

British Columbia Construction Association

Integrating Newcomers

A comparison of select British Columbian and UK apprenticeships

OS Consulting Inc.
07 March 2017

Funded by:



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Contents

Contents	ii
List of Tables	iv
Preface	5
An applied glimpse at differences.....	6
Credential equivalency.....	6
Essential skills equivalency	7
Health and Safety, and other legislated skills equivalencies	7
Training contents equivalency	8
Major differences all trades.....	8
Most important trade areas equivalencies.....	9
Certification process equivalency	10
Recommendations	11
Essential Skills recommendations	11
Health and Safety, and other legislated skills recommendations	11
Carpenter recommendations.....	12
Construction Electrician recommendations	12
Plumber recommendations	12
Construction Craft Worker recommendations	13
Roofer recommendations	13
Methodology.....	14
Essential skills.....	15
Training Contents: GACs, Competencies, and Rating Scale	17
Rank-ordering GACs	17
Competency rating scale.....	17
Results	18
Essential Skills	18
Health and Safety, and other legislated skills	20
Training programs comparisons	21
Training Contents Comparison	22
Carpenter programs comparison at-a-glance	23
Carpenter GACs and Competencies comparison (details)	23
Construction Electrician programs comparison at-a-glance.....	25

Construction Electrician GACs and Competencies comparison (details).....	25
Plumbers programs comparison at-a-glance	28
Plumbers GACs and Competencies comparison (details).....	28
Construction Craft Workers programs comparison at-a-glance.....	30
Construction Craft Workers GACs and Competencies comparison (details).....	31
Roofer (Damp- and Waterproof) programs comparison at-a-glance.....	32
Roofer (Damp- and Waterproof) GACs and Competencies comparison (details).....	33
Discussion.....	35
Essential Skills	35
Reading	35
Document Use.....	35
Writing	35
Numeracy.....	35
Oral communications.....	36
Essential Skills recommendations.....	36
Health and Safety, and other legislated skills.....	36
Health and Safety, and other legislated skills recommendations	37
Training Contents Comparisons.....	37
Carpenter	37
Carpenter recommendations.....	37
Construction Electrician	38
Construction Electrician recommendations	38
Plumber.....	38
Plumber recommendations	38
Construction Craft Worker.....	38
Construction Craft Worker recommendations	39
Roofer.....	39
Roofer recommendations	39
Credentialing comparisons	39
British Columbia.....	39
The Red Seal - Apprentices and challengers	39
UK.....	41
BC vs. UK	43

List of Tables

Table 1. Trade certification requirements in BC.....	6
Table 2. Summative select Essential Skills complexity scores (Carp. means Carpenter; C.E. means Construction Electrician; C.C.W. means Construction Craft Worker; Plumb. means Plumber; Roof. means Roofer).....	7
Table 3. Select Regulatory Requirements scores (using same complexity scores as for Essential Skills)	7
Table 4. Major differences between the BC and UK apprenticeship programs for 5 trades, by trade..	8
Table 5. Top 5 trade areas for all trades (ratings; 0=not mentioned; 1=some overlap with BC program; 2=substantial overlap with BC program).....	9
Table 6. Comparison of BC and UK examination and credentialing.....	11
Table 7. Complexity level for essential skills cross-referenced to CEFR.....	16
Table 8. Detailed Essential Skills requirements by trade cross-referenced to "Most UK Trade Newcomers" skills	18
Table 9. Regulatory requirements for 5 trades - training (and certification) may be undertaken by the employer (refer to Table 7 for complexity rating explanation and color code)	20
Table 10. Comparison of BC and UK apprenticeship program elements across 5 trades.....	21
Table 11. BC Carpenter and UK Advanced Site Carpenter apprenticeships; duration and prerequisites	23
Table 12. Rank-ordered BC Carpenter GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program) – Note Hours & percentages are for the BC program.....	23
Table 13. BC Construction electrician and UK Installation Electrician duration and prerequisites	25
Table 14. Rank-ordered Construction Electrician GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program)	25
Table 15. BC Plumber and UK Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician (Natural Gas) duration and prerequisites	28
Table 16. Rank-ordered Plumber GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program).....	28
Table 17. BC Construction Craft Worker and UK Construction Assembly Technician duration and prerequisites	30
Table 18. Rank-ordered Construction Craft Worker GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program; Note: we used the “Concrete” specialization as a reference).....	31
Table 19. BC Roofer and UK Roofer apprenticeships (2 streams); duration and prerequisites.....	32
Table 20. Rank-ordered Roofer, Damp and Waterproofing GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program; Note: we used the “Roof, wall and waterproofing technology” specialization as a reference)....	33
Table 21. Comparison of BC and UK examination and credentialing.....	43

Preface

We conducted a comparison of apprenticeship essential, health and safety, and legislated skills requirements, training contents, and certification processes between British Columbia and UK for 5 trades: Carpenter, Construction Electrician, Construction Craft Worker, Plumber, and Roofer.

The goal of the comparison is to provide a reasoned tool for newcomers - and their advisors - when they are trying to determine what BC trade best matches their trade credential and experience.

The report is in 4 parts:

1. A quick summary equivalency reference tool with upgrade recommendations;
2. A methodology section outlining how we arrived at the conclusions;
3. A results section containing full details of the analysis undergirding the reference tool; and,
4. A discussion section that addresses briefly what the results might mean and how these considerations might be used for make-up training and the job-aids.

The first section (“An applied glimpse at differences”) can be used as a stand-alone. Newcomers and their advisors will find all the key comparisons and upgrade recommendations there. The section is the summary of the other three sections which, together, provide a level of detail more appropriate to policy-driven endeavors.

Due to scope constraints, we have focussed the comparisons using the BC apprenticeship program and BC legislated requirements as bases for technical, safety, and compliance skills. But we used Employment and Social Development Canada’s Essential Skills profiles for our analysis of literacy and numeracy skills requirements.

Note that we have used the latest UK apprenticeship system as it is undergoing major changes, among others moving from “Frameworks” to “Standards”. These Standards are developed by “Trailblazers”, industry groups that define scope of the trade, entry requirements, mandatory topics, optional topics that have to be delivered during the apprenticeship, as well as testing protocols and content. The UK system covers England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Apprenticeships in Scotland are similar in scope, duration, and proficiency testing, but are called “Modern Apprenticeships”.

An applied glimpse at differences

In this summary tool, we outline trade credential equivalency processes and “high-level” comparisons of the skills, programs, and certification mechanisms for the 5 trades. Three sections follow this “glimpse”: methodology, results, and discussion. The methodology section lists the data sources we used and how we conducted the analysis. The results section makes thorough use of tables and color-coding to provide fine-grained analysis and summative results. And the discussion section contains practical, reasoned recommendations. All of these elements are summarized in this “glimpse” section.

Credential equivalency

There is no formal recognition of trade credentials in Canada; there is no assured exchange of a foreign trade credential for an equivalent Canadian credential.

In British Columbia (BC), no credential is required to work in any of the trades. Some specific trade activities, however, require a relevant base trade credential – for example to “pull” electrical permits or connect a gas furnace. Mandatory credential requirements vary from Canadian jurisdiction to jurisdiction; consult the provincial Apprenticeship website or the Federal Ellis Chart¹.

Trade credentials in BC are awarded by the Industry Training Authority (ITA). Similar entities – provincial government departments or crown-enabled institutions – award trade credentials in the other Canadian provinces and territories.

In BC², the ITA issues 2 trade credentials: the Certificate of Apprenticeship (CofA) and the Certificate of Qualification (CofQ). These credentials bear the federal Red Seal endorsement for Red Seal trades³. CofA credentials are issued upon successful completion of the relevant apprenticeship program. CofQ credentials are issued upon successful completion of the relevant Red Seal or Interprovincial Standards examination (IP). CofQs without Red Seal endorsement are awarded for non-Red Seal trades upon successful completion of the relevant ITA CofQ examination.

Access to these examinations is by one of two routes: apprenticeship program completion or challenge based on time-in-trade. Apprenticeship programs vary in length and in the number of weeks of in-school training over the duration of the program – apprentices are registered with the ITA; in-school training is through ITA-approved public and private training providers. Time-in-trade challengers are required to prove they have practiced the trade for at least 1.5 times the stipulated length of the apprenticeship on-the-job hours (See Table below).

Table 1. Trade certification requirements in BC

Trade	Apprenticeship		Challenge	
	In-school (weeks)	On-the-job (hours)	On-the-job (hours)	Fee
Carpenter	28	6480	9720	C\$120
Construction Electrician	40	6000	9000	C\$120
Construction Craft Worker	8	4000	6000	C\$120
Plumber	32	6420	9630	C\$120
Roofer	12	3600	5400	C\$120

¹ <http://www.ellischart.ca/search/s.2.1rch-eng.html> last accessed 29 September 2016

² The same general process holds in the other Canadian jurisdictions.

³ <http://www.itabc.ca/discover-apprenticeship-programs/search-programs> accessed 23 September 2016

Essential skills equivalency

In all of the 5 trades, workers are expected to read, consult, and fill a range of documents, from simple forms requiring dates, times, or measurements to detailed reports to engineers, inspectors, or customers. The “UK – All trades” scores reflect our acceptance that credentialed newcomers have met the minimum academic requirement of GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education (EU Level 2) in math and english), hence have the literacy and numeracy skills to handle moderately elaborate documents – these often provide or require numerical information such as readings or measurements. We also assumed that newcomers would be able to understand trade-specific common instructions (written or spoken) but might not have the local technical language skills required to write complex reports, direct teams, or lead group discussions such as pre-job conferences or tailboards.

The UK offers a single pathway to (most) trade credentials at a given level: apprenticeship. But there are many different places to attend training.

Table 2. Summative select Essential Skills complexity scores (Carp. means Carpenter; C.E. means Construction Electrician; C.C.W. means Construction Craft Worker; Plumb. means Plumber; Roof. means Roofer)

Essential Skills' Category	Trade (BC)					UK
	Carp.	C.E.	C.C.W.	Plumb.	Roof.	All trades
Reading	2.56	2.11	1.67	2.44	1.67	2.56
Document use	1.89	2.78	1.11	1.89	1.67	2.11
Writing	1.60	1.60	1.20	1.20	0.40	2.20
Numeracy	1.64	1.71	1.14	2.00	1.71	1.57
Oral Communication	1.50	1.90	0.80	1.00	1.50	1.40

Health and Safety, and other legislated skills equivalencies

The “skills” listed in the table below are, at a minimum, those that trade persons are expected to have when reporting to the job site. Some of the skills required in BC are also required in UK, but since most of these are highly jurisdiction-specific, newcomers would not fully have BC-equivalent skills.

In some cases, it is the employer’s responsibility to provide training or equipment, but that is not always the case. Trade persons should make sure they have the skills and qualifications required to work safely and within the legislated framework for their trade’s most common demands.

Trade persons are often expected to drive a company vehicle – most likely a pick-up truck or van. These vehicles can be operated with a Class 5 BC Driver’s License. ICBC has a reciprocal agreement in place to exchange a UK driver’s license for a BC one (some conditions apply).

Table 3. Select Regulatory Requirements scores (using same complexity scores as for Essential Skills)

Regulatory requirements	Trade				
	Carp.	C.E.	C.C.W.	Plumb.	Roof.
OSH Requirements					
WorkSafeBC (WSBC) Rights and Responsibilities	0	0	0	0	0
WSBC Young / New Worker (Training & Orientation)	0	0	0	0	0
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements	3	3	3	3	3
Duty to co-operate with internal and external OSH officials	3	3	3	3	3

Regulatory requirements	Trade				
	Carp.	C.E.	C.C.W.	Plumb.	Roof.
Other Regulatory Requirements					
WHMIS	0	0	0	0	0
Fall arrest / restraint / protection	3	3	3	N/A	3
Confined space	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
Building Code	0	N/A	0	0	0
Gas Code (B 149.1)	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	N/A
Canadian Electrical Code	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
Driver's License (Class 5)	5	5	5	5	5

Training contents equivalency
Major differences all trades

Table 4. Major differences between the BC and UK apprenticeship programs for 5 trades, by trade.

Trade	Major differences
Carpenter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK program does not include concrete forming and placing, oxy-fuel cutting, cabinet installation, or siting components. • The UK building codes are different. • The UK program has some joinery elements not in the BC program. • The UK entry requirement is set as “~Grade 10” but varies locally. Math and English at “~Grade 12” are required for “graduation”. • The BC program has 4 levels of block release in-school training over 4 years; the UK is based on minima of 4 years of work totalling at least 4800 hrs. and 576 hrs. of school training.
Construction Craft Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trade as such does not exist in the UK has no masonry component. • The trade we used as a basis for comparison has no placing of concrete, no scaffold, no masonry, and no roadwork components. • There are no educational requirements to enter the trade in the UK. • The BC program has 2 levels of block-release in-school training over 2 years; the UK is based on minima of 2 years of work totalling at least 3000 hrs. and 216 hrs. of school training.
Construction Electrician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK program does not include entertainment systems, and nurse call system competencies. • The UK codes are different than those in BC. • The UK entry requirement is set as “~Grade 10” but varies locally. Math and English at “~Grade 12” are recommended for entry and required for “graduation”. • The BC program has 4 levels of block-release in-school training over 4 years; the UK is based on minima of 4 years of work totalling at least 8000 hrs and 640 hrs. of school training.

Trade	Major differences
Plumber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK program does not include well and septic, irrigation, and specialized systems. • UK plumbers have electrical skills required to connect heating and cooling apparatus. • The UK codes are different than those in BC. • The UK entry requirement is set as “≈Grade 10” but varies locally. Math and English at “≈Grade 12” are recommended for entry and required for “graduation”. • The BC program has 4 levels of block release in-school training; the UK is based on minima of 4 years of work totalling at least 7200 hrs. and 800 hrs. of school training.
Roofer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There seems to be 3 different trades: “flat roofer”, “steep roofer” unitized materials, and “steep roofer” modular materials. • UK Roofers do not damp and waterproof. • UK roofers do not appear to be expected to organize and run roofing jobs; they are mainly installers and fixers. • There are no educational requirements to enter the trade in the UK. • The BC program has 3 levels of block release in-school training; the UK is based on minima of 3.5 years of work totalling at least 4000 hrs. and 576 hrs. of school training.

Most important trade areas equivalencies

The table below contains a rated summary of the 5 most important trade areas (General Areas of Competence / GACs) for each trade, where importance is based on in-school and on-the-job training effort expressed in percentage of the apprenticeship duration.

Table 5. Top 5 trade areas for all trades (ratings; 0=not mentioned; 1=some overlap with BC program; 2=substantial overlap with BC program)

Top 5 General Areas of Competence by trade				
BC trade and GACs	BC program			UK
	School	On-job	Total %	Rating
	Hours	Hours		
Carpenter⁴				
Wood Frame Construction	191.1	1474	23%	2
Concrete Formwork	161.7	1247	19%	0
Documentation and Organizational Skills	157.5	1215	19%	2
Finishing Materials	96.6	745.2	12%	2
Tools and Equipment	67.2	518.4	8%	2
Construction Electrician⁵				
Apply Circuit Concepts	441	2205	37%	1

⁴ UK – Advanced Site Carpenter

⁵ UK – Installation Electrician

Top 5 General Areas of Competence by trade					
BC trade and GACs	BC program			UK	
	School	On-job	Total %		
	Hours	Hours		Rating	
Install Electrical Equipment	210	1050	18%	2	
Install Low Voltage Distribution Systems	168	840	14%	2	
Install Control Circuits and Devices	168	840	14%	2	
Read and Interpret Drawings and Manuals	75	375	6%	2	
Plumber⁶					
Install Natural Gas and Propane Systems	192	1580	25%	2	
Organize Work	122.5	1009	16%	2	
Install Sanitary and Storm Drainage Systems	113.8	936.3	15%	2	
Install Water Service and Distribution	96	790.1	12%	2	
Install Hydronic Heating and Cooling	77.04	634.1	10%	1	
Construction Craft Worker⁷					
Perform Concrete Work	45.6	19%	760	1	
Perform Site Work	43.2	18%	720	1	
Use Scaffolding and Access Equipment	27.6	12%	460	0	
Perform Utilities and Pipeline Tasks	26.4	11%	440	0	
Organize Work	24	10%	400	2	
Roofer, damp and waterproofer⁸					
Install Low Slope and Flat Roofing	138.0	1380	38%	2	0
Install Steep Roofing	55.2	552	15%	0	2
Organize Work	45.6	456	13%	2	
Use Safe Work Practices	44.4	444	12%	1	
Use Documentation	32.4	324	9%	1	

Certification process equivalency

BC apprentices are required to pass each of 2-4 levels (blocks) of in-school training. Pending the implementation of centrally-imposed tests, practical and theory tests were training institution-specific, but coordinated through a BC Articulation Committee for some of the trades. Successful completion of the final Level in-school final exam gives access to the Red Seal examination, the only certification mechanism for trade persons in BC (all the trades we looked at are “Red Seal” trades).

⁶ UK – Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician (Natural Gas)

⁷ UK – Construction Assembly Technician

⁸ UK – Built-up Felt Roofer or Slating and Tiling Roofer

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

This is somewhat more systematic than the UK credentialing system as it is wholly “owned” by the Apprenticeship Sponsor and/or the training institution (if these are separate entities which is not always the case). Moreover, the UK system is based on minimum standards which can be supplemented locally: there is no strict equivalency within the state between one program delivery and another except that they all must have covered the minima set out in the Standard. However, the “cultural” and work environment in UK are similar enough to allow a UK trade worker holding a UK “NVQ 2 or 3” to be taken as qualified as a BC one - after having addressed the skills gaps as indicated in “Recommendations” below.

The table below summarizes the major differences.

Table 6. Comparison of BC and UK examination and credentialing

Examination and certification		
Element	BC	UK
Exam	Single	Multiple
	Pencil & paper	Pencil & paper Hands-on
Domains tested	Multiple unspecified	Multiple unspecified
	Proxy	Proxy and direct
Domain inclusion	Negotiated norm	National minimum norm
Item type	Selected response	Unknown
Scoring	Machine	Unknown for theory
		Employer evaluation for OJT (logbook)
		Approved independent agency for end-point assessment (summative battery of mixed methodology tests)
Scores	One correct	Local norms
Results	Unique fixed cut score	Compounded for progress and summative tests
Validity	Medium	Weak
Reliability	Unknown	Weak
Credential	Endorsement	State proof of competence

Recommendations

Essential Skills recommendations

It is unlikely that essential skills training is required for UK newcomers, at least for them to be able to join and function as part of a (small) team. Doubtless some of them, especially if they are originally not from the UK (e.g., from another EU country), would benefit from a brief educational intervention made up of 2 parts: (i) trade and legalistic English and (ii) worksite protocols and business processes, both making use of documents, such as regulations or codes, pertinent to the newcomers’ trade.

Health and Safety, and other legislated skills recommendations

There are many online training opportunities for all the OSH requirements that are appropriate and recognized. These can be purchased for approximately \$200.

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

Code books (or relevant appropriate section) can be purchased for \$150-250 online or at specialized bookstores – knowing the code will be important for those workers wanting to challenge the Red Seal examination, especially for Plumbers and Electricians.

Plumbers wishing to install and connect gas-fired appliances must take a course and pass the relevant Safety Authority examination.

[Carpenter recommendations](#)

UK carpenters have the skills to be productive on a worksite. But they miss some minor skills required to be fully autonomous – say on a small residential job where siting and cabinet installation is required, or to work on residential tower, industrial, or commercial projects that make heavy use of reinforced concrete.

Providing UK carpenters with an oxy-fuel component at an institution (approximately 2 weeks and \$500) and courses in concrete (e.g. through the BCRMCA⁹) and residential insulated forming (e.g., through NUDURA¹⁰), as well as site layout would bring them up to the level of BC carpenters for residential work. Courses in formwork and tilt-up work for large industrial sites are not available except through the Carpenter apprenticeship.

And to ensure safety on the job site, a one-day rigging and hoisting course would be beneficial¹¹.

Alternatively, they could pick up these skills on the job if they were employed as a Construction Craft Worker, whether as an apprentice or a laborer, getting to Carpenter Red Seal certification in 2-3 years (their apprenticeship hours fall short of the ITA requirement).

[Construction Electrician recommendations](#)

UK electricians have the skills to be productive on a worksite on residential, commercial, or industrial jobs. But they will need to adapt to high voltage components that they do not seem to have. Likewise, codes and regulations driving work practices will be foreign to them. Providing them with an Electrical Code course (approximately 2 weeks a day/week and \$600) would bring them up to speed.

Alternatively, they could pick up these skills on the job, getting to Red Seal certification in a year or so.

[Plumber recommendations](#)

UK “plumbers” have the skills to be productive on residential, commercial, or industrial worksites for installation, commissioning, and troubleshooting work. But codes and regulations driving work practices will be foreign to them, and they will not have the required gas license. Providing them with the in-school equivalent of C3 (codes and regulations) in C line in Level 1 (approximately 1 week) of the apprenticeship program and a Gas B course (approximately 3 weeks and \$1000) would bring them up to speed.

Alternatively, they could pick up code-related skills on the job and take the Gas B course – to get the Safety Authority qualification, and then challenge the Red Seal examination in a year or so.

⁹ See, e.g., <http://www.bcrmca.ca/education/>

¹⁰ See, e.g., <http://www.nudura.com/training>

¹¹ See, e.g., <http://www.safetycheck.ca/course-training.asp?name=introduction-to-rigging-and-hoisting&id=38>

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

[Construction Craft Worker recommendations](#)

UK Construction Craft Laborers have the skills to be productive on a worksite. But, codes and regulations driving work practices will be foreign to them. While they lack many job-specific skills like masonry, they bring advanced planning and assembly skills to the table. After a solid year and a half on the job, they should be able to challenge the Red Seal examination.

[Roofer recommendations](#)

UK Roofers have the skills to be productive on a worksite, be it flat and low slope, or steep roofing. They would also be a strong asset in the roof architectural sheet metal work. But, codes, regulations, and industry standards driving work practices will be foreign to them – as will be managing a job on their own. Within a couple or so on the job with a company that does all aspects of roofing, they should be able to challenge the Red Seal examination.

Methodology

We obtained data from 10 major UK and Scottish sources of information, and one main source for British Columbia. The UK and Scottish sources were:

- UK Further Education and Skills¹²
- (UK) Apprenticeships¹³
- UK Apprenticeship Standards¹⁴
- UK End-Point Apprentice Assessment¹⁵
- NCFE (Northern Council for Further Education)¹⁶
- ATA Bradford (Apprenticeship Training Agency)¹⁷
- Business in the Community Organization¹⁸
- AllAbout School Leavers¹⁹
- Skills Development Scotland²⁰
- Scottish Training Federation²¹

On these sites, we collected data from the following documents or web pages:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/384254/CONSTRUCTION_LoR_-_Assembly_Technician_Standard_Final_081214.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/411761/CONSTRUCTION_-_Carpentry_and_Joinery.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/411757/CONSTRUCTION_-_Advanced_Carpentry_and_Joinery.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/455234/CONSTRUCTION_Steel_Fixer.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/589514/Scaffolder_Standard.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/555637/BSE_Craftsperson.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/555636/BSE_Installer.pdf

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills> last accessed 26 February 2017

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships> Last accessed 26 February 2017

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards> last accessed 26 February 2017

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/register-of-apprentice-assessment-organisations> last accessed 29 February 2017

¹⁶ <http://www.stf.org.uk/stf-sds-joint-equalities-event/> last accessed 3 March 2017

¹⁷ <http://atabradford.co.uk/> Last accessed 4 March 2017

¹⁸ <http://www.bitc.org.uk/blog/post/scottish-and-english-apprenticeships-what-do-companies-need-know-about-differences> last accessed 29 February 2017

¹⁹ <https://www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk/articles/article/219/are-apprenticeships-different-in-scotland> last accessed 29 February 2017

²⁰ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/modern-apprenticeships/> last accessed 27 February 2017

²¹ <http://www.stf.org.uk/> last accessed 27 February 2017

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/455228/BUILDING_SERVICES_ENGINEERING_Building_Services_Engineering_Service_and_Maintenance_Engineer.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/448907/ELECTROTECHNICAL_Installation_Electrician_Maintenance_Electrician.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459797/Electrotechnical.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584775/PLG_AND_HTG_APP_STANDARD.pdf

The British Columbian sources were:

- ITA (Industry Training Authority).
- WorkSafeBC²²
- ICBC²³

On these sites, we collected data from the following documents or web pages:

- ITA Program Profile
- ITA Program Outline
- WorkSafeBC Employee Roles, Rights and Responsibilities web pages
- WorkSafeBC Young or New Workers Training Guide pdf
- ICBC “Moving to BC” web pages

In the report, we use the BC trade name, requisites, and content as the reference.

Essential skills

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)²⁴ has published essential skills profiles for over 350 occupations. Essential skills fall under a number of categories. To make things simpler, we have retained those shown in Table 8 below. We did not retain the “Thinking”, “Digital Technology”, “Working with Others”, or “Continuous Learning” as these categories address either the newcomer or her culture or his opportunities rather than portable skills amenable to improvement through training.

As a reference, we used the Essential Skills profile for Construction Trades Helpers and Labourers (NOC 7611, 7612) assuming it was similar to the used the BC Construction Craft Worker (C.C.W.) trade. And we aligned the Essential Skills for the other 4 trades to those for C.C.W. retaining the complexity score as published. Skills in each of the categories are accompanied by a “complexity rating” ranging from 1-5, where “1” means “basic” and “5” means “advanced”.

We married the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)²⁵ to the Canadian complexity rating in order to assign a complexity score to an average UK tradeperson, i.e., a non-native speaker of English who might have had some basic training in English.

²² <https://www.worksafebc.com/en> last accessed 2 October 2016

²³ <http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/moving-bc/Pages/default.aspx> last accessed 2 October 2016

²⁴ http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/essential_skills/profiles/index.page accessed 20 September 2016

²⁵ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp accessed 24 September 2016

To assign complexity scores, we stipulated that the CEFR language proficiency were arranged on this continuum: reception (listening and reading – A1/A2) < production (spoken and written – B1) < interaction (spoken and written – B2) < mediation (translating and interpreting – C1/C2). We have assumed that these ratings are interval-based in order to calculate averages. We used 0 to indicate absence.

In effect, we boosted the complexity scale from an ordinal to and interval scale to legitimately calculate average scores. We used Bond and Fox, 2007²⁶ scale explanation as a rationale:

- Nominal scales– separate the data of interest in defined, recognizable classes, for example, there is an “A”, a “B”, a “C”, ... a “n”
- Ordinal scales – separate nominal data along a quantitative axis, for example $A > B > C > \dots n$, therefore, e.g. $A > n$
- Interval scales – separate ordinal data along a regular quantitative axis, for example $A > B > C > \dots n$, such that $(A-z)=B$, $(B-z)=C$, $(C-z)=D$, ..., $(m-z)=n$, and z is invariant or constant but specific to the data (and scale) at hand (e.g. millimeters, cents, seconds, etc.)
- Ratio scales – separate interval data along a quantitative axis, for example $A > B > C > \dots n$, such that $(A-z)=B$, $(B-z)=C$, $(C-z)=D$, ..., $(m-z)=n$, and z is invariant or constant across all possible scales

In the 5 trades, workers are expected to read, consult, and fill a range of documents, from simple forms requiring dates, times, or measurements to detailed reports to engineers, inspectors, or customers. The “UK – All trades” scores reflect our assumption that newcomers who have had basic English language training have the skills to handle simple documents – these often provide or require numerical information such as readings or measurements. We also assumed that newcomers would be able to understand simple instructions (written or spoken) but would not have the technical language skills required to direct small teams or take an active part in group discussions such as pre-job conferences or tailboards.

We used the classification and color scheme listed in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Complexity level²⁷ for essential skills cross-referenced to CEFR

Essential Skill complexity rating descriptor	CEFR	Complexity Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not present 	-	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read relatively short texts to locate a single piece of information. • Follow simple written directions. 	A1 / A2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read more complex texts to locate a single piece of information or read simpler texts to locate multiple pieces of information. • Make low-level inferences. 	B1	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose and integrate information from various sources or from several parts of a single text. • Make low-level inferences from multiple sources. • Identify relevant and irrelevant information. 	B2	3

²⁶ Bond, T. & Fox, C. (2007). Applying the Rasch model: Fundamental measurement in the human sciences (2nd). Mahwah, NJ

²⁷ http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/essential_skills/profiles/readersguide.page accessed 24 September 2016

Essential Skill complexity rating descriptor	CEFR	Complexity Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate and synthesize information from multiple sources or from complex and lengthy texts. Make complex inferences and use general background knowledge. Evaluate quality of text. 	C1	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpret dense and complex texts. Make high-level inferences and use specialized knowledge. 	C2	5

Training Contents: GACs, Competencies, and Rating Scale

Rank-ordering GACs

We assumed that the in-school training hours assigned to any given GAC reflect the relative importance of that aspect of the trade. Further, we assumed that proportion of total training hours dedicated to any aspect of the trade reflect the frequency with which that aspect of the trade is practiced in the field.

We used the BC program outline posted on the ITA website as the reference document. We first listed all the General Areas of Competence (“Lines” or GACs) with the respective percentage of instructional time by level of apprenticeship. We calculated the number of hours devoted to each of these GACs by multiplying the training time allotment - over 4 levels - in percent by the number of training hours for each level and then summed these values.

$$\sum_{i=1}^4 (\%_{instructional\ time})(instructional\ time_{level}) \quad (1)$$

We divided this sum into the total program instructional time and expressed the quotient in percentage, then used this percentage and multiplied it by the on-the-job program hours.

$$\left(\frac{\sum_{i=1}^4 (\%_{instructional\ time})(instructional\ time_{level})}{Total_{instructional\ time}} \right) (Hours_{OJT}) \quad (2)$$

Then we rank-ordered the GACs from largest number of program hours to smallest number of program hours.

Due to scope constraints, we did not perform the same analysis at the competency level.

Competency rating scale

Unlike the ITA documents, UK documents are less prescriptive when it comes to training hours, focussing instead on competence attainment (based on local tests cross-referenced to “end state” competences’ completion).

Given the lack of time markers in UK trade training, we decided to limit our competency ratings on a three-point basis, using the following protocol:

- **0 (zero)** for BC competencies that are not mentioned in the UK documents.
- **1 (one)** for BC competencies that are partially covered by those described in the UK documents.
- **2 (two)** for BC competencies that are completely covered by with those described in the UK documents.

The GAC rating is the rounded mean of the constituent competency ratings.

Results

Essential Skills

Refer to the Methodology session, Table 7 for complexity rating explanation and color code.

Credentialed UK Trade workers master English and the ratings reflect this (they must complete GCSE 2 in math and english to “graduate”). We have assumed that UK newcomers have mastered English trade technical terms, the metric system, and business practices, but that they would not have be comfortable with the imperial system, BC construction standards, codes (fire, building, plumbing, etc.), and regulations.

Table 8. Detailed Essential Skills requirements by trade cross-referenced to "Most UK Trade Newcomers" skills

Essential Skills (by profile)	Trade					
	Carp.	C.E.	C.C.W.	Plumb.	Roof.	UK
Reading						
Read instructions and warnings written on signs, labels and packaging.	1	1	1	0	1	3
Read short text entries on forms and technical drawings.	1	1	1	1	1	3
Read notices and bulletins.	2	2	2	2	2	3
Read a variety of instructions, procedures, and workplace safety materials.	2	2	2	2	1	3
Read safety-related information, and equipment use instructions.	3	3	3	3	2	3
May read trade journals, brochures and website articles to learn about new products and technologies.	3	3	3	3	2	2
May read manuals, and instructions and procedures contained in manuals.	3	3	3	3	3	2
May read technical reports and trade textbooks.	4	0	0	4	0	2
Read and interpret building codes, regulations, bylaws and standards.	4	4	0	4	3	2
"Average"	2.56	2.11	1.67	2.44	1.67	2.56
Document use						
Scan labels on product packaging and equipment to locate specifications, times, safety information and identification numbers.	1	1	1	1	1	2
View digital readouts, and readings on equipment.	0	1	1	0	0	3
Refer to lists to identify identification numbers and quantities.	0	2	1	2	2	3
Locate and enter data on labels.	1	3	0	1	2	3
Complete a variety of forms and check boxes; enter dates, times, and identification numbers.	2	3	2	2	2	2

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

Essential Skills (by profile)	Trade					
	Carp.	C.E.	C.C.W.	Plumb.	Roof.	UK
Locate data, such as dates, times and dimensions, in tables and conversion charts.	3	3	2	3	2	2
May interpret technical drawings including floor plans, schematics, and assembly drawings.	3	4	3	4	3	2
Complete complex entry forms and building permits.	3	4	0	0	0	0
Study a variety of plan, elevation, detail, elevation and section drawings.	4	4	0	4	3	2
"Average"	1.89	2.78	1.11	1.89	1.67	2.11
Writing						
Write short comments in log books to, e.g., record the outcome of safety inspections.	1	1	1	1	1	3
Write short notes to co-workers to, e.g., inform them about defective equipment.	1	0	1	1	0	3
May write text entries in forms.	2	2	2	2	0	2
May write short reports to describe events leading up to workplace accidents.	2	2	2	2	1	1
Write comments in forms, schedules, job hazard assessment forms.	2	3	0	0	0	2
"Average"	1.60	1.60	1.20	1.20	0.40	2.20
Numeracy						
May purchase supplies using petty cash and receive change.	1	0	1	1	1	1
Take a variety of measurements using basic tools.	1	1	1	1	2	2
Measure the dimensions and angles using basic tools.	0	1	1	1	2	2
Compare measurements to specifications.	1	1	1	1	2	2
May estimate distances.	0	1	1	0	0	1
Calculate material requirements.	2	2	2	2	3	2
May calculate averages.	2	2	2	2	1	1
May estimate quantities.	2	2	2	2	2	1
Estimate the length of time that it will take to complete projects.	2	1	0	2	3	1
May estimate weights.	0	2	2	3	2	1
May schedule the completion of construction.	2	2	0	3	3	1
Calculate amounts for estimates and invoices.	3	2	0	3	3	1
May take precise measurements using specialized measuring instruments.	3	3	3	3	0	3

Essential Skills (by profile)	Trade					
	Carp.	C.E.	C.C.W.	Plumb.	Roof.	UK
Calculate runs, rises and offsets.	4	4	0	4	0	3
"Average"	1.64	1.71	1.14	2.00	1.71	1.57
Oral Communication						
Speak to suppliers.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Exchange information with co-workers and other tradespeople.	2	2	2	2	2	2
Participate in group discussions.	2	2	2	0	2	2
Talk to safety and building inspectors.	2	2	0	2	2	2
Speak with manufacturer representatives.	2	0	0	0	1	1
Listen to instructions.	0	0	3	0	0	2
Speak with customers.	3	3	0	2	3	1
May provide detailed instructions to co-workers.	3	3	0	3	1	1
Interact with co-workers regarding critical safety issues.	0	3	0	0	3	2
Exchange information with engineers, owners, architects, inspectors and other trades.	0	3	0	0	0	0
"Average"	1.50	1.90	0.80	1.00	1.50	1.40

Health and Safety, and other legislated skills

We assessed the skill level of newcomers with Canadian and BC OSH, as well as code requirements as non-existent or partial. There are safety and health as well as code requirements in the UK but they are most likely different from those in BC.

We applied that reasoning to WorkSafe BC (WSBC) rights and responsibilities for workers – and “new” workers, Fall Protection, and Confined Space requirements.

We applied that reasoning as well to Federal legislation that covers Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) as a requirement for all types of work and workplace.

And we also applied that reasoning to the codes relevant to their occupation as required. And we included a special consideration for plumbers who, in BC, are expected to have a “Gas B License”.

We assumed that trade persons are often expected to drive a company vehicle – most likely a pick-up truck or van. These vehicles can be operated with a Class 5 BC Driver’s License. ICBC has an agreement in place to exchange a UK driver’s license for a BC one.

Table 9. Regulatory requirements for 5 trades - training (and certification) may be undertaken by the employer (refer to Table 7 for complexity rating explanation and color code)

Regulatory requirements	Trade				
	Carp.	C.E.	C.C.W.	Plumb.	Roof.

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

Regulatory requirements	Trade				
	Carp.	C.E.	C.C.W.	Plumb.	Roof.
WSBC Rights					
Right to a healthy and safe workplace	0	0	0	0	0
Right to safety training and orientation	0	0	0	0	0
Right to refuse unsafe work	0	0	0	0	0
WSBC Responsibilities					
Young / New Worker (Training & Orientation)	0	0	0	0	0
Follow safe work procedures and act safely in the workplace at all times.	0	0	0	0	0
Use the protective clothing, devices, and equipment provided. Be sure to wear them properly.	3	3	3	3	3
Co-operate with joint occupational health and safety committees, worker health and safety representatives, WorkSafeBC prevention officers, and anybody with health and safety duties.	3	3	3	3	3
Miscellaneous Requirements					
WHMIS	0	0	0	0	0
Fall arrest / restraint / protection	3	3	3	N/A	3
Confined space	N/A	1	N/A	1	N/A
Building Code	0	N/A	0	0	0
Gas Code (B 149.1)	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	N/A
Canadian Electrical Code	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
Driver's License (Class 5)	5	5	5	5	5

Training programs comparisons

In the table below, we compare key structural and procedural elements of the apprenticeship programs in BC and in UK. Note that we have only considered the UK certification based on apprenticeship.

Table 10. Comparison of BC and UK apprenticeship program elements across 5 trades

Program element		British Columbia	UK
Entry requirements	Type	Recommended	Required
	Special requirements	None	Locally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 years old minimum • Recommended or mandatory physical abilities • English and scholastic proficiency tests • Requirements may vary from employer to employer

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

Program element		British Columbia	UK
	Lowest scholastic	Grade 9 (Roofer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSEs D - G / Level 1 (minimum mandatory schooling) • None but varies employer to employer
	Preferred scholastic	Grade 10 (Carpenter, Construction Craft Worker, Roofer)	GCSEs A* - C / Level 2
	Highest scholastic	Grade 12 (Plumber) Grade 12 (Electrician)	A levels (≈ G12)
	Topics scholastic	English, math, science	"Maths", English, science preferred
In-school training	Total length	Varies (0 - 1200 hours total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undefined for each trade • May be delivered by employer on-site • 500 - 900 hours total
	Number of periods	Varies (3-4)	Fixed weeks per year (2-4) or fixed competencies
	Additional studies		Varies depending on employer requirements; may be more than minimum.
On-the-job training	Total length	Fixed for each trade, but varies by trade (3600 – 6480 hours)	Fixed minimum for each trade but varies (18 – 48 months)
	Number of periods	Fixed but varies by trade	Recommended minimum months for each trade but "period" varies locally
Assessment	School-based exams	Institution-specific (moving to standardized tests)	Institution or program-sponsor or employer specific with guidelines
	On-the-job	Employer hours' sign-off	Program-sponsor competence evaluation
	Final examination; certification	Pencil-and-paper Red Seal examination	End-Point-Assessment (EPA) battery paper-and-pencil and practical tests by approved independent agency
	Credential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Apprenticeship (CofA) • Certificate of Qualification (CofQ) • Both with Red Seal (Federal) endorsement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-issued "NVQ" • EU Level 2 (Roofing) or Level 3 (all other trades)

Training Contents Comparison

Carpenter programs comparison at-a-glance

Table 11. BC Carpenter and UK Advanced Site Carpenter apprenticeships; duration and prerequisites

British Columbia - Carpenter	UK – Advanced Site Carpenter (Pathway 1)
Level 1 In-school training: 210 hours	1 st 12 months formal training: approx. 10 weeks
Level 2 In-school training: 210 hours	2 nd 12 months formal training: approx. 10 weeks
Level 3 In-school training: 210 hours	3 rd 12 months formal training: approx. 10 weeks
Level 4 In-school training: 210 hours	4 th 12 months formal training: approx. 10 weeks
Total in-school: 840 hours	Total formal training: approx. 40 weeks (varies; competence-based); (combines Level 2 “Site Carpenter” and Level 3 Advanced Site Carpenter)
Total work based: 6480 accumulated work based hours	Total work base: approx. 20 – 39 months (combines Level 2 “Site Carpenter” and Level 3 Advanced Site Carpenter)
Recommended entry: Grade 10 English, Math, and Science	Minimum secondary school completion (GCSEs D – G) (varies locally according to employer or placement agency)

[Carpenter GACs and Competencies comparison \(details\)](#)

In the table below we list all the GACs and attendant competencies rated as described above. The ratings are indicative of the differences between trade practices in BC and the UK.

Table 12. Rank-ordered BC Carpenter GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program) – Note Hours & percentages are for the BC program

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Wood Frame Construction	191.1	23%	1474	2
Describe Wood Frame Construction				2
Select Framing Materials				2
Build Floor Systems				2
Build Wall Systems				2
Build Stair Systems				2
Build Roof Systems				2
Build Specialized Framing Systems				2
Perform Renovations and Additions				2
Build Timber and Engineered Wood Construction				2
Build Decks and Exterior Structures				1
Concrete Formwork	161.7	19%	1247	0
Use Concrete Types, Materials, Additives and Treatments				0
Select Concrete Forming Systems				0
Build Footing and Vertical Formwork				0

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Build Slab-On-Grade Forms and Suspended Slab Forms				0
Install Reinforcement and Embedded Items				0
Build Concrete Stair Forms				0
Place and Finish Concrete				0
Install Specialized Formwork				0
Documentation and Organizational Skills	157.5	19%	1215	2
Describe Carpentry Trade				0
Use Construction Drawings and Specifications				2
Interpret Building Codes and Bylaws				0
Plan and Organize Work				2
Perform Trade Math				2
Finishing Materials	96.6	12%	745.2	2
Describe Roofing Materials				1
Install Doors and Hardware				2
Install Windows and Hardware				2
Install Exterior Finishes				2
Install Interior Finishes				2
Install Cabinets				0
Install Interior Floor, Ceiling and Wall Systems				2
Tools and Equipment	67.2	8%	518.4	2
Use Hand Tools				2
Use Portable Power Tools				2
Use Stationary Power Tools				1
Use Oxy-Fuel Equipment				0
Survey Instruments and Equipment	50.4	6%	388.8	0
Use Levelling Instruments and Equipment				0
Use Site Layout Equipment				0
Building Science	35.7	4%	275.4	1
Control the Forces Acting on a Building				1
Control Heat and Sound Transmission				1
Control Air and Moisture Movement in Buildings				1
Site Layout	33.6	4%	259.2	1

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Lay Out Building Locations				1
Prepare Building Site				1
Apply Excavation and Shoring Practices				1
Access, Rigging and Hoisting Equipment	25.2	3%	194.4	1
Use Ladders, Scaffolds and Access Equipment				1
Use Rigging and Hoisting Equipment				0
Safe Work Practices	21	3%	162	2
Apply Shop and Site Safety Practices				2
Apply Personal Safety Practices				2

Construction Electrician programs comparison at-a-glance

Table 13. BC Construction electrician and UK Installation Electrician duration and prerequisites

British Columbia – Construction Electrician	UK – Installation Electrician
Level 1 In-school training: 300 hours	1 st 12 months formal training: approx. 12 weeks
Level 2 In-school training: 300 hours	2 nd 12 months formal training: approx. 12 weeks
Level 3 In-school training: 300 hours	3 rd 12 months formal training: approx. 12 weeks
Level 4 In-school training: 300 hours	4 th 12 months formal training: approx. 12 weeks
Approximate in-school: 1200 hours	Total formal training: approx. 48 weeks (varies; competence-based)
Total work based: 6000 accumulated work based hours	Total work base: approx. 42 – 48 months
Recommended but not required: recent Grade 12 graduation (within 5 yrs.) with demonstrated mechanical aptitude; Math and Physics 11; English or Communications 12; or successful completion of an electrical industry assessment exam; or recent (with 5 yrs.) Electrical Foundation Program graduate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum mandatory secondary school completion (GCSEs D – G) (varies locally according to employer or placement agency) • Recommended GCSEs A* – C (≈ G12) and/or experience

Construction Electrician GACs and Competencies comparison (details)

In the table below we list all the GACs and attendant competencies rated as described above. The ratings are indicative of the differences between trade practices in BC and the UK. Note that the reference is the UK trade “Installation Electrician” rather than “Maintenance Electrician” which is more focused on PM planning and processes rather than building new.

Table 14. Rank-ordered Construction Electrician GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program)

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
----------------------------------	-----------------	-------	------------------	--------

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

Competencies				UK
Apply Circuit Concepts	441	2205	37%	1
Use Electrical Circuit Concepts				2
Analyze DC Circuits				1
Solve Problems Using the Principles of Electromagnetism				1
Analyze Single-phase AC Circuits				2
Analyze Three-phase Circuits				2
Analyze Electronic Circuits				1
Install Electrical Equipment	210	1050	18%	2
Install Lighting and Lighting Controls				2
Install Transformers				1
Install Protective Devices				2
Install DC Motors and Generators				0
Install AC Motors and Alternators				2
Install HVAC				1
Install Emergency Power Systems				1
Install Alternative Power Systems				1
Install Low Voltage Distribution Systems	168	840	14%	2
Apply Codes, Regulations and Standards				1
Install Service Equipment				2
Install Grounding and Bonding				2
Install Distribution Centres				2
Install Raceways, Boxes and Fittings				2
Install Conductors and Cables				2
Install Utilization Equipment and Devices				2
Install Control Circuits and Devices	168	840	14%	2
Install Manual Motor Controls				2
Install Magnetic Motor Controls				1
Install Electronic Motor Controls				2
Install PLCs				0
Install Automated Controls				1
Read and Interpret Drawings and Manuals	75	375	6%	2
Use Circuit Drawings				2
Use Construction Drawings and Specifications				2
Use Manuals and Manufacturers' Instructions				2
Plan Time and Materials				1

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Install Signal and Communications Systems	42	210	4%	1
Install Fire Alarm and Suppression Systems				2
Install Structured Cabling Systems				1
Install Nurse Call Systems				0
Install Building Integrated Control Systems				2
Install Sound Systems				0
Install Entertainment Systems				0
Install CATV Systems				2
Install Security Alarm Systems				2
Use Test Equipment	42	210	4%	2
Use Analog Meters				2
Use Digital Meters				2
Use Scopes				2
Use Power Quality Analyzers				1
Perform Structured Cable Testing and Reporting				2
Install High Voltage Systems	24	120	2%	1
Apply High Voltage Safety Procedures				2
Install High Voltage Cable				1
Install High Voltage Switch Gear				1
Use High Voltage Test Equipment				1
Use Safe Work Practices	18	90	2%	2
Perform Lockout Procedures				2
Apply WCB Standards and Regulations				0
Apply Safe Work Practices				2
Apply WHMIS				0
Use a Daily Safety Plan				2
Use Safe Rigging Techniques				0
Use Essential Skills	12	60	1%	2
Use Tools and Equipment	0	0	0%	2
Use Hand Tools				2
Use Power Tools				2
Use Fastening Systems				2
Use Powder Actuated Tools				0
Use Access Equipment				1

Plumbers programs comparison at-a-glance

Table 15. BC Plumber and UK Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician (Natural Gas) duration and prerequisites

British Columbia – Plumber	UK – Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician (Option 1 – Fossil Fuel – Natural Gas)
Level 1 In-school training: 180 hours	1 st 12 months formal training: approx. 12 weeks
Level 2 In-school training: 180 hours	2 nd 12 months formal training: approx. 12 weeks
Level 3 In-school training: 180 hours	3 rd 12 months formal training: approx. 12 weeks
Level 4 In-school training: 240 hours	4 th 12 months formal training: approx. 12 weeks
Total in-school: 780 hours	Total formal training: approx. 48 weeks (varies; competence-based)
Total work based: 6420 accumulated work based hours	Total work base: approx. 48 months; may be shorter if apprentice has “prior experience”
Recommended but not required: Grade 12 English, Grade 11 Algebra or Trade Math 11, Grade 11 Physics or Science and Technology 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum mandatory secondary school completion (GCSEs D – G) (varies locally according to employer or placement agency) • Recommended GCSEs A* – C (≈ G12) and/or experience

Plumbers GACs and Competencies comparison (details)

In the table below we list all the GACs and attendant competencies rated as described above. The ratings are indicative of the differences between trade practices in BC and the UK.

Table 16. Rank-ordered Plumber GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program)

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Install Natural Gas and Propane Systems	192	1580	25%	2
Install and service fuel systems				2
Install and service gas equipment				2
Install venting and air supply				2
Install and service controls and safeguards				2
Use gas codes, regulations and standards				0
Organize Work	122.5	1009	16%	2
Use mathematics and science				2
Read drawings and specifications				2
Use codes, regulations and standards				0
Use manufacturer and supplier documentation				2
Plan a project				2
Install Sanitary and Storm Drainage Systems	113.8	936.3	15%	2

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Install sanitary drain, waste and vent systems				2
Install storm drainage systems				2
Install sanitary sewer systems				2
Test and commission sanitary and storm drainage systems				2
Maintain and repair sanitary and storm drainage systems				2
Install Water Service and Distribution	96	790.1	12%	2
Install water services				2
Install potable distribution systems				2
Install private potable water supply systems				0
Install water treatment systems				0
Test and commission potable water systems				2
Maintain and repair potable water systems				2
Install Hydronic Heating and Cooling	77.04	634.1	10%	1
Describe the operation of hydronic heating and cooling systems				1
Install hydronic heating and cooling systems				1
Test and commission hydronic systems				1
Maintain and repair hydronic systems				1
Use Tools and Equipment	55.28	455	7%	2
Use hand tools				2
Use portable power tools				2
Use stationary power tools				2
Use measuring and leveling tools				2
Use cutting, brazing, and soldering equipment				2
Use ladders and platforms				0
Use rigging and hoisting equipment				0
Prepare and Assemble Plumbing Components	35.1	288.9	4%	2
Install pipes				2
Install valves				2

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Install fittings				2
Penetrate structures				2
Apply Plumbing Principles	23.32	191.9	3%	2
Install Fixtures and Appliances	22.4	184.4	3%	2
Install fixtures and trims				2
Install appliances				2
Test and commission fixtures and appliances				2
Maintain and repair fixtures and appliances				2
Install Specialized Systems	18.42	151.6	2%	0
Install medical gas systems				0
Install irrigation systems				0
Install compressed air systems				0
Install fire protection systems				0
Test and commission specialized systems				0
Maintain and repair specialized systems				0
Use Safe Work Practices	12.42	102.2	2%	2
Control workplace hazards				2
Use information in the OSH Regulation and WCB standards				2
Use WHMIS				0
Use Personal Protective Equipment				2
Practice fire prevention				2
Install Private Sewage Systems	11.76	96.79	2%	0
Install private sewage disposal systems				0
Repair and maintain private sewage disposal systems				0

[Construction Craft Workers programs comparison at-a-glance](#)

Table 17. BC Construction Craft Worker and UK Construction Assembly Technician duration and prerequisites

British Columbia – Construction Craft Worker	UK - Construction Assembly Technician (NVQ Level 2)
Level 1 In-school training: 120 hours	1 st 12 months formal training: approx. 8 weeks
Level 2 In-school training: 120 hours	2 nd 12 months formal training: approx. 8 weeks
Total in-school: 780 hours	Total formal training: approx. 16 weeks (varies; competence-based)
Total work based: 4000 accumulated work based	Total work base: 18 - 24 months; may be shorter if

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

British Columbia – Construction Craft Worker	UK - Construction Assembly Technician (NVQ Level 2)
hours	apprentice has “prior experience”
Recommended but not required: Grade 12 English, Grade 11 Algebra or Trade Math 11, Grade 11 Physics or Science and Technology 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum mandatory secondary school completion (GCSEs D – G) (varies locally according to employer or placement agency)

[Construction Craft Workers GACs and Competencies comparison \(details\)](#)

In the table below we list all the GACs and attendant competencies rated as described above. The ratings are indicative of the differences between trade practices in BC and the UK.

Table 18. Rank-ordered Construction Craft Worker GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program; Note: we used the “Concrete” specialization as a reference)

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Perform Concrete Work	45.6	19%	760	1
Form Concrete				2
Place and Finish Concrete				0
Modify Concrete				0
Install Grout, Epoxies and Caulking				0
Perform Site Work	43.2	18%	720	1
Prepare Site				1
Perform Ground Work				2
Perform Demolition				0
Apply Excavation and Shoring Practices				2
Service Site				2
Use Scaffolding and Access Equipment	27.6	12%	460	0
Use Scaffolding and Access Equipment				0
Use access equipment				0
Perform Utilities and Pipeline Tasks	26.4	11%	440	0
Install utility piping				0
Perform pipeline activities				0
Perform pipeline maintenance				0
Organize Work	24	10%	400	2
Use Documentation, Blueprints and Specifications				2
Communicate with Others				2
Use Basic Trade Math				2
Perform Routine Trade Activities	24	10%	400	1
Install Permanent and Temporary Fencing				1

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating
Competencies				UK
Erect and Dismantle Hoarding / Enclosures				1
Perform Traffic Control				1
Establish Grades and Elevations				0
Handle Materials				2
Install Membranes				0
Install Insulating Materials				0
Use Safe Work Practices	18	8%	300	1
Manage Workplace Hazards				1
Apply OHS Regulations and WorkSafeBC Standards				0
Use Fall Protection Systems and Equipment				1
Use Personal Protective Equipment				1
Use Fire Safety Procedures				1
Use Safety Committees				0
Perform Safety Watch				0
Use Tools and Equipment	12	5%	200	1
Use hand tools				1
Use power tools				1
Use powder-actuated tools				1
Use Rigging and Hoisting Equipment				2
Use portable equipment				1
Use mobile equipment				1
Use sandblasters				0
Use packers				0
Perform Masonry Work	12	5%	200	0
Prepare masonry work				0
Tend to bricklayers				0
Perform Roadwork	7.2	3%	120	0
Install paving materials				0
Install roadwork components				0

Roofer (Damp- and Waterproof) programs comparison at-a-glance

Table 19. BC Roofer and UK Roofer apprenticeships (2 streams); duration and prerequisites

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

British Columbia - Roofer	UK – Built-up Felt (BuF) / Slating and Tiling (SaT) / Sheeting and Cladding Roofer (NVQ Level 2)
Level 1 In-school training: 120 hours	1 st 12 months formal training: approx. 11 weeks
Level 2 In-school training: 120 hours	2 nd 12 months formal training: approx. 11 weeks
Level 3 In-school training: 120 hours	
Total in-school: 360 hours	Total formal training: approx. 22 weeks (varies; competence-based) (for each of the three “trades”)
Total work based: 6480 accumulated work based hours	Total work base: 24 months (for each of the three “trades”)
Recommended entry: Grade 10 English, Math, and Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum mandatory secondary school completion (GCSEs D – G) (varies locally according to employer or placement agency)

[Roofer \(Damp- and Waterproofer GACs and Competencies comparison \(details\)\)](#)

In the table below we list all the GACs and attendant competencies rated as described above. The ratings are indicative of the differences between trade practices in BC and the UK. We have considered 2 trades / streams: one focused on flat roofs and the other on steep roofs where those competencies strongly diverged. Elsewhere, the competencies between the streams converge and we rated those jointly.

Table 20. Rank-ordered Roofer, Damp and Waterproofer GACs and competencies (0=not present in UK program; 1=partial overlap; 2=substantial or complete overlap with BC program; Note: we used the “Roof, wall and waterproofing technology” specialization as a reference)

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating	
				BuF	SaT
Competencies					
Install Low Slope and Flat Roofing	138.0	1380	38%	2	0
Install Gypsum Board and Insulation				2	0
Install Overlay Board				2	0
Install Vapour Retarders and Air Barriers				2	0
Install Flashing Materials				2	0
Install Built-Up Roofing Systems				2	0
Install Flexible Membrane Roof Systems				2	0
Install Steep Roofing	55.2	552	15%	0	1
Install Asphalt Shingles				0	1
Install Wood Shingles and Shakes				0	0
Install Concrete and Composite Materials				0	2
Install Metallic Materials				0	2
Organize Work	45.6	456	13%	2	

A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships

General Area of Competence (GAC)	In-school hours	%/GAC	On-the-job hours	Rating	
				BuF	SaT
Competencies					
Describe Roof Types				2	
Communicate with others				2	
Prepare the worksite				2	
Estimate quantities of materials				2	
Use Safe Work Practices	44.4	444	12%	1	
Describe Workplace Hazards				2	
Interpret the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and WCB Standards				0	
Use WHMIS				0	
Use Personal Protective Equipment				2	
Use fire safety procedures				2	
Use Documentation	32.4	324	9%	1	
Read Drawings and Specifications				1	
Use Building Codes and RCABC Standards				0	
Read Manufacturers' Information				1	
Use Tools and Equipment	21.6	216	6%	2	
Use hand tools				2	
Use portable power tools				2	
Use propane-fuelled equipment				2	
Use hot process equipment				2	
Use Hoisting, Lifting and Rigging Equipment				2	
Use Motorized Equipment				2	
Use Ladders and Platforms				2	
Assess and Maintain Roof, Damp and Waterproofing	12.0	120	3%	2	
Assess Roof Conditions				2	
Maintain and Repair Roofs, Damp and Waterproofing				2	
Apply Waterproofing and Damp-Proofing	7.2	72	2%	0	
Waterproof surfaces				0	
Damp-proof surfaces				0	
Prepare Roofs	3.6	36	1%	2	
Prepare Roofs For Replacement				2	
Prepare Roofs For New Installation				2	

Discussion

In this section, we consider the meaning of the results.

Essential Skills

Reading

The “overall score of 2.56” reflects our assumption that many UK trade persons have English as mother tongue, and have completed the mandatory minimum secondary school (approx. G10) or more (approx. G12) where the language of instruction and examinations is English. Regardless of English fluency, it is also reasonable to assume that UK newcomers would lack familiarity with exact BC-specific safety, trade or legislation technical terms, or codes and regulations, but would master those in a general sense as they would trade processes language (including trade jargon).

In addition, our analysis accepts that reception (listening and reading – A1/A2) and reading tend to be more complex literacy skills than listening (and understanding), this even more so in a specialized field and for newcomers with just minimal formal education or from a trade with no educational requirements such as Construction Assembly Technician or “Roofer”.

Document Use

The “overall score of 2.11” reflects the language assumption we mentioned above. We can expect a UK newcomer whose mother tongue and education are anchored in English to be able to handle most common documents, especially plans, schematics, blueprints etc. (for most trade a required component). The UK trade person’s limitations would be linked to differing protocols embedded in the plans rather than the language skills. The only skill we thought might be out of a UK trade person is that of completing complex forms and building permits (score of 0). Here we have assumed that unfamiliarity with exact terms and process and reporting requirements, even though in English, worked synergistically “against” a newcomer.

The most complex literacy skill required here is that of mediation (translating and interpreting - C1/C2). But UK trade persons have had to practice that skill in their day-to-day praxis in their home country. In BC their only impediment is that of having to apply the skill in a new environment.

Writing

The “overall score of 2.20” reflects both the language assumption we mentioned above and the fact that both written production (written – B1) and document “interaction” (B2) are directly proportional to educational achievement – here we have assumed that minimum GCSE Level 2 in Math and English achievement was common and weighted that with the fact that 2 of the 5 trades have no educational requirements.

Numeracy

The “overall score of 1.57” reflects the language assumption even though its importance is not as great here as it is in the other essential skills categories. However, the trade educational requirements - and there are none for 2 of the 5 trades we considered – are light on mathematics, with the algebra requirement for electrician apprentices not apparently required, and the training which most often does not mention “trade math”. Still, we can expect a UK newcomer to be able to handle tasks requiring numbers like taking measurements and conducting rough estimates as these skills are part of everyday trade practices – but we might make an exception for UK Roofers, where the emphasis appears to be more on “doing” than “planning” or following plans, blueprints, and schematics.

In addition to the roofing trades, the other 4 trades workers might also not be fluent in scheduling and estimating costs and time-to-completion because (i) the minimum educational achievement required is quite low, and (ii) these skills are not emphasized (or mentioned in the training minima). In addition, we can assume that, despite commonalities, UK business trade practices are different than those in BC.

Oral communications

The “overall score of 1.40” reflects the language assumption and the complexity level: interaction (spoken – B2) < mediation (translating and interpreting – C1/C2). Language demands such as understanding simple requests, what is said at crew meetings, or what a customer might want is certainly within the grasp of a UK newcomer. But talking to building and safety inspectors, engineers, manufacturers, or acting as a crew leader might be beyond a UK trade person’s abilities less because of language barriers than because of a lack of familiarity with the industry in BC.

Essential Skills recommendations

It is unlikely that essential skills training is required for UK newcomers, at least for them to be able to join and function as part of a (small) team. Doubtless some of them, especially if they are originally not from the UK (e.g., from another EU country), would benefit from a brief educational intervention made up of 2 parts: (i) trade and legalistic English and (ii) worksite protocols and business processes, both making use of documents, such as regulations or codes, pertinent to the newcomers’ trade.

Health and Safety, and other legislated skills

Here we have assumed that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Fall Protection and Arrest, and participation/cooperation with OSH practices and people are similar – and just as compulsory - in the UK. But to be compliant in BC, a trade worker needs to be holding the BC (or Canadian) proof of training.

WorkSafe BC (WSBC) lists rights and responsibilities for workers – and additional training for “new” workers. While compliance is commonly taken care of by the employer, it is up to the trade person to know what they can and cannot do safely, as well as how to be in compliance with WSBC regulation. WSBC requirements with respect to PPE varies from trade to trade but usually includes regulation-approved footwear, clothing (including high visibility clothing), ear/eye/hand protection, and hard hat. In addition, for some types of work, respirator proficiency is required.

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) is a requirement for all types of work and workplace. WHMIS certification is often a pre-requisite for jobs – it may be offered through the employer.

Proof of training and a certificate in Fall Prevention (covered under Part 11 of the WSBC Regulation) is a requirement for all workers who work at heights exceeding 3 meters. And while it is possible to work without fall restraint (for example if guardrails have been installed), roofers and carpenters will often be required to have and know how to use fall restraint equipment.

Electricians and plumbers often work in confined spaces (covered under Part 9 of the WSBC Regulation). Proof of training and a certificate is required for those workers who might come across such environments.

For all construction trades a familiarity with the codes relevant to their occupation is necessary. In addition, plumbers in BC are expected to have a “Gas B License” in order to install and connect gas-fired appliances.

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

Trade persons are often expected to drive a company vehicle – most likely a pick-up truck or van. These vehicles can be operated with a Class 5 BC Driver’s License. ICBC has an agreement in place to exchange a UK driver’s license for a BC one provided a copy of the document is submitted alongside proof of at least 2 years’ driving experience either in the form of a formal letter or as attested by the issuance date on the driver’s license itself. Operating commercial vehicles with more than 2 axles, especially those equipped with air brakes requires a special license and an air brake endorsement.

[Health and Safety, and other legislated skills recommendations](#)

There are many online training opportunities for all the OSH requirements that are appropriate and recognized. These can be purchased for approximately \$200.

Code books (or relevant appropriate section) can be purchased for \$150-250 online or at specialized bookstores – knowing the code will be important for those workers wanting to challenge the Red Seal examination, especially for Plumbers and Electricians.

Plumbers wishing to install and connect gas-fired appliances must take a course and pass the relevant Safety Authority examination.

[Training Contents Comparisons](#)

[Carpenter](#)

The differences between trade practices in BC and UK are minimal. Briefly, in UK carpenters do not routinely

- Install or strip formwork.
- Place concrete.
- Install cabinetry.
- Use oxy-fuel equipment.
- Site buildings.
- Perform rigging and hoisting tasks.

Curiously, the apprenticeship program does not mention the performance of:

- Perform renovations and additions.

[Carpenter recommendations](#)

UK carpenters have the skills to be productive on a worksite. But they miss some minor skills required to be fully autonomous – say on a small residential job where siting and cabinet installation is required, or to work on residential tower, industrial, or commercial projects that make heavy use of reinforced concrete. Providing UK carpenters with an oxy-fuel component at an institution (approximately 2 weeks and \$500) and courses in concrete (e.g. through the BCRMCA²⁸) and residential insulated forming (e.g., through NUDURA²⁹), as well as site layout would bring them up to the level of BC carpenters for residential work. Formwork and tilt-up work for large industrial sites is not available except through the Carpenter apprenticeship.

And to ensure safety on the job site, a one-day rigging and hoisting course would be beneficial³⁰.

²⁸ See, e.g., <http://www.bcrmca.ca/education/>

²⁹ See, e.g., <http://www.nudura.com/training>

³⁰ See, e.g., <http://www.safetycheck.ca/course-training.asp?name=introduction-to-rigging-and-hoisting&id=38>

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

Alternatively, they could pick up these skills on the job if they were employed as a Construction Craft Worker, whether as an apprentice or a laborer, getting to Carpenter Red Seal certification in 2-3 years (their apprenticeship hours fall short of the ITA requirement).

[Construction Electrician](#)

The differences between trade practices in BC and UK stem from codes and regulations, and high voltage electrical distribution systems. But UK electricians have advanced skills in photovoltaic and other green technologies. Briefly, in the UK electricians do not

- Install sound and entertainment systems.
- Install nurse call systems.
- Install high voltage systems (<1000V).
- Plan and estimate jobs (generally).

[Construction Electrician recommendations](#)

UK electricians have the skills to be productive on a worksite on residential, commercial, or industrial jobs. But they will need to adapt to high voltage components that they do not seem to have. Likewise, codes and regulations driving work practices will be foreign to them. Providing them with an Electrical Code course (approximately 2 weeks a day/week and \$600) would bring them up to speed.

Alternatively, they could pick up these skills on the job, getting to Red Seal certification in a year or so.

[Plumber](#)

The differences between trade practices in BC and UK stem from codes and regulations. But UK plumbers have advanced skills in water conservation and other green technologies. Briefly, in the UK “Plumbers” do not

- Well systems.
- Septic systems.
- Irrigation systems.
- Specialty systems.

[Plumber recommendations](#)

UK “plumbers” have the skills to be productive on residential, commercial, or industrial worksites for installation, commissioning, and troubleshooting work. But codes and regulations driving work practices will be foreign to them, and they will not have the required gas license. Providing them with the in-school equivalent of C3 (codes and regulations) in C line in Level 1 (approximately 1 week) of the apprenticeship program and a Gas B course (approximately 3 weeks and \$1000) would bring them up to speed.

Alternatively, they could pick up code-related skills on the job and take the Gas B course – to get the Safety Authority qualification, and then challenge the Red Seal examination in a year or so.

[Construction Craft Worker](#)

The ratings are indicative of the differences between trade practices in BC and UK. Clearly, UK Construction Assembly Technicians work more often on large construction projects where they are part of a team that installs all manners of pre-fabricated building components.

Briefly, in the UK Construction Craft Laborers do not

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

- Help masons.
- Modify concrete structures.
- Perform roadwork.
- Maintain pipelines.
- Establish elevations.
- Erect and disassemble scaffolds.
- Direct traffic.

[Construction Craft Worker recommendations](#)

UK Construction Craft Laborers have the skills to be productive on a worksite. But, codes and regulations driving work practices will be foreign to them. While they lack many job-specific skills like masonry, they bring advanced planning and assembly skills to the table. After a solid year and a half on the job, they should be able to challenge the Red Seal examination.

[Roofer](#)

The ratings are indicative of the differences between trade practices in BC and the UK.

Briefly, in UK Roofers do not

- Either perform flat roof or steep roof duties depending on the trade they studied.
- Damp- and waterproof.
- Organize and “run” jobs.
- Know local industry standards (in this case Roofing Contractors Association of BC – RCABC).

[Roofer recommendations](#)

UK Roofers have the skills to be productive on a worksite, be it flat and low slope, or steep roofing. They would also be a strong asset in the roof architectural sheet metal work. But, codes, regulations, and industry standards driving work practices will be foreign to them – as will be managing a job on their own. Within a couple or so on the job with a company that does all aspects of roofing, they should be able to challenge the Red Seal examination.

[Credentialing comparisons](#)

[British Columbia](#)

Apprentices are required to pass each of 4 levels (blocks) of in-school training. At the time of this writing, the practical and theory tests were institution-specific, but coordinated through a BC Articulation Committee for the trade. The Industry Training Authority (ITA) intends to impose standardized level theory tests starting in 2016. There is no standardized practical test: instructors assign cumulative marks for in-school projects (similar but not standardized).

Successful completion of the Level 4 in-school final exam gives access to the Red Seal examination, the only certification mechanism for carpenters in BC.

[The Red Seal - Apprentices and challengers](#)

[Introduction](#)

Apprentices and approved challengers are required to write the Red Seal examination to get a BC carpenter credential. There is no partial credit, no part credential.

The Red Seal examination is a timed “paper and pencil” test. All questions on the examination are machine-scorable multiple choice.

The Red Seal Certification examination is based on the National Occupational Analysis (NOA). The NOA is broken down into a number of blocks, tasks, and sub-tasks. Examination questions are based on the sub-tasks, the number of questions on each sub-task is based on a national mathematical average of estimated time spent on task by the carpenters in each jurisdiction, curved to the total number of question on the examination.

There is no weighting of any section of the Red Seal examination based on either heightened safety implications or criticality of task. There is no jurisdictional examination overlay for the Red Seal examination.

Red Seal examinations are prepared cooperatively between all Canadian jurisdictions but are hosted by a designated jurisdiction (designate status for any Red Seal examination is assigned through the CCDA³¹'s Product Committee's ISEC³²). Red Seal examinations are item bank-generated; that is for each examinable sub-task of the NOA, a number of items are developed and then randomly assigned to an instrument based on a ToS³³ that mirrors the NOA percentages.

Bank-generated examinations are more comprehensive and more “difficult³⁴” than many of the “before-bank” examinations: items address more areas of the trade at more varied/complex levels than in one-off, instructor-developed examinations.

Problems

It is generally assumed that the ability to pass the examination³⁵ can be directly attributed to a candidate's work experience: that there is a direct proportional relationship between the level, scope, and quality of on-the-job training (OJT) and experience, and performance on the examination. It is also assumed that the instructional content (and activities) delivered by the institutions reflect the National Occupational Analysis (NOA) - our analysis shows this to be a dubious assumption, at best.

There are several problems with these assumptions. First, it is questionable if a pencil and paper test can stand as a proxy for practical ability. Second, it is unclear whether the candidates are able, for the purpose of the test only, to conceptualize what they do to answer a "word" problem. Third, domain hierarchy is neither considered nor established. And fourth, the NOA sub-tasks are not worded clearly enough to permit domain definition (e.g. “G21.01 Removes existing materials”).

The third and fourth problems are of interest to the carpenter Red Seal examination because they are borne out of examination development design and practice. As a pencil and paper test, the carpenter IP assumes that all candidates can read, thus making the examination a test of literacy. As well, many items require candidates to apply mathematical concepts to identify (not necessarily generate as they would

³¹ Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship

³² The *Interprovincial Standards Examination Committee* is made up of provincial/territorial government representatives

³³ A *Table of Specifications* is developed by the host jurisdiction and assigns weights and taxonomic item levels to sub-tasks

³⁴ Where “difficulty” is a perceptual measure from the candidates' perspective rather than statistically derived through Item Response or Classical theories

³⁵ 70% aggregate cut score for all Red Seal examinations

on the job) the correct answer, as such, the Red Seal is a test of numeracy. These two domains are listed in the Essential Skills, but these are not tested for, nor are they part of the requirement for challengers, but they are tested in conjunction with the job skills. All Red Seal examinations are made up of items that test an indeterminate number of domains in an indeterminate fashion.

Success on the Red Seal examination means the candidate scored >70%. All Red Seal examinations have this unique cut score. The cut score is not adjusted to the compounded psychometric profile of the items used for the examination – items are not differentially weighted. And, while results are available at the task level, the score obtained is the unweighted ratio of correct answers over number of questions at the sub-task level.

Validity

Validity is a measure of confidence in the inferences made based on a test score. With high stakes tests (like the Red Seal), it is crucial that test developers and administrators ensure inferences drawn from test scores are accurate. In the case of carpenters, a score <70% means that the candidate is not a competent carpenter, a serious professional issue.

Validation studies are recommended prior to the introduction of any test and should be mandatory for high stakes tests like the carpenter Red Seal. Usually three types of validation studies are conducted: content, criterion-related, and construct. With Red Seal examinations in general, only a cursory content validation is conducted when local experts review items.

Some may argue that the use of subject matter experts (SMEs) during item development is a validation exercise. This is a spurious argument, as content validation exercises ought to be conducted by independent judges, not the people who developed the items. Moreover, there is no indication that the SMEs are fully cognizant of all domains tested, are representative of the population of carpenters, or can precisely determine what is being tested.

Reliability

If a test is an accurate measure of an individual's ability³⁶, then any candidate's observed scores should be consistent over repeated tries on the same test or parallel, equated tests. Reliability indices are numerical values that provide a statistical measure of the consistency of test scores; one would expect z-scores of a given individual to remain relatively consistent over repeated tries.

Score consistency is affected both by random and systematic errors. Random errors are chance happening and cannot be controlled (but they can be accounted for). Systematic errors are due to either examination flaws or candidates' characteristic (e.g. visual impairment). Red Seal examinations are developed, produced, and implemented without any reliability studies. In fact, some jurisdictions do not track reliability indices, even rudimentary α s or z-scores distributions in or for test-re-test situations.

UK

The UK Department of Education issues Level 2 or 3 NVQs and Level 2 GCSEs only to those apprentices who have completed the minimum requirements as stated in the Standards (used to be "Frameworks") developed by "Trailblazers", employer groups approved by the UK Further Education and Skills

³⁶ i.e. that E (the error unrelated to the domain(s) being tested – see footnote 2) is minimized in $T=X+E$ so that the test score (X) is a stable, true reflection of the true score (T),

[A Comparison of Select British Columbia and UK Apprenticeships](#)

Department, provided the apprentice has passed an independent assessment, the end-point assessment (EPA). These Standards are “managed” by industry with the help of government counsellors.

For apprentices, there are no paper-and-pencil summative tests like the Red Seal. There are institution-specific examinations for in-school / formal training, the scheduling, content, and testing of which must match the Standard but can (and do) vary locally – local industry and apprentice placement agencies (not obligately) establish and “enforce” these requirements. In addition, some employers are also the “training institution” of record.

For apprentices, there are no standard hands-on tests for the training provided on the job, although they are expected to maintain a logbook and have informal assessments of hand skills at work.

The results of both these tests and assessments are required to register for the EPA which is administered by an approved, independent entity³⁷ using a variety of assessors. The EPA consists in a battery of pencil-and-paper and hands-on tests based on the KSAs listed in the Standard³⁸. For those trades requiring GCSE Level 2 in English and Math, these tests must be taken prior to apply for the EPA. All of these are approved and regulated by Ofqual (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation), a UK government non-ministerial department.

The UK apprenticeship system is buttressed by several distributive funding mechanisms that provide (depending on location) for the training and wage support of registered apprentices. The funds for apprenticeship are collected through a UK-wide payroll levy.

Validity

The UK government requires that UK apprentices demonstrate both cognitive and hands-on abilities in both the punctual and at the EPA. But the modes and instruments for testing are non-standard. Even the EPAs can vary locally, especially is they are not registered. And since apprenticeship completions are a key indicator for continued funding, and since the progress examiners are also the people delivering the program, a potential conflict of interest is possible and may be a threat to the tests’ validity, even at a local level. As the EPA are expected to cost approximately 10-20% of the training costs, it is also possible that testing agencies have a vested interest in “passing” people.

The terminal competences are those the training program and the trade require as minimum proof of competence but the vagueness and generality of the terms, phrases, and descriptors, not to mention lack of performance outcomes or indicators (at least with Bloom-aligned action verbs), leave a lot of room for stated rather than demonstrated achievement.

Assuming validity is unwarranted by the evidence.

Reliability

Having many tests increase challenges to reliability, even if we added a reliability index for each test and summed those. But in the UK, the formative and summative tests are not standardized and do not appear to have been tested for consistency, either on their own or from test to test – what we have are prescriptive norms for test elements marked on a 3-point scale “pass (70%), merit (80%), distinction

³⁷ See, e.g., <https://www.ncfe.org.uk/>

³⁸ See, e.g., for electricians https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459797/Electrotechnical.pdf

(90%)” assigned by the assessor(s). The EPA centers are visited by “inspectors” to ensure they are appropriate.

While we could argue that the UK performance picture of an apprentice is a composite one spread over the duration of the apprenticeship, it is unknown that a candidate in a test-re-test situation would “do” roughly the same overall.

Assuming reliability is unwarranted by the evidence.

BC vs. UK

Table 11 compares the major elements of the testing and credentialing systems for apprentices and trade persons in BC and in UK. Both systems reflect general beliefs and philosophy about education and training.

Briefly, BC, consistent with a greater reliance on technology and quantitative, large scale standardized testing uses a machine scorable test. The Red Seal examinations are designed and produced by a broad-based Canadian consensus, and are managed by a local arms-length government agency, ITA, an institution removed from the training institutions and the field. The Red Seal endorsement is meant to qualify the worker to the worker’s benefit.

By contrast, the UK approach is non-standard, reflects local ideas of competence, and is reliant on non-expert testers and tests formatively and experts and roughly similar tests for the summative assessment. But, unlike in BC, the credential is meant to qualify the worker to the employers’ benefit.

Table 21. Comparison of BC and UK examination and credentialing

Examination and certification		
Element	BC	UK
Exam	Single	Multiple
	Pencil & paper	Pencil & paper
		Hands-on
Domains tested	Multiple unspecified	Multiple specified (somewhat)
	Proxy	Direct and proxy
Domain inclusion	Negotiated norm	Local / employer norm (formative)
		National norm (EPA)
Item type	Selected response	Unknown (formative)
		Battery + hands-on (summative)
Scoring	Machine	Unknown for non-hands-on
		Examiner for hands-on
Scores	One correct	Unknown
Results	Unique fixed cut score	Locally averred minimum
Validity	Medium	Weak
Reliability	Unknown	Weak
Credential	Endorsement	State (completion only)