

Group 3 – Courses, CPD & Professional Qualifications

Purpose: To ensure that courses, CPD, and professional qualifications are fully aligned with employer needs, while establishing a structured and ongoing feedback loop to continuously inform and improve training and workforce development provision across the sector. This group will identify both current and emerging training needs, review existing CPD provision against industry demand, map qualifications to identified skills gaps and career pathways, and recommend targeted improvements or new initiatives that strengthen overall workforce capability and progression.

Leads: NOCN will provide overall leadership for the working group, overseeing progress against priorities and reporting updates.

Outcomes:

Top 3 Priorities:

1. Identify changes or new offerings for courses and CPD.
2. Establish an employer feedback loop for course content and delivery.
3. Advocate for professional development aligned with industry requirements.

Actions/Timeline:

3 months: Conduct a structured consultation with employers across the RACHP sector to gather detailed feedback on current short courses and CPD provision. This will include identifying skills gaps, assessing the relevance of existing training, and capturing emerging workforce needs. Data will be collected through surveys, employer engagement sessions, and targeted stakeholder discussions. The output will be a clear evidence base highlighting priority areas for development and improvement.

6 months: Using the employer feedback and skills intelligence gathered, develop detailed proposals for new or updated RACHP courses and CPD initiatives. This will include defining course content requirements, delivery models, and alignment to industry standards and occupational needs. Initial curriculum concepts will be evaluated with employers and providers to ensure relevance, practicality, and uptake potential, with refinements made based on sector feedback.

12 months: Launch updated courses and CPD offerings across participating providers, supported by employer engagement and promotional activity. Alongside delivery, publish formal Skills Alliance recommendations for professional development, outlining agreed priorities, identified skills gaps, and future training direction for the sector. This will establish a clear, employer-led framework for ongoing CPD and workforce development alignment.

Group feedback from Launch

Group 3's discussion explored the widening gap between current training provision and the real needs of industry, with a strong focus on apprenticeship delivery, progression, and long-term workforce sustainability. The conversation highlighted that while there are multiple training routes available, they are not consistently aligned with employer demand, resulting

in inefficiencies, learner frustration, and a growing shortage of higher-level skills across the sector.

A central issue identified was the ongoing challenge surrounding End Point Assessments (EPA). Learners are experiencing significant delays in accessing EPA, in some cases waiting up to three years to complete their qualification. This not only prevents individuals from progressing in their careers but also limits employers' ability to fully utilise their workforce. The lack of structured preparation and consistent support for EPA further compounds the problem, with many learners entering the assessment without the confidence or readiness required to succeed. As a solution, the group agreed that the EPA system requires urgent review, including increased assessor capacity, improved scheduling systems, and the introduction of more structured preparation support embedded throughout the apprenticeship journey rather than concentrated at the end.

The structure of the apprenticeship itself was also challenged, particularly at Level 2 Electrical. The current volume and complexity of content were seen as excessive for an entry-level programme, making it difficult for learners to properly absorb and apply core knowledge. Rather than building strong foundational skills, the system risks overwhelming learners early on. The group proposed a shift towards a more streamlined and practical model that prioritises mastery of essential skills. This could be supported through a staged learning approach, potentially including a pre-Level 2 or Level 1 gateway that allows learners to build confidence and capability before progressing into more demanding content.

Progression remains a critical weakness within the current system. Many learners are choosing not to move beyond Level 2, as they are able to secure employment and earn a reasonable income at that stage. While this may benefit individuals in the short term, it is creating a significant gap at Level 3 and above, where more advanced technical skills are required. Over time, this imbalance risks undermining the industry's ability to deliver complex work and innovate. To address this, the group agreed that clearer progression pathways must be established, supported by tangible incentives for both learners and employers. This could include financial support, recognition frameworks, or structured career mapping that demonstrates the long-term value of higher-level qualifications.

Another important theme was the increasing specialisation within the sector. What was once considered a single, broad industry is now evolving into distinct technical disciplines, each requiring a more focused skill set. However, training provision has not kept pace with this change and remains too generalised. While a broad foundation remains important, it must be complemented by clearly defined pathways into specialist areas. The group recognised the role of organisations such as NOCN Group in developing structured progression roadmaps that align training with real job roles and emerging industry needs. This would ensure that learners are not only trained, but trained with purpose and direction.

The discussion also identified specific gaps in provision, particularly around refrigeration awareness and the need for more flexible routes to support upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce. There was strong agreement that training should better recognise prior learning and practical experience, rather than requiring individuals to repeat content that does not add value. A more competency-based approach would improve engagement, reduce duplication, and accelerate workforce development.



Looking further upstream, the group emphasised the importance of engaging learners earlier in their education journey. Introducing technical and vocational pathways at pre-16 level would help to build awareness of the sector, challenge outdated perceptions, and create a stronger pipeline of future talent. Early exposure to practical skills and career opportunities would also support more informed decision-making, reducing dropout rates later in the training cycle.

Overall, the group concluded that meaningful reform is required to ensure the system is fit for purpose. This includes improving access to EPA, simplifying and strengthening apprenticeship frameworks, creating clear and attractive progression routes, and aligning training more closely with the realities of a rapidly evolving industry. Without these changes, the sector will continue to face skills shortages, reduced learner engagement, and increasing pressure on employers.

To ensure momentum is maintained, Group 3 has agreed to reconvene via an online meeting before July. This session will focus on reviewing progress against the key themes identified, sharing updates on any developments, and agreeing next steps to move the recommendations forward in a coordinated and measurable way.