

Unit 2: Apprenticeship Roles and Responsibilities

Learning Objective

By the end of this unit, you will be able to describe the apprentice's role in the Building Trades and the institutional structures and facilities which support the apprenticeship program, including the obligations of the indenture, the apprenticeship trust and school, and sponsors.

Union Indenture Agreement

Every apprentice signs an indenture agreement. This is an agreement between the apprentice and the local Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC) that spells out the conditions of apprenticeship.

The JATC is an organization that represents both the local union and the local contractor's organizations in establishing local apprenticeship standards. In the United States, these standards are then approved by the Office of the Department of Labor. In Canada, apprenticeship standards are set by the provincial government.

While standards may vary from state to state and province to province, they all set forth a period of apprenticeship: the number of years of apprenticeship to be served. This varies across the trades, as well as across local JATCs.

The indenture agreement also establishes a probationary period, a time during the first six to twelve months during which the JATC may cancel the apprenticeship agreement if the committee feels a person cannot succeed in the trade. The probationary period also gives apprentices a chance to decide if they have the interest and aptitude to pursue the craft. If they decide not to continue, they can quit the trade without penalty at any time during the probationary period.

When apprentices sign the indenture agreement, they agree to attend the apprentice training classes specified by the local JATC. An apprentice who does not attend these classes regularly can be suspended from the job by the JATC, either permanently or until the class hours are made up, depending on the policies set up by the local JATC.

Ordinarily, indenture agreements also set forth the wage rates and advancement stages for apprentices. These have been established through local collective-bargaining agreements. Wage rates are set either as a percentage of a journeyman's pay or a fixed amount for each defined stage of apprenticeship. At the end of each stage, the JATC reviews every apprentice's work both on the job and in the training program. If the apprentice's progress is satisfactory, the apprentice is advanced to the next stage and wage rate.

Scholarship Loan Agreement

At the beginning of the apprenticeship program, you may be asked, depending on the trade you choose, to sign a scholarship-loan agreement. This agreement requires that you pledge to work for several years in covered employment (work covered by a contract with the union to which you belong) or pay back the cost of your apprenticeship as determined by your local JATC. The several years of covered employment includes your years of apprenticeship.

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JATCs rigorously enforce scholarship-loan agreements. Apprentices who quit their apprenticeships to go to work for a nonunion contractor are often surprised when presented with a bill for the cost of training for each year of their apprenticeship (usually around \$10,000 per year). These costs include not only the amount spent by the local JATC, but also that portion spent by the international organizations.

It's important to remember that apprentice training is of great value to you personally, and if you work in the trade for a number of years,

it's provided to you at no charge. The industry invests thousands of dollars into your years of training, and they must receive a return on that investment. That is why you are required to sign a scholarship-loan agreement each year of your apprenticeship.

The scholarship-loan agreement makes it possible for you to obtain valuable training, and it allows the trade industry to continue to offer training for those who follow. It helps guarantee that you will have a healthy and prosperous industry to work in when you finish your apprenticeship.

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