician
- Collision repair technician
- Automotive refinisher
- Service advisor
- Parts interpreter

Advanced

- Senior technician
- Workshop supervisor
- Service manager
- Structural repair technician
- Refinishing specialist
- Workshop owner

NB: Advanced roles may require experience and/or further study.

WHAT will I learn?

Automotive Engineering

- Workshop safety, policies and regulations
- Hand tools, power tools and equipment use
- Engine servicing fundamentals
- Electrical and electronic fault-finding basics
- Driveline, brakes and brake adjustments
- Steering, suspension, wheels and tyres
- Component removal, refitting and storage
- Minor repairs and surface preparation basics

Collision Repair

- Safe workshop practices and procedures
- Collision repair tools and equipment
- Minor vehicle damage assessment
- Repair procedures and materials
- Vehicle component removal and refitting
- Interior, exterior and critical components
- Workplace communication and teamwork
- Supervised collision repair work experience

HOW will I learn?

- Hands-on tasks in workshop environments
- Tutor demonstrations and supervised practice
- Simulated workplace jobs and practical projects
- Online activities to support theory learning
- For collision repair, supervised work experience (50 hours)

Industry connections

You'll build job-ready skills through hands-on learning that reflects current workplace practice and manufacturer requirements. Industry bodies such as Motor Industry Training Organisation (MITO), Hanga-Aro-Rau and the Collision Repair Association

help inform the direction of training. For collision repair, you'll do 50 hours of supervised work experience with a partner business, supported by onsite visits and learning-focused feedback.

Study options

	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
New Zealand Certificate in Automotive Engineering	3	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 1 year	January, February, August [^]
New Zealand Certificate in Collision Repair and Automotive Refinishing	3	Christchurch	Full-time 20 weeks	February, July

[^]Christchurch only

Starter options

Trades Primer*	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
	2	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 6 months	February [^] , July

*Available free through Youth Guarantee. Conditions apply.

[^]Christchurch only



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ENGINEERING TRADES

Engineering trades cover the practical work that keeps industry running, from making parts and structures to building, fitting and maintaining machines and equipment. Tradespeople make, install and repair items like structural steel beams, stairs and balustrades, ducting, tanks, pipework, custom trailers, machine guarding and plant equipment.

People in this field read drawings, measure and mark out accurately, choose suitable materials, then cut, shape, join and assemble components to meet job requirements. Work can range from light fabrication through to heavy engineering and structural steel, as well as machining and maintenance.

Would this suit me?

This area could suit you if you like hands-on work and making things accurately. It helps to enjoy practical problem solving, working to a plan and thinking step by step. You'll need a steady approach, good focus and the kind of mindset that checks measurements twice.

Career Pathways

Entry Level

- Trade assistant
- Industrial process worker
- Machine operator
- Junior welder
- Apprentice

Intermediate

- Welder
- Fabricator
- Mechanical fitter
- Machinist
- Maintenance technician
- Structural steelworker
- Toolmaker

Advanced

- Leading hand
- Workshop supervisor
- Quality inspector
- Maintenance planner
- Project supervisor
- Business owner

NB: Advanced roles may require experience and/or further study.

WHAT will I learn?

- Health and safety practices
- Engineering calculations and measurement
- Reading and creating basic drawings
- Materials, fasteners and handling methods
- Machining and workshop processes
- Fabrication principles and techniques
- Welding and thermal cutting fundamentals
- Quality checks and efficient work practices

HOW will I learn?

- Hands-on workshop practice
- Tutor-led demonstrations and guidance
- Learning by doing real trade tasks
- Tutor feedback as you practise
- Projects you can show employers
- Online and classroom learning support

*May vary depending on the specialisation you choose.

Industry connections

Learning takes place in industry-standard workshops, using tools and equipment you'll see on the job. Projects are shaped with industry input and designed around real trade tasks, to ensure the skills you learn are relevant to local employers. Guest speakers and visits to workplaces help you understand day-to-day realities

and build connections. Depending on your course, you may have work-based learning opportunities. If you choose an apprenticeship study option, you'll complete much of your learning on the job, supported by block courses at Ara and tutor visits.

Study options

	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES	NOTES
New Zealand Certificate in Mechanical Engineering*	3	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 1 year	February, July [^]	
New Zealand Certificate in Mechanical Engineering (Apprenticeship)	4	Christchurch, Timaru	Part-time 4 years	February, July	Available in: • General Engineering • Fitting and Machining • Maintenance Engineering • Machining • Toolmaking
New Zealand Certificate in Fabrication (Apprenticeship)	4	Christchurch, Timaru	Part-time 4 years	February, July	Available in: • Heavy Fabrication • Light Fabrication • Steel Construction

*If you complete the Level 3 New Zealand Certificate in Mechanical Engineering (or similar) you can complete an apprenticeship within three years.

[^]Christchurch only

Starter options

Trades Primer*	LEVEL	LOCATION	DURATION	INTAKES
	2	Christchurch, Timaru	Full-time 6 months	February [^] , July

*Available free through Youth Guarantee. Conditions apply.

[^]Christchurch only



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APPLY NOW

ara.ac.nz

City campus

130 Madras Street, Christchurch
Mon-Fri, 8am - 4.30pm

Manawa campus

276 Antigua Street, Christchurch
Mon-Fri, 8.30am - 4.30pm

Woolston campus

Ensors Road, Christchurch
Mon-Fri, 8am - 4.30pm

Timaru campus

32 Arthur Street, Timaru
Mon-Fri, 8am - 4.30pm

Connect with us:

Free call (New Zealand): 0800 24 24 76
Email: info@ara.ac.nz

