



Assessment of prior learning

Application handbook
for trades qualifications

Competenz
SKILLS FOR INDUSTRY

Welcome

I would like to warmly welcome you to the Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) application process.

Chances are, you have been working within your industry for quite some time but lack a national qualification for it. We are proud of being able to help you on your way towards achieving one.

Our role is to support and guide you through the APL process – from your initial application, right through to graduation. We do this both by providing this guide to APL, and through the services of our account managers and moderators who are there to support, advise and assist you in accomplishing your goal.

Gaining a qualification is a hard, but rewarding road. It takes both commitment and dedication which are highly valued by employers. All of the qualifications offered by Competenz are of a nationally recognised industry standard. After successfully completing your APL programme, you will gain a National Certificate relevant to your skill and industry, which will signal to both current and future employers that you have the skills and knowledge set down by your industry as professional best practice.

We wish you well on the journey to gaining your qualification, and if you have any questions at any stage of the process, please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre on 0800 526 1800.



Fiona Kingsford
General Manager – Trades
Competenz

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Introduction

What is APL?

Over your career, you have gained a large body of knowledge, skills and experience. Assessment of Prior Learning, or APL, is the formal process used to recognise your wealth of experiences and current skills to gain an industry qualification.

APL is designed especially for mature learners (also known as 'journeymen') who missed out on qualifying earlier in life, migrant trades-people and those from allied trades.

Will you qualify?

All applicants must have current, relevant experience in the trade for which they are seeking recognition.

You may qualify for APL if you:

Are currently employed **and**

- Have been working within your industry for a minimum of 8 years and hold no formal qualification for it **or**
- Have entered your current job from an allied trade of the qualification you wish to obtain **or**
- Are an immigrant to New Zealand who has found your foreign qualifications do not meet the required NZQA level for the industry you are working in (other criteria may also apply, see page 15 for more details) **or**
- Hold a similar New Zealand industry qualification at a higher level and wish to gain a level 4 National Certificate in the same industry.

Recognised qualifications

APL is currently available for the following qualifications:

- National Certificate in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (Level 4)
- National Certificate in Locksmithing (Level 4)
- National Certificate in Engineering – Fabrication (Level 4) with any of the following strands:
 - Heavy Fabrication
 - Light Fabrication
 - Steel Construction
- National Certificate in Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning (Mechanical Services) (Level 4)
- National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering (Level 4) with any of the following strands:
 - Fitting and Machining
 - Machining
 - Toolmaking
 - General Engineering
 - Maintenance Engineering.

The APL process

APL is made up of three stages, as shown below.

These will be explained in more detail later in this booklet.

Application

- A Competenz account manager helps you choose a qualification and guides you through your application.
- You complete and submit your application pack and evidence.



Review

- A Competenz moderator reviews your application, and conducts referee checks and an onsite visit.
- You are advised of the outcome of your application.
- A personalised training plan is set and agreed to.



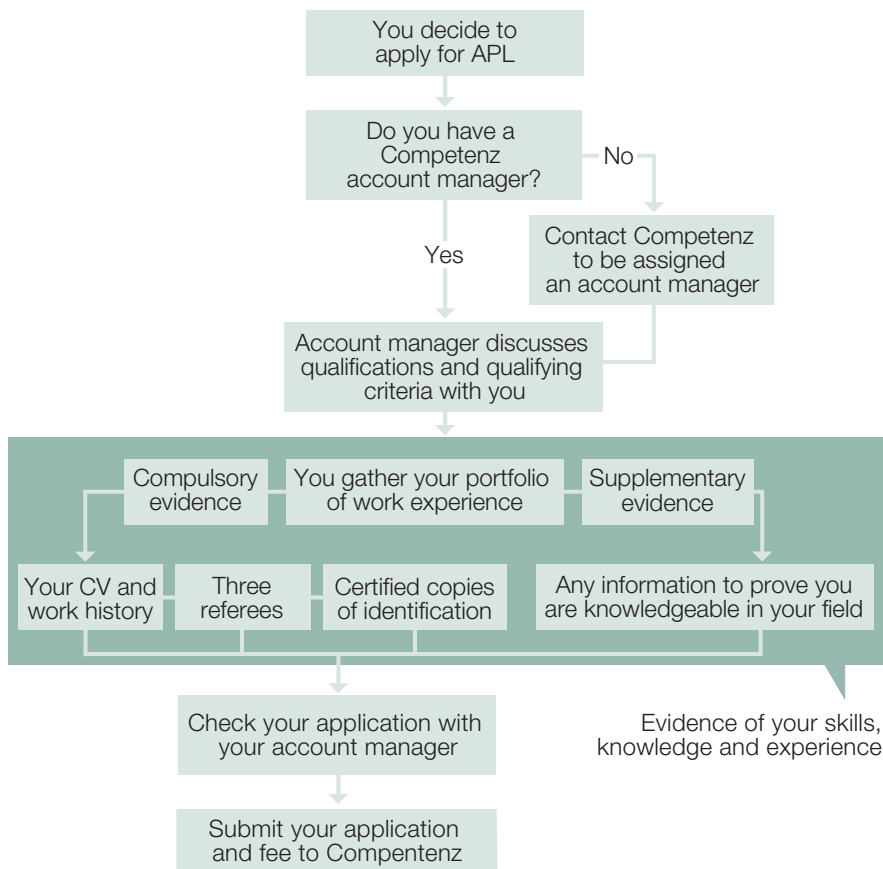
Assessment

- You complete any training courses required.
- Assessment is undertaken to prove your knowledge.
- You achieve the qualification.

Stage one: Application

The first stage of the APL process is your application. This involves a number of people who will guide you through the journey, and help you to select evidence of what you know, and can do, in order to qualify.

The application process:



The people involved

The application stage involves the following people:

You

After deciding to begin the APL process, your main responsibility is to assemble evidence which proves you have sufficient knowledge to progress further.

Your employer

Your employer needs be supportive of your application as you will need them to help collect evidence and to act as referees (see below) in support of your application.

Referees

A referee is someone who you have worked with, or worked for, who is able to verify that you can perform tasks to a high standard.

They will be contacted in the next stage of the process by a Competenz representative to discuss your abilities and performance.

More information on referees can be found on page 13.

Account manager

Account managers are employed by Competenz and are there to help and advise you through the application stage.

You must speak to an account manager before you submit your application. They will assist you in:

- Choosing the best qualification for your experience.
- Answering any questions you have along the way.
- Checking your application for you before it is officially submitted for consideration.

Evidence

When you apply for APL, you need to prove that you are currently knowledgeable, and have the required practical skills in the areas a graduate would learn about during the course of their apprenticeship. You do this by providing evidence.

Evidence can be any document or witness testimony which proves you have displayed a skill competently and consistently over a period of time.

There are two types of evidence which you will be asked for: compulsory and supplementary.

Compulsory evidence

Compulsory evidence gives us the “must have” information needed to lodge your application. You must provide us with all compulsory evidence to be considered for APL.

Compulsory evidence includes:

- If born in New Zealand:
 - A certified copy of your birth certificate or passport.
 - A current CV.
 - Your work history.
- If born overseas:
 - A certified copy of your work permit or residency certificate
 - Certified copy of NZQA International Qualification Assessment (IQA) report (if relevant – see page 15 for more details).
 - A current CV.
 - Your work history.
 - Details of up to three (3) referees (see page 13 for more details).
 - Certified course certificates.

For more information on certified copies, see page 14.

Supplementary evidence

Supplementary evidence is additional information related to your previous experience and training, and is used to prove your competency. Ultimately, whether or not you qualify for APL is decided based on your evidence, so it is worth providing as many quality examples as you can.

Supplementary evidence can include:

- Accident/incident forms
- Safety hazard plans
- Work procedures
- Test results
- As built plans/records/drawings
- Job instructions
- Project or contract details
- Site safety plans
- Photographs
- Time sheets
- Daily job sheets
- Quality information
- Plant and equipment records

CV and work history

You will need to attach a copy of your CV to your application. A current CV, with which you would apply for any job, will be fine for this.

As well as your CV, you will need to fill out the employment history section of the application form. This should only contain the details for relevant and related jobs which you have held. Don't worry if you have only held one or two positions within the industry, simply provide as much detail as you can.

Referees

Your referee must meet specific criteria in order to be suitable for the role. Please take these guidelines into account before asking people to act as your referee. Each referee:

- Should be knowledgeable in your area or expertise. They should have at least the equivalent knowledge and skills as demanded by your qualification.
- Must be people who you have worked for, or with closely.
- Must agree to act as your reference for the purpose of APL.
- May not be family members.

At least **one** referee must be a current supervisor or manager.

At least **one** referee must be able to attest to your most recent work or project.

Once someone has agreed to be your referee, ask them to complete the referee section of your application form and sign the referee declaration.

Your referees will be contacted and interviewed during stage two of the application process.

Projects

The APL application form will ask for details of up to three projects which you have worked on. It is worth putting some thought into which projects to include so your application demonstrates as many relevant skills as possible.

Things to consider when choosing projects to include are:

- Is it relevant to the qualification?
- Is there someone I worked closely with on this project who will be able to act as one of my referees?
- Do my projects show a wide variety of skills and knowledge?
- Do I have other proof of this project to include (e.g. photos, plans, timesheets)?

Certified copies

When you supply Competenz with a copy of any official document (for example, your birth certificate, work permit, visa or other relevant qualifications), this needs to be certified by one of the following people:

- Your Competenz account manager
- A Justice of the Peace
- A barrister or solicitor of the High Court
- A registrar or deputy registrar of the court

They will stamp and sign the copy to confirm they have seen the original document and that it belongs to you.

You can find a list of Justices of the Peace in your area at the front of your local white pages.

Compiling evidence

As well as your application form, there is likely to be a lot of supplementary evidence which can take up a lot of paper.

Compile your evidence in a way that will make sense to the moderator.

Here are some hints:

- Use a ring binder with subject dividers
- Group your evidence together e.g.
 - Compulsory evidence
 - Course and qualification evidence
 - Other supplementary evidence (with labels or notes to explain its significance).

QUESTIONS? Call our Customer Support Centre on 0800 526 1800 and ask to talk to your local Competenz account manager.

Non-New Zealand residents

If you have a New Zealand working visa, you will need to fill in the 'non-New Zealand resident' page of the application form.

This form will ensure you meet the requirements particular to non-New Zealand residents. These include:

Visa requirements

If you are on a temporary visa, it must remain valid for at least the course of your training. Because the APL process does not conform to a strict timeline and varies for each person, we recommend you ensure it's valid for at least two years from the time of your APL application.

Overseas qualifications

If you hold a qualification gained in another country which is relevant to your trade, then prior to applying for APL, you need to apply for an NZQA International Qualifications Assessment (IQA). This will tell you how your qualification compares to the New Zealand qualifications framework.

You can apply for IQA by going to the website below.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/international-qualifications/apply-for-an-international-qualifications-assessment/

Some qualifications are exempt from this assessment. If yours is one of them, you may not require APL at all. To check, visit the website below.

www.immigration.govt.nz/opsmanual/i35607.htm

Declaration

Once you have collected all of your evidence and filled out your APL application form, you need to sign the declaration at the end of the form.

The declaration states that:

- You agree for Competenz to collect and hold on to your personal information for the purpose of appraising your APL application.
- The information you have provided may be shared and disclosed to NZQA and any other relevant organisations for the purpose of verification.
- You have had contact with a Competenz account manager, who has advised you on the best qualification for your industry and experience.
- All of the information provided (both within your application form and compulsory or supplementary evidence) is complete and true.
- You have worked closely with, or for, all of your referees, and they have given their permission to be contacted by a Competenz moderator in regards to your APL application.
- Competenz has permission to contact both you and your employer with regards to your application and assessment(s).
- A moderator may come and visit you at work to judge your skill and knowledge in person.
- Competenz has the right to reject your application if it is found that:
 - You have falsified your application in part or as a whole.
 - You do not have enough experience, skill or knowledge to qualify for APL, as deemed by the Competenz moderation process.
 - You are not currently employed within Competenz industry coverage.

Application fee

Applicants for the APL process are required to pay an initial application fee of \$550 plus GST.

The fee covers the review process, which includes examination of your portfolio of evidence, site visits, and referee checks by the moderator.

If you are judged a suitable candidate for the APL assessment process, a personal training and assessment plan will be developed and supplied to you with recommendations of where and how to complete your relevant trades qualification through the Assessment of Prior Learning process.

This fee is non-refundable if you are unsuccessful in your application.

Please be aware that if your application is successful, further fees will be required. For more details on the fees, please see Appendix 1 (page 28).

Submitting your application

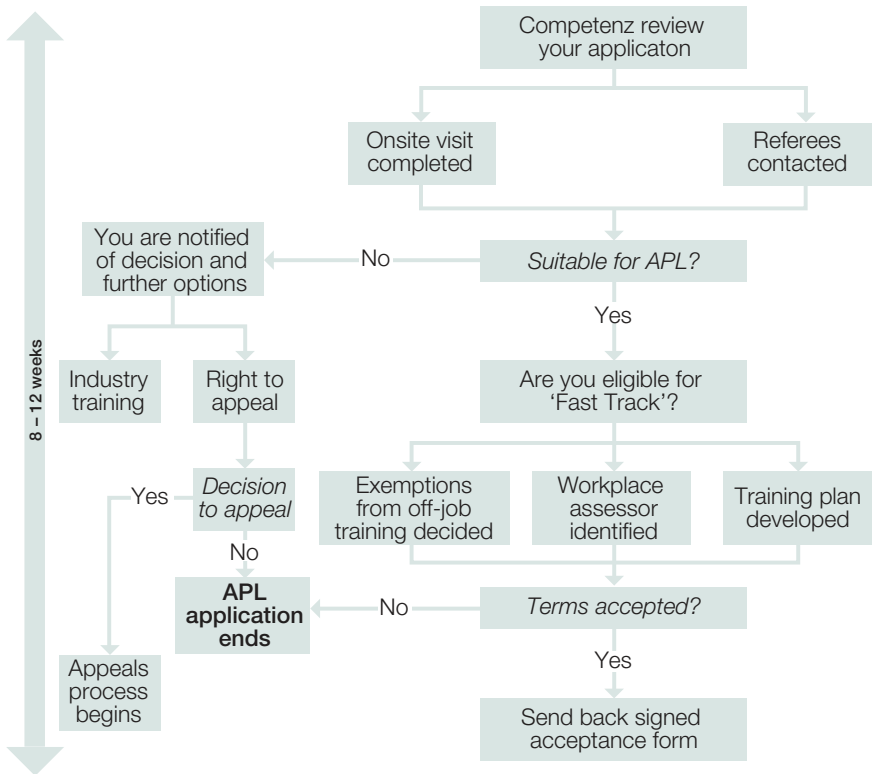
Once you have completed the APL application form, gathered all relevant evidence of your work experience, and signed the declaration, we recommend asking your account manager to look over it before submitting. They may be able to pick up things you have missed which will ultimately strengthen your application.

After this final check, send your APL application form, evidence portfolio, and your application fee to:

Compliance Department
Competenz
PO Box 9005
Newmarket
Auckland 1149

Stage two: Review

Once your application has been received, it will be assessed by a Competenz moderator who will match your experience and evidence against the qualification training plan to see what portion of the off-job courses you can be exempted from.



The People Involved

The review stage involves the following people:

Moderator

Competenz will assign a moderator to your APL application, who will be responsible for judging whether or not you have the skills, knowledge and experience to qualify for APL and, if you do, how much you will qualify to be exempted from.

The moderator will base their decision on your application, evidence portfolio, the site visit and conversations with your referees.

You

For the most part you will not be involved in this stage, however you will be required to take part in a site visit where your abilities will be assessed on the job.

You may also be asked to answer any questions to support your application.

Referees

During this stage, your referees will be asked to verify to your performance at work through a conversation with the moderator. This conversation can be held face-to-face or via telephone.

This conversation usually takes around 20 minutes.

Account manager

Your Competenz account manager will be your point of contact if you have any questions or problems throughout the review stage.

If your APL application is accepted, they will also be there to answer any questions about your training plan.

QUESTIONS? Call our Customer Support Centre on 0800 526 1800 and ask to talk to your local Competenz account manager.

Successful application

If your application is successful, you will be notified in writing.

This letter will also inform you of:

- The terms of your APL.
- What you are exempt from, and what you must complete.
- Who your workplace assessor is.
- What Competenz is responsible for.
- Your personalised training plan.
- The estimated timeframe to earn your qualification (including whether you have been deemed capable of taking the Fast Track option).

Training plan

Your training plan will be created for you by Competenz. The plan will show the NZQA units and skills that you should be able to display once you have completed your qualification, and is tailor-made to your position and experience.

Timeframe

Most candidates undertaking a standard APL programme will complete their qualification in 12 to 24 months.

Fast Track

In some cases, Competenz may offer a 'Fast Track' option to candidates deemed capable of undertaking the APL process. You are able to decline this option if you choose.

In these cases, you will be able to significantly reduce the amount of time it takes you to reach your qualification as those who choose to use 'Fast Track' are expected to take between 6 and 12 months to complete their qualification.

If you wish to pursue the Fast Track option, it is advisable to talk to a Competenz moderator before submitting your application, as the Fast Track option is decided at the discretion of the moderator reviewing your application.

Acceptance

Before Competenz can formally enrol you into the APL programme, you will need to agree to the following terms.

These terms may include:

- Your training plan.
- Your APL training agreement (a legal document outlining the commitment to APL training by the learner, the learner's employer and Competenz).
- APL service agreement (an agreement which defines all of the terms and conditions and expectations of all parties relating to the APL assessment process to which the learner must commit before embarking on the APL assessment program).

Unsuccessful application

If your application is unsuccessful, you will be notified in writing.

At this stage, Competenz will offer you further options for your training and outline the appeals procedure, should you wish to challenge the moderator's decision.

Appeals

Competenz takes all APL applications seriously, however we do retain the right to decline an application for any of the following reasons:

- You have falsified your application in part or as a whole.
- You do not have enough experience, skill or knowledge to qualify for APL, as deemed by the Competenz moderation process.
- You are not currently employed within Competenz industry coverage.

If you feel that your application has been declined unfairly, you are able to appeal.

Initially, you are advised to resolve any issues directly with your evaluator/assessor.

If this is not possible, you may make a formal appeal in writing to the Compliance Manager at Competenz. Any appeal must be postmarked within ten working days of the application decision.

The complaint must contain:

- A clear outline of the grounds for appeal.
- Supporting documents.
- Copies of any correspondence concerning the complaint.

Send your appeal letter to:

Compliance Manager
Competenz
PO Box 9005
Newmarket
Auckland 1149

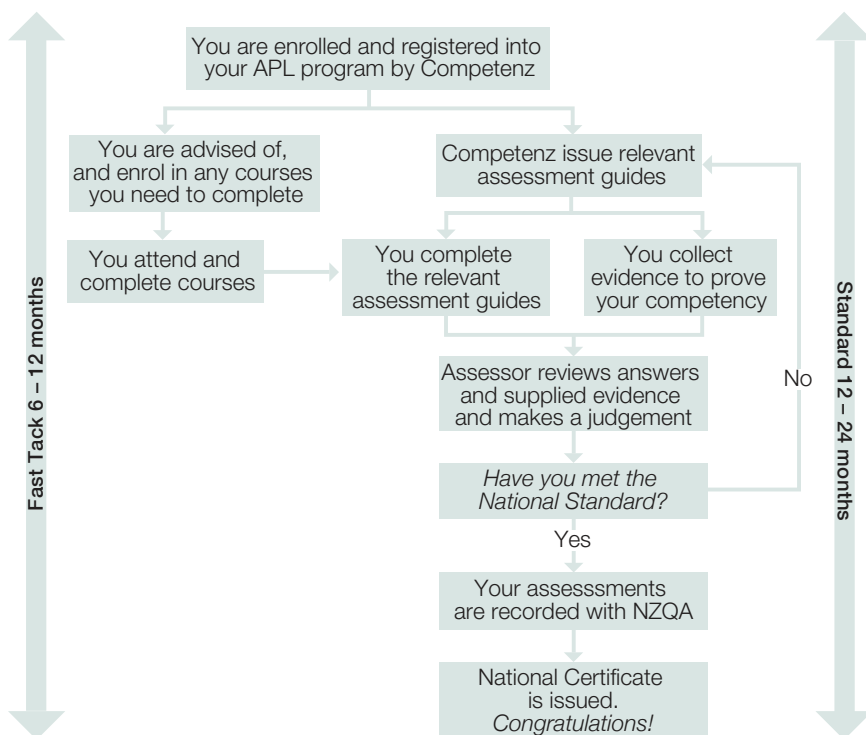
If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome following the review, you may appeal to NZQA, who are the final point of appeal.

Stage three: Assessment

APL recognises that you already have the knowledge and skill, but you are still required to complete the assessment to prove it.

Stage three is where workplace assessment will happen, normally this will take anywhere between 12 and 24 months to complete. If you have been deemed able to undertake the Fast Track programme, you will take between 6 and 12 months to complete.

At this stage, you will also need to take part in any courses where it has been identified you do not currently meet the national standard, and complete the assessments for all the units in your training plan.



The people involved

The assessment stage involves the following people:

You

This stage is where you take part in any off-job training, and complete a range of assessments to prove you know and/or can do the requirements of your qualification.

Your employer

Your employer will need to be happy for you to undertake assessment at work. Sometimes this may mean moving you into different areas of the business, taking you off a production line or allowing you to take part in off-job training. A supportive manager is essential.

Verifier

A verifier is someone nominated by your employer who is able to confirm for assessment purposes that you have the skills and knowledge required for each NZQA unit you are working towards.

Assessor

Your assessor will be there to assess your performance. This may include completing on-job observations (where you would be observed doing a particular task), and marking your assessment guides after you have completed them.

Account manager

Your Competenz account manager will ensure you are aware of, and attend, any off-job training or organised learning included in the conditions of your APL acceptance.

Moderator

Once you have completed all your assessments and off-job training, a moderator will double check you have met the national standard before you are awarded your qualification.

QUESTIONS? Call our Customer Support Centre on 0800 526 1800 and ask to talk to your local Competenz account manager.

Assessment

Even though you have been accepted into the APL, you still need to prove your knowledge and practical skills through assessment.

APL may exempt you from the formal courses within your qualification – meaning you can skip the classes and move straight to proving what you know and can do (assessment).

What are assessment guides?

A NZQA unit standard specifies a number of things you must be able to do, or know in order to obtain it.

To prove your knowledge or skill, Competenz has assessment guides for each unit standard to support your evidence gathering.

An assessment guide can include a range of questions, or observation tasks which may require an assessor to watch you doing something at work.

The questions in the assessment guide are known as the 'theory'. Your assessor may allow you to fill these in yourself, or they may ask you the questions verbally.

When you complete an assessment guide, your assessor will mark it and let you know if you are 'competent' or 'not yet competent'.

Competent results

If you are deemed competent, it is proven that you have the skills required by a unit standard, and you are one step closer to your qualification.

Not yet competent results

If you are 'not yet competent', it means you still have some learning to do. You will be given the opportunity to do this before re-sitting the part of the assessment activity you got incorrect.

You will have two attempts to earn a 'competent' result. If you receive another 'not yet competent' then your account manager will discuss your options with you – these may be formal training or, in some cases, asking you to complete a similar assessment at a lower level first.

Fees

Fees cover Competenz's service to you: any assessment guides, the assistance of your account manager, registration of units on the national framework and, ultimately, your National Certificate.

These fees do not cover any off-job training you may be required to complete.

Fees can be paid either as a single, upfront, 'one-off' payment, or monthly installments.

For more details on the fees, please see Appendix 1 (page 28).

Off-job training

It's possible that there are gaps between your knowledge and experience and the knowledge expected of a graduate. Where this exists, you will be required to attend off-job training.

You will be advised of any off-job training you are required to undertake in your acceptance letter and your account manager will advise you when courses are available.

Off-job training is not included in your fees and will come at extra cost to you or your employer.

Meeting the national standard

Once you have completed all of your assessments and completed your off-job training, a moderator will check to ensure you have met all the requirements of your qualification to an acceptable standard. If you have, you will have completed your programme and you will be awarded your National Certificate.

QUESTIONS? Call our Customer Support Centre on 0800 526 1800 and ask to talk to your local Competenz account manager.

Appendix 1 – Fee structure

When are my fees due?

Application

\$550.00 + GST
non-refundable initial
application and
review fee.



Review

Your application
is reviewed.



Assessment

Full fees due, as
shown opposite.

Assessment fee structure

New Zealand residents

Option 1. Standard APL assessment fee

One-off payment	\$2,550.00 + GST
Installments (over 12 months)*	\$229.17 + GST per month

Option 2. Fast Track APL assessment fee**

One-off payment	\$3,400.00 + GST
Installments (over 6 months)*	\$600.00 + GST per month

Non-New Zealand residents

Option 1. Standard APL assessment fee

One-off payment	\$4,250.00 + GST
Installments (over 12 months)*	\$370.83 + GST per month

Option 2. Fast Track APL assessment fee**

One-off payment	\$4,750.00 + GST
Installments (over 6 months)*	\$825.00 + GST per month

* Please note that the installment option incurs an extra \$200 administration fee, which has been included in the payment cost.

** Fast Track is only available to those applicants deemed able by the Competenz moderation process. For more information on Fast Track, please see page 21.

All prices exclude GST which incurs an extra 15% charge.

Fees are payable by direct debit, cheque or cash.

SPECIAL NOTE: Off-Job training is NOT included in your APL fees. All off-job training must be undertaken at your own, or your employer's additional cost.

Glossary

Word

Meaning

Account manager	Your main point of contact with Competenz. They design your training plan, advise you during your APL application and organise your assessments and off-job training.
APL service level agreement	An agreement which defines all of the terms and conditions and expectations of all parties relating to the APL assessment process to which the learner must commit before embarking on the APL assessment program.
Assessment	The process of collecting and judging evidence of a person's competence or performance against standards.
Certified copy	A copy of an official document which has been seen and stamped by an official signatory.
Competent	Is able to perform the task required correctly, also referred to as "has met the national standard".
Competenz	Competenz is the New Zealand Engineering, Food and Manufacturing Industry Training Organisation (ITO).
Evidence	Proof of your skills, knowledge and experience.
IQA	International Qualification Assessment. A procedure offered by NZQA which measures how an overseas qualification aligns to the qualifications on New Zealand's National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority.
Off-job training	Training which takes place outside of your workplace, such as a block course, or night course.
Qualification	The end-goal of your study. A nationally recognised symbol of your knowledge.
Referee	Someone who acts as a reference for your knowledge, skill and experience.
Relevance	All the evidence related back to what the unit(s) is asking for.
Training agreement	<p>A legal document as defined by the Industry Training Act, and is an appendix to the learners employment contract.</p> <p>It outlines the commitment to APL training of each of the three parties: the learner, the company and Competenz (Industry Training Organisation). The training agreement allows Competenz to access industry training funding for New Zealand residents which is applied as subsidies to the APL schedule of fees.</p>
Training plan	A training plan is a specific and personalised set of unit standards that you are required to complete to achieve the qualification you are working towards.
Unit standard	A measure of learning. A unit standard outlines what a person who earns the unit knows and/or can do.

If you want more information on any aspect
of industry training, contact Competenz on:

T: 0800 526 1800

F: 09 539 9899

E: info@competenz.org.nz

Web: www.competenz.org.nz

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