

New Zealand's Facilities Management community is eagerly anticipating the first homegrown degree-level FM qualification, set to deliver graduates into the workforce in just over three years' time.

Auckland University of Technology's new Building Engineering major (Bachelor of Engineering Technology) opens its doors to students in February.

"This is a key milestone in the delivery of FMANZ's education strategy and a huge leap forward for the FM profession in New Zealand," says David Curry, Chairman of FMANZ's Education Committee.

"It gives us the opportunity to attract bright young people directly into the industry by offering a recognised degree level qualification with workplace relevance. Given our national shortage of FMers, and the demographic of our current workforce, there should be a ready market for these young graduates when they hit the workforce in just over three years' time."

The new Building Engineering Major incorporates three pathways, one of which is Asset and Facilities Management. The others are Building Surveying Technology and Construction Safety Engineering.

The Head of Built Environment at AUT's School of Engineering, Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Professor John Tookey, says industry demand has driven the launch of the major.

"At the moment there is a clear and significant shortfall of engineers both worldwide and in New Zealand. Our industry partners keep telling us there is a strong demand for new infrastructure but also to maintain and sustain existing infrastructure.

"We agreed that there needs to be engineers tasked directly in the development, management and maintenance of constructed infrastructure, so have created this specific major."

New Zealand is considered behind the world when it comes to this area of engineering, boasting only one engineering technician to every engineer. In other developed countries this ratio is 4:1.

In promoting the new AM/FM pathway to students, AUT says: "The Asset and Facilities Management pathway helps you develop the skills to provide cost-effective lifecycle sustainability of commercial buildings. It covers a wide range of skills – including building technology, building management systems, energy management and the commercial aspects of construction."

Professor Tookey says AUT's Bachelor of Engineering Technology takes a hands-on, applied approach to learning, and the Assets and Facilities Management pathway will produce engineering competent individuals who 'get' FM. "Engineers with a pragmatic commercial understanding of FM and construction."

AUT's Bachelor of Engineering Technology involves three years of fulltime study and 600 hours of work experience, and is internationally recognised under the Sydney Accord.

Programme Structure

Year 1 - This major shares some of the first year with the other majors in the Bachelor of Engineering Technology. Students develop skills in essential construction technology and materials, as well as generic engineering skills.

Year 2 - Students become familiar with lifecycle design, engineering and analysis. This year also introduces specific skills in asset and facilities management, as well as management, cost engineering and project management skills.

Year 3 - This year covers advanced construction technology and asset and facilities management skills, as well as ethics, sustainability and other management topics. Students also complete the compulsory integration specialisation project. Students work as part of team, undertaking the role of an asset and facilities management professional to develop building management specifications and plans, working alongside students from other construction disciplines.

Industry Engagement

AUT's engineering programme is currently based entirely at its Auckland CBD Campus, but for industry reasons, this new major will only be offered at AUT's South Campus, in South Auckland.

"There are more than 2400 construction companies in the Penrose area of Auckland alone and the majority of big construction company headquarters are based in South Auckland," explains Professor Tookey. "We take industry engagement seriously and we will get them involved in all of our papers. This will help companies find future talent, and graduates future employers all on each other's doorsteps."

Professor Tookey says the other reason to base the major at the South Campus is to attract more Maori and Pacific students into engineering degrees.

“The industry needs to be more reflective of society and that means getting more Maori and Pacific students into study. Our South Campus already has strong links with the community and we hope to build on that with this major to ensure the industry is as diverse as the population it serves.”

“The construction business is a large part of the South Auckland economy,” agrees Richard Hall, Executive Director, AUT South Campus. “The new Bachelor of Engineering Technology will provide students with the opportunity to specialise in a key area of this critical industry sector.”

Want to Help?

FM professionals are being asked to help build FM futures in New Zealand by providing scholarships, internships and mentoring opportunities for students. For more information, email info@fmanz.org.