



THE  
**OTAGO**  
CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE

# Submission

Reform of Vocational Education

Due: 16 June 2021

Connecting People & Advancing Business

[www.otagochamber.co.nz](http://www.otagochamber.co.nz)

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Otago Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the proposed Reform of Vocational Education. We are pleased to make a submission on behalf of our members in the Otago region (excluding Queenstown Lakes).
2. The Chamber consistently works to ensure the business community has a voice in central government reforms by being better aligned to the needs of industry and employers, and these vocational education reforms are an essential part of this.
3. We provide constructive comments on the proposals and indicate where we would like to see further consultation with industry leaders, large employers and industry organisations to validate employer needs.

## ABOUT THE CHAMBER

4. The Chamber is a membership based service organisation that has been the home and voice of business in the Otago region<sup>1</sup> since 1861. It offers business and business people a range of services and advocacy. We are dedicated to promoting and actively encouraging business growth and opportunity throughout the Otago region.
5. Comprised of over 950 members, the Chamber actively provides information, advocacy and support for business, connecting members through networking events and functions, and developing capability and skills through our training workshops and programmes.
6. We also advocate and offer a voice for business concerns and submit on behalf of members on local and national government policy. Representation occurs on behalf of a broad cross-section of business demographics including size, location and industry type, with the full range from small businesses through to large employers and stakeholders in the Otago region.
7. The Chamber has a special interest in the vocational reforms as we are an organisation that has a vested interest in workforce development. We manage the 4 Trades Apprenticeship Trust across the Otago Region, currently employing 38 apprentices across a range of trades. The Chamber also runs an Education 2 Employment career pathways programme for Dunedin and the Workforce Central Dunedin programme which is focussed on building the workforce for the new Dunedin Hospital Build. We work closely

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<sup>1</sup> There are two chambers operating within the Queenstown Lakes District Council area ie. Queenstown Chamber of Commerce and Ignite Wanaka.

with the Otago Polytechnic and Industry Trade Organisations across the region.

## SUPPORT FOR THE REFORMS

8. In general terms, the Chamber is comfortable with most of the aspects of the proposed intent to simplify and create consistency across vocational training between training institutions and throughout the country.
9. The Chamber supports the reforms aim of having greater collaboration between providers and employers, improving the “portability of students learning”, and “consistency of what graduates know and can do”. This would help provide employers with a greater confidence of consistency in the training provided and qualifications attained.
10. The Chamber supports the principles for change set out in the Reform for Vocational Education 2021. The Chamber agrees that it is important the vocational education system is ready and equipped to respond to future needs to help New Zealand thrive and be resilient to change. We support the promotion of career pathways for the two thirds of school leavers who do not go on to study degrees and recognise the important role of polytechnics in providing career training. We also welcome vocational education systems being better aligned to the needs of industry and employers, whilst providing a focus on better serving learners who are in work. The Chamber is aware of the challenges of the current vocational system and applauds the intention of the reforms to simplify qualification and other credentials in vocational education.
11. The Chamber welcomes:
  - a. The over-arching focus on creating the skills and capability for the future, not to just train people for yesterday’s skills, for two key reasons:
    - i. workplaces need to become increasingly agile (skills and aptitude needs to support this) and technology driven (automation, AI, safety systems and data-led workplaces will become common), and
    - ii. NZ lags the OECD for productivity which will eventually challenge our competitiveness.
  - b. Replacing training schemes with micro-credentials makes absolute sense – essentially a training scheme is a micro-credential, so simplifying the development/approval pathway and how micro-credentials are managed will be a positive development.

- c. Bringing a more consistent approach to how academic programmes are developed and delivered is also positive - the current system is convoluted and leads to a lot of variation between qualifications with these being developed and delivered by individual providers. More consistency will see greater transportability between providers and modes of delivery (eg. learners who transfer from ITP delivery to apprenticeship delivery, or to potential work-based learning delivery). This is a barrier for learner completion when their circumstances change.

12. The Chamber would like the potential impact of the RoVE reforms on the Otago region to be taken into consideration, including:

- a. The future workforce development for the Otago region's considerable horizontal and vertical infrastructure will need the support and delivery of a locally responsive polytechnic.
- b. The hospital rebuild and other infrastructure work will require a direct link to vocational programmes that will need to be highly adaptable as the project proceeds, at various stages of development, and through to completion.
- c. The Cromwell campus is an example of a regional organisation that is adaptable to meet the needs of the changing business workforce requirement of its community eg. Viticulture and horticulture training as well as hospitality. It would create even further workforce stresses if this adaptability was lost.
- d. The Otago Polytechnic is a significant community organisation that has growing communities and philanthropy of actions and support at its heart.

13. The Chamber would like to see further consultation occur on the following:

- a. The role of Workforce Development Council's and how they will develop and approve the skill standards that will make up qualifications. This is currently a little unclear, and may lead to some bureaucratic and inflexible processes. We would suggest a wider consultation with industry leaders, large employers and industry organisations to validate employer needs.
- b. How much the new system will allow providers to adapt programmes to suit local needs. It is unclear how far into the teaching/learning process standardised national programmes will go, and what impact this will have on academic freedom and ability of teachers to adapt programme materials to suit regional needs, teaching environments and personal preferences.

## CONCLUSION

14. The Chamber broadly supports the vocational reforms but wants to ensure that there will be flexibility for local providers to adapt programmes to suit the local environment.
15. This submission is submitted on the basis that it provides feedback and the opportunity to further engage with vocational reforms. We are committed to working with NZQA as a key stakeholder where possible, to achieve objective of attracting and encouraging the development of business opportunities in the Otago Region.
16. Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of our members.

Yours sincerely,

Nicky Aldridge-Masters  
Acting Chief Executive  
Otago Chamber of Commerce