Agricultural Trade Qualification

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Trade vs traineeship

What is the difference between a declared trade and a declared vocation?

A declared trade is a skilled occupation delivered through an apprenticeship and formally recognised under state legislation.

A declared vocation is a non-trade occupation delivered through a traineeship, typically with shorter duration and different regulatory requirements.

Can a declared vocation become a declared trade?

Yes. A declared vocation can be reclassified as a declared trade through a formal application by industry as part of a process managed by state and territory training authorities.

What is the process to convert an occupation into a formally recognised trade?

The process generally involves:

- Industry application: Submission by industry bodies, employers or stakeholders.
- Evidence and alignment: Demonstrating alignment with qualification standards (e.g. Certificate III+), supervision requirements, safety and training pathways.
- Government approval: Formal declaration by the relevant state or territory authority.

Qualification design and structure

Who is the qualification intended for?

AHC3XX27 Certificate III in Agricultural Production is intended for individuals looking to build a career in agricultural production roles across a range of agricultural workplaces. It is suitable for new entrants to the agriculture industry, those looking to undertake an apprenticeship, as well as existing workers seeking to formalise and broaden their skills.

What are the key differences between existing traineeships and apprenticeships?

Existing Certificate III traineeships:

- shorter duration
- task-focused training
- designed for immediate job readiness

Proposed trade apprenticeship:

- 3–4 year structured program
- prescriptive core with mandatory specialisation
- focus on higher-level capabilities, including:

- autonomy and judgement
- planning and coordination
- system-level responsibility.

Where can I find more information on apprenticeships?

Stakeholders seeking further information should consult Australian Apprenticeships or their local Australian Apprenticeship Support Network Provider.

How will the trade qualification differ from the existing Certificate III in Agriculture?

The existing qualification prepares graduates to:

- perform tasks under broad supervision
- apply a range of skills across varied contexts.

The proposed trade qualification will:

- include a strong core of transferable agricultural skills
- require industry-specific specialisations
- develop capability to work across sectors, regions, and systems.

What will trade-level jobs look like?

Graduates will:

- work with a high level of autonomy
- have the foundational and portable skills to work across agricultural sectors with minimal additional training
- apply broad technical and operational skills in varied contexts
- exercise judgement to plan, implement, and adapt work
- respond to contingencies and solve complex problems.

What will the trade graduate be called?

The proposed title is "Agriculturist", reflecting a fully qualified trade-level occupation aligned with other recognised trades such as electrician, carpenter, or mechanic.

Workforce Need and Industry Value

Why is there a need for an Agricultural Trade Apprenticeship?

Evidence, supported by key stakeholder views of industry peak bodies and unions, indicates the trade could:

- strengthen workforce capability and professionalism
- improve productivity through higher skill levels
- enhance workplace safety and culture
- provide a clearer, more attractive entry and career pathway into agriculture.

With effective implementation, the trade pathway is expected to contribute to addressing workforce shortages.

Pathways and progression

Will existing traineeships provide pathways into the apprenticeship?

Yes. The qualification design aims to:

- support credit arrangements for AQF Level 2 and 3 graduates
- support progression without disadvantaging existing workers
- recognise related sector experience (e.g. pork, poultry, production horticulture).

What entry pathways are available?

You can enter this qualification through several different pathways, including:

- direct entry with no prior agricultural experience or formal qualifications
- progression from lower-level studies, such as completing a Certificate II in Agriculture or Rural Operations (ideally paired with relevant some farm work experience)
- transitioning from related industries, using transferable skills from sectors like mining, construction, or transport
- recognition of on-the-job experience, for those who have worked on a farm but do not hold formal qualifications
- recognition of prior learning for those who have completed other relevant Certificate III qualifications or undertaken other informal training.

Training delivery and flexibility

How will training reflect different commodities or regions?

Training outcomes will be influenced by:

- industry engagement with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
- locally tailored training plans developed in partnership with employers
- selection of electives aligned to sector-specific or locational-specific needs.

Is the agriculture industry too broad for a single trade qualification?

While the agriculture sector is large and varied, the qualification is designed to provide flexibility to suit all types of workplaces, commodities, and jurisdictions. This is achieved by:

- including a core set of transferable skills applicable across multiple sectors
- incorporating specialisations for industry-specific technical skills.

Graduates will be equipped to transfer skills between:

- sectors (e.g. livestock, cropping, dairy)
- regions
- different operating environments.

Will graduates gain licences and certifications?

There are no plans for the introduction of any additional licensing. However, some existing regulatory or licensing outcomes may be achieved depending on:

- units selected within the training plan
- employer requirements.

Examples may include:

- high-risk work licences (e.g. telehandler)
- Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP).

Do graduates of the trade qualification need to obtain a separate industry licence to practice as an Agriculturist?

No. Some trades require an additional licence to practice or set up their own business within their chosen field (e.g. electrical, plumbing), but agriculture does not (similar to carpentry and automotive trades). Once this qualification is completed, graduates are fully qualified to work as an Agriculturist without needing any extra registration or licencing.

Do workplace supervisors need to hold a qualification to supervise apprentices?

Requirements vary by jurisdiction and trade, but generally:

- supervisors must be suitably skilled and experienced in the occupation they are supervising
- a formal qualification is not always mandatory, particularly in unlicensed trades
- in licensed trades, supervisors may need to hold the relevant licence (and associated qualification)
- employers are responsible for ensuring apprentices receive appropriate supervision at all times, including access to a qualified tradesperson where required.

Further information is available from the relevant state or territory apprenticeship authority.

Recognition and assessment

What is recognition of prior learning (RPL)?

RPL is an assessment process that recognises skills and knowledge gained through:

- work experience
- informal and non-formal learning.

RPL allows an individual to demonstrate that they already meet the requirements of a unit of competency or qualification without having to repeat learning they have already achieved.

Further information is available from ASQA and the Australian Qualifications Framework.

How is RPL undertaken?

The process generally includes engaging with a RTO with the qualification on scope to:

- evidence collection: resumes, portfolios, references
- assessment: mapping evidence against qualification requirements
- outcome: full or partial credit, or qualification attainment.

What types of evidence can be used for the RPL process?

You can provide evidence from different types of prior learning and experience, including:

- Formal learning: Certificates, transcripts, or statements of attainment from accredited qualifications or courses.
- Workplace training (Non-formal learning): Certificates from industry short courses, vendor training, or unaccredited workplace programs.
- Work and life experience (informal learning): Employment references, job descriptions, resumes, logs of hours or practical demonstrations of your skills on the farm.

Will existing workers be required to hold this qualification to keep working in the industry?

No. There is no mandatory requirement for existing, experienced workers to obtain this qualification to continue working in their current roles. The qualification is an optional pathway designed to formalise skills and support career progression, not a regulatory requirement to work in the sector.

If an existing worker wants to get qualified, do they have to complete the entire qualification from scratch?

No. Experienced workers do not have to do the full qualification. If you already have the skills and knowledge from years on the job, you can apply for RPL. This process assesses your existing experience, which can significantly reduce the amount of training you need to do.

How will RPL work for experienced farm workers or supervisors?

Many existing agricultural workers and supervisors may already possess skills and knowledge that align with the qualification. Through the RPL process, these existing competencies can be assessed using evidence such as workplace experience, employment records, references, workplace documents, practical demonstrations and workplace observations. This may reduce the amount of training required and, in some cases, lead to attainment of individual units or the full qualification. To support this process, an RPL Kit is being developed to assist RTOs, employers and workers to identify and gather evidence that may support an RPL application. Final RPL decisions will be made by the relevant RTO.

Training volume and delivery settings

What is the 'volume of learning'?

The volume of learning refers to the total notional time required to achieve a qualification, expressed in equivalent full-time years.

What are supervised and unsupervised hours?

- Supervised hours: Structured training and assessment delivered by an RTO.
- Unsupervised hours: Independent study, workplace learning, and practice.

What are nominal hours?

Nominal hours:

- represent expected training duration for funding purposes
- do not typically include unsupervised learning activities.

Nominal hours have not yet been assigned and are typically allocated after endorsement through state and territory processes.

Do nominal hours determine the length of an apprenticeship?

No, apprenticeship duration is influenced by a range of factors beyond nominal hours, including training plans, workplace progression, credit transfer and RPL outcomes.

What is meant by the 'amount of training'?

This refers to the training approach required to ensure learners achieve competency, considering:

- existing skills and experience
- mode of delivery
- training context.

Qualification and implementation considerations

What will happen to other existing Certificate III qualifications in agriculture?

Current agricultural qualifications will remain available while the new trade qualification is being developed. Any future decisions regarding changes to or the retention of other qualifications will be:

- informed by extensive industry and stakeholder consultation
- included in final recommendations submitted to Ministers
- agreed in collaboration with state and territory governments.

How will the transition to the new qualification affect current students and employers?

The specific rules for transitioning to the new qualification and transferring credits are being developed as part of this project.

The final arrangements will be designed to protect learners and employers by:

- recognising current qualifications and completed units so students don't have to repeat work
- minimising disruption to ongoing training and farm operations
- providing clear, straightforward pathways to move across to the new qualification.

How is the length of the apprenticeship determined?

The duration of a declared trade apprenticeship is determined by each state and territory, typically aligned to:

- qualification requirements
- volume of learning
- industry expectations.

Other related questions

What is the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) and why is it important?

OSCA is the Australian Bureau of Statistics framework for classifying occupations. It is important because it:

- informs workforce planning and labour market analysis
- supports education and training design
- guides skilled migration policy
- underpins national statistics and funding decisions.

How can a new occupation be recognised in OSCA?

Recognition occurs retrospectively and requires:

- demonstrated workforce presence of the occupation
- evidence collected through datasets such as the Census
- formal consideration by the ABS.

What level would a trade graduate operate at?

The intent is to establish a distinct trade-level occupation:

- Agriculturist
- AQF Level 3
- OSCA Skill Level 3.

Is the Pastoral Award still relevant?

Yes. The Pastoral Award will remain relevant.

Future discussions with industry and industrial bodies will consider how apprenticeship arrangements may be reflected within the award.

Further information is available from the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Fair Work Commission.

Skills Insight

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