



Telecommunications & Data Network Technician Apprenticeship

Telecommunications and Data Network Technician

Employer Information Sheet

Apprenticeship and Skills Education in TU Dublin is defined as a mode of education which contains a workplace learning component of at least 50%, with a strong focus on programme content which is industry and employer driven. A fundamental principle of TU Dublin's approach is to view apprenticeship in all its forms as a mode of learning seeking to exploit methods of applied education in order to offer a powerful and effective route to achieving both technical expertise and accredited qualifications.

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is the recognised means by which apprentices receive comprehensive training in order to become skilled in a particular area of employment. Apprenticeship training provides alternating on-the-job training in conjunction with off-the-job training in Education and Training Boards and selected higher education institutions. An apprenticeship normally has a specified duration depending upon the industrial sector. Apprentices sign an employment contract with the employer when commencing the apprenticeship and are considered to be part of the employed population who "earn while they learn". In addition, both the apprentice and employer also sign a SOLAS Apprenticeship registration form. Apprenticeship Programmes offer a smooth transition into valuable careers and upon completing a qualification the potential benefits for the fully qualified apprentice are large.

What is the Apprenticeship in Telecommunications and Data Network Technician?

This Apprenticeship Programme is one of the primary tools that the telecommunications industry will use to address the clear need for trained technicians in the field. The Programme will support employers from the ICT sector by providing a structure for the training of Technicians over a period of two years. The new Apprenticeship is a joint endeavour by companies engaged in the telecommunications sector and TU Dublin to provide a formal accredited apprenticeship programme for the development of the telecommunications workforce. The objective of TU Dublin as coordinating provider, is to partner with





Telecommunications & Data Network Technician Apprenticeship

industry members to enhance the quality of education and advancement opportunities for the overall telecommunications workforce in order to meet the ongoing network needs for the future.

TU Dublin will oversee the training and qualification standards and coordinate with SOLAS to approve participation in the programme. The primary intent is to provide quality education that guarantees an agreed level of training and competency across the industry. This Programme will help satisfy the need for the availability of highly skilled technical employees for ongoing network deployment projects.

At the completion of the new Apprenticeship Programme, the apprentice will receive a QQI accredited Higher Certificate in Telecommunications and Data Network Engineering which will be a nationally recognised qualification. This award will ensure that the holder has proficiency as a Field Technician in the discipline. The programme will be delivered over two years, involving both off-the-job and on-the-job phases, developing subject matter expertise and investigating industry-wide standards.

Benefits to your Company

As an important part of the Work-Based element of apprenticeship training the employer will provide on-the-job training and assessment of the apprentice in the skills, knowledge and techniques of the particular job. Over the period of the two year apprenticeship the employer will be required to release the apprentice in order to attend eight blocks of off-the-job tuition at TUDublin. Using the Apprenticeship scheme, employers can invest in higher-level qualifications that are specific to their needs and can deliver measurable benefits to the organisation. The apprenticeship will undoubtedly enhance both staff retention and motivation while investment in higher level skills training can form part of a strategic plan for a company within the sector.

The changing shape of the labour market is considered to be a direct consequence of changes to the work environment, as organisations endeavour “to be more agile, to be able to respond quickly to changing market conditions and to develop new capabilities within the organisation. Furthermore, organisations are facing increased technological complexity that will continue to drive the demand for higher level skills. This form of apprenticeship delivery is particularly well suited





Telecommunications & Data Network Technician Apprenticeship

to meeting the needs of large organisations, as well as SMEs that must to compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

As part of this apprenticeship, TUDublin has put in place structures to support the uptake of Work Based Learning (WBL) and this initiative will act as a focal point for employer-University engagement. One important aspect of this Programme will be the capacity to engage in University accredited learning culminating in the award of a nationally recognised qualification, Higher Certificate in Telecommunications and Data Network Engineering that provides both credibility and consistency. The development of this apprenticeship has been supported by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and this funding has proved valuable in assisting this Programme.

Employer Registration

An apprentice must be sponsored by a SOLAS approved employer. The process of approval is to ensure that the employer has the necessary facilities to provide the on-the-job training of the appropriate quality. It is the task of the prospective apprentice to make contact with an appropriate employer (who employs qualified craft workers in that particular trade). The employer will recruit and employ the new apprentice, as well as registering the apprentice with SOLAS.

As part of the national apprenticeship system, there are formal requirements for approval of an employer's suitability to train apprentices and for the registration of apprentices. SOLAS is responsible for delivering on these requirements. Applications for entry to the apprenticeship can only be submitted by an employer who is registered for the Telecommunications and Data Network Technician Apprenticeship. Employers can contact TUD Tallaght directly to initiate the registration process or can contact the apprenticeship Authorised Officer based in the Education and Training Boards around the country.

Employer Approval

In conjunction with Authorised Officer, the Employer must complete the 'Employer Suitability to Train Apprentices Form' and have it approved by the Employer's Authorised Signatory. The form declares that the Employer agrees to comply with the Apprenticeship Rules and Regulations and abide by the Code of Practice which are available via www.apprenticeship.ie or your local Education and Training





Telecommunications & Data Network Technician Apprenticeship

Board. Key commitments include providing access for the apprentice to the range of work specified in the on-the-job element of the apprenticeship programme and to releasing the apprentice to complete all necessary off-the-job elements. The Employer must provide details to the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator or Manager (Verifier) who will have responsibility for the programme in the company.

Choosing a Mentor

Work Based Learning is an integral part of each module on this new industry-led apprenticeship programme. It typically involves 200 hours of on-the-job training and assessment following approximately 70 hours of off-the-job training on the campus of the coordinating provider, TU Dublin. The apprentice works with a mentor, and activities are structured and commensurate with the programme outcomes. The work-based mentor plays a key role in the formative assessment of work based learning. The mentor must be a suitably qualified technician or engineer who can provide relevant training and must be approved by the employer's training manager and by the Consortium Steering Group. The mentor supervises and signs-off on the competences and will be offered mentor training by TU Dublin.

Support for the Mentor

All Mentors will receive a one day training programme in TU Dublin covering such topics as the responsibilities of mentoring, organising suitable training structures and personal development plans. This programme is designed to support both the employer and the apprentices during this two year apprenticeship. A TUDublin lecturer has visibility of the WBL training record during the apprenticeship and is available to provide regular online support during the work-based learning period.

Employer Costs

The employer will contribute an annual fee of €750 towards the academic programme costs. The apprentices will be employed by the employer for the duration of the programme.





Telecommunications & Data Network Technician Apprenticeship

Career Profile

Communications technology has transformed our professional and social lives and is at the heart of Ireland's innovation economy. The telecommunications industry employs 20,000 professionals, who deliver mission critical services every day. From fibre broadband rollout, to 4G capability, to data centres and cloud based services, this industry is the fulcrum that provides instant connectivity to people, services, entertainment and information on demand. The growing need for a robust, reliable and expanding communications infrastructure poses significant challenges to telecommunications companies in terms of required competencies and the availability of qualified personnel. In recent years a significant skills gap has developed in the industry, which threatens the sector's ability to expand broadband coverage across the nation. In order to address this urgent need for expertise, companies from the telecommunications sector in partnership with TU Dublin, have developed a 2 year Telecommunications and Data Networks Technician Apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship Programme will support employers from the ICT sector by providing a structure for the training of Technicians over a period of two years.

Contact details

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