

Apprentice Employment Network Awards

AEN Member Guide to
writing an effective nomination -
Individual Categories



The Apprentice Employment Network NSW & ACT the peak industry body representing the largest employer network of apprentices and trainees in NSW & ACT.

aennswact.com.au

Apprentice Employment Network Awards Guide

Introduction to the Apprentice Employment Network Awards Guide

The Apprentice Employment Network (AEN) Awards celebrate outstanding apprentices and trainees, showcasing their skills, dedication, and contributions. As staff within a Group Training Organisation (GTO), you play a crucial role in ensuring nominees receive the recognition they deserve.

This guide will help you craft strong, competitive nominations by providing practical advice and a structured approach. A compelling nomination goes beyond listing achievements—it tells a powerful story that highlights the nominee's journey, leadership, and impact.

By following this guide, you'll learn how to gather meaningful information, structure your submission effectively, and provide the detail needed to stand out. Whether you're new to the process or refining past submissions, this resource will support you in writing nominations that truly reflect the hard work and success of your apprentices and trainees. Let's make sure their achievements are recognised at the highest level.

We would like to thank Chris Czarnosz, CEO of Australian College of Commerce & Management, for his assistance in writing this guide.



Jason Sultana

Executive Officer

Apprentice Employment Network NSW & ACT

Background Information

What makes a competitive nomination?

Consider what sets your nominee apart when crafting your Apprentice Employment Network Awards nomination. Here's how to make it stand out:

- Tell the nominee's story in an engaging and easy way to connect with. Compellingly share their journey and achievements.
- Use clear, straightforward language. Avoid jargon or exaggerated statements that aren't backed up by real examples.
- Bring their accomplishments to life with specific examples and stories showing what they've achieved and how they've impacted.
- Make sure you cover all three judging criteria in detail, offering a full picture of who the nominee is – not just their work, but as a person too.
- Help the judges feel like they understand the nominee, their experiences, and how their VET journey shaped them.
- Write with a general audience in mind, ensuring it's clear and relatable to anyone – not just experts in the industry.

Who is the audience for your nomination package?

The audience for your nomination package consists of a panel of judges selected by AEN. These judges have extensive experience in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and/or Group Training Organisations (GTOs), but they may not be experts in the specific industry of your nominee. This means your nomination should clearly highlight the nominee's achievements so that judges can understand and appreciate, even if they're unfamiliar with the details of that particular field.

What makes an entry stand out?

Judges seek high achievers who excel in every category and can inspire others as your GTO, AEN & VET ambassadors.

A strong personal story told clearly and authentically—no jargon, just real achievements. Substance over style—judges will focus on the impact of your journey, not just fancy words.

Background Information

Who should write the nomination?

- No single "right" answer exists, but the nominee's input is key!
- When nominees write their own, it often feels more personal and directly reflects their goals, **but it needs to ensure it addresses the criteria.**
- If a nominator or supervisor writes it, they must genuinely capture the nominee's passion and journey.
- **Historically, nominations written by nominators or supervisors have led to more winners—this holds for both the AEN Awards and the NSW & ACT Training Awards.**

How does the scoring work?

- Each nominee is judged in three equal categories.
- Ensure your nomination has strong, meaningful content in every section to stay competitive.
- Please don't do it alone! Gather insights from co-workers, your Host, and supervisors to strengthen your nomination.

Writing is more than just putting words on a page.

A well-prepared nomination starts with gathering the right details—as important as the writing itself.

Approach it step by step, and you'll build a strong, standout nomination package.



Background Information

Getting Started: Writing a Strong Nomination

1. Writing an awards package takes time—start early and plan!
2. Carefully review the award criteria so you know exactly what each section requires.
3. Gather specific examples of the nominee's achievements that you've personally witnessed.
4. Add details and context to each example—help the judges understand why it matters.
5. Talk to others (supervisors, co-workers, Hosts) for more examples and insights.
6. Organise your examples into categories, ensuring balanced coverage across all criteria.
7. Start writing! Use tools like ChatGPT to help refine your writing.
8. Don't stress over fancy wording—clear, straightforward language is best.
9. Make sure the nominee's personality and journey shine through.
10. If possible, involve the nominee in the writing process or include direct quotes.
11. Review, refine, and repeat.
12. A winning nomination will:
 - Tell a compelling story of the nominee's journey.
 - Highlight achievements in a way that makes their impact clear.
 - Address all three award criteria.

Let Their Story Shine

Simply listing achievements isn't enough—this is about bringing the nominee to life on the page. You're telling their story.

The more compelling their journey, the stronger and more memorable the nomination will be.

Support Bold Statements with Evidence

Saying, *"Jennifer is fantastic and a true asset to the industry!"* sounds great—but without context, it doesn't tell the judges why.

A stronger approach includes specific examples:

"Jennifer's expertise in diagnosing exhaust issues has cut repair times by 30%, far exceeding expectations for her experience level."

Backing up statements with real achievements makes your nomination more compelling and credible.

The Awards Criteria

On the Job Performance

1. Skill development (e.g. the rapid development of competencies, the height of skill attained, any additional skills developed and translation of skills attained off the job into the workplace, Awards or recognition received)
2. Knowledge of Host Employer's business
3. Awareness and understanding of new developments and trends in apprentice/trainee's workplace or industry
4. Overall work performance and commitment to the apprenticeship/traineeship
5. Demonstrated commitment to safe work practices

Off the Job Training

1. TAFE/RTO Results (e.g. consistent high grades, awards received and/ or additional studies undertaken)
2. Demonstration of the integration of skills learnt off the job with on the job performance
3. Understanding of the vocational education and training system and the value of learning; (eg understanding why they are doing training both on and off the job training; what is great about the pathway/career they have chosen)

Personal Skills

1. Communication skills and personal presentation, (e.g. effective written and oral communication, level and quality of communication with GTO, host and/or TAFE/RTO)
2. Team Work and Leadership (e.g. self-started projects and team participation)
3. Goal setting and planning (e.g. work involving goal setting and attainment)
4. Self-reliance (e.g. demonstrated ability to manage own skill and personal development)
5. Community involvement relevant to their apprenticeship/traineeship (eg an apprentice cook who volunteers in a nursing home)

On the Job Performance

Workplace success isn't just a key part of the VET sector—it's where you, the nominee, have stood out.

This is your chance to tell your story and highlight how much of an impact you've made.

Make it shine! ✨

Skills Development: Your Journey, Your Story

The journey is just as important as the destination. When nominating someone for the Apprentice Employment Network Awards, it's important to share how far their skills have come—and to do that, we need to hear the story of where it all began.

Please think of this section as the opening chapter of their story. The judging panel wants to understand how they entered the industry and what motivated them to start this journey.

Consider these points to get started:

- **Was this always a passion for them?** Maybe they've loved the industry for as long as they can remember.
- **Is this industry part of their family's history?** Perhaps they grew up around it and always felt connected to it.
- **Did they stumble into the industry by chance?** Maybe they didn't plan to be here, but once they found it, everything clicked.
- **Was it an opportunity that they seized?** Maybe they saw a chance and ran with it, and that decision changed everything.

Sharing how and why they entered this industry helps the panel understand their background and gives context to their story.



On the Job Performance

Knowledge of Your Host Employer's Business

In this section, we want to hear about the nominee's knowledge of your Host's business. It's important to focus on what they know and understand about the company—beyond what's on their website or in marketing materials.

Take a moment to describe your Host's business in their own words. What does it do, and what industry does it operate in? What makes it stand out? It's your chance to show the judging panel how well you understand the company and its core areas of expertise.

Here are some things to think about when describing the business:

- **What's their main focus?** What products or services do they provide, and what sets them apart from competitors?
- **What's the company's role in the industry?** Are they leaders in their field, or are they known for a particular innovation or skill?
- **What makes their expertise unique?** Does the company excel in a certain area, such as customer service, technology, or production?

The key is to show your pride in the business and how you understand your role in its success. Let the judges know that you're not just there for the experience but that you truly care about the company and what it stands for.



On the Job Performance

Awareness and Understanding of New Developments and Trends in the Workplace and Industry

Every industry is constantly evolving. Whether it's new technology, updated regulations, or shifts in market trends, staying informed is key to success. This section is your chance to show the judges how aware you are of the changes in your workplace and industry.

Think about the following areas:

- **Technology:** What new technologies or tools have been introduced to your workplace or industry? How do you stay updated on the latest tech advancements?
- **Best Practice Processes and Procedures:** Have new methods or best practices changed how things are done in your field? How have you adapted to or implemented these changes?
- **Legislation and Regulations:** Has any shift in laws or regulations impacted your industry? How do you stay informed of these changes?
- **Market Changes and Competition:** Have you noticed changes in the market or how competitors are adjusting? How do you keep track of these developments?
- **Host Workplace Changes:** How has your workplace adapted to these changes, whether in technology, processes, or regulations?

The key here is showing what you know and how you stay current with industry trends. It's important to demonstrate that you actively seek out information to remain ahead of the curve. If someone else is writing this nomination for you, be sure they focus on your awareness and actions, not their own experiences. The judges want to understand how you stay informed about developments in your industry and how that knowledge influences your work.



On the Job Performance

Overall Work Performance and Commitment to the Apprenticeship/Traineeship

This section allows you to share your personal story and workplace successes. It highlights how your hard work and dedication have shaped your VET journey and how your achievements reflect your commitment to the apprenticeship or traineeship.

Take a moment to think about how things have been going at work. Here are some questions to help you reflect:

- **Have you received any feedback from your host employer?** If your host has praised your work or given you positive feedback, share that. What did they say about your contributions?
- **Have you won any awards or recognition for your performance?** Maybe you were recognised as “Employee of the Month” or received another award for dedication and effort.
- **Have you completed any particularly difficult tasks?** Whether it’s a tough project or a challenging job, explain what it was and how you tackled it.
- **Have you worked on any special projects or tasks?** If you’ve been part of something important, such as a team project or initiative, share your role and what you accomplished.
- **Have you been identified for special training or additional responsibilities?** If you’ve been selected for any further training or given more responsibility, explain why and how you’ve handled it.

Instead of just listing your achievements, provide specific, personal examples. Describe why each accomplishment was important and how it reflects your growth and commitment to your role.



On the Job Performance

Overcoming Challenges and Demonstrating Dedication

Apprenticeships and traineeships require real dedication, and the judges want to understand the challenges you've faced and how you've overcome them. Consider the obstacles you've encountered along the way:

- **Did you always make time for study, even when work was busy?** If you've had to balance your learning with a demanding workload, explain how you managed it.
- **Have you faced any workplace or personal challenges?** Whether it was a difficult project, a tough team dynamic, or personal hurdles, describe how you stayed focused on your goals.
- **Did you go the extra mile by coming in early or staying late to meet your commitments?** Share any instances where you put in extra effort to get things done.
- **Have you dealt with any health issues that impacted your apprenticeship?** If health challenges have come your way, explain how you handled them and stayed committed to your apprenticeship.
- **Were there any obstacles that impacted your progress?** Maybe you had to change hosts or faced other issues. Describe how you overcame these and stayed on track.
- **Have you faced any physical, mental, or learning challenges?** If you've had to navigate any difficulties in learning or physical tasks, share how you overcame these barriers.

The judges want to hear about your dedication to your apprenticeship or traineeship, so explain how you persevered through any challenges. Your journey tells the story of your resilience and commitment to your goals.



On the Job Performance

Commitment to the Apprenticeship/Traineeship and the Larger VET Pathway

If you're also being considered as a VET Ambassador, it's crucial to show your commitment to your apprenticeship and the broader VET pathway. This is a chance to explain why you're passionate about your career goals and how you're contributing to the future of your industry through your apprenticeship.

Sharing these personal stories and challenges will give the judges a clearer picture of your hard work, resilience, and dedication. This is your opportunity to show how your efforts have shaped your growth and your commitment to your future in the industry.



On the Job Performance

Demonstrated Commitment to Safe Work Practices

Safety is essential in every workplace, no matter the industry. This section is your chance to show how you've demonstrated a commitment to maintaining a safe work environment through your actions, leadership, or support of safety initiatives.

Think about the following examples and reflect on how you've contributed to a safer workplace:

- **Have you participated in or taken the lead on a workplace safety program?** Share how you've been involved in these efforts, whether it's a formal training session or an initiative to improve safety.
- **Have you identified risks or hazards in the workplace?** If you've noticed something unsafe or a potential hazard, did you take action and report it to the person responsible?
- **Have you ensured that you (or others) follow safety guidelines?** Demonstrating your commitment to safety means consistently following procedures and encouraging others to do the same.
- **Have you provided safety training to others?** If you've helped train coworkers or new employees on safety protocols or procedures, highlight this experience.
- **Have you responded to or assisted during a safety-related incident?** In case of accidents or near-misses, how did you react? Did you help manage the situation and support those involved?

Even if safety isn't the main focus of your role, safety practices likely play an important part in your workplace. The judges want to hear about how you've shown dedication to keeping the workplace safe for yourself and others.

If you've been actively involved in safety initiatives or have contributed to creating a safer environment, share those moments with specific examples. This is your opportunity to show that you understand the importance of safety and take it seriously in your daily work.

Off the Job Training

Off-the-job training is essential to the VET experience, even though it might not always be the most exciting topic to write about. However, it plays a critical role in your overall development and success, especially when working with a Group Training Organisation. This training helps build the skills and knowledge that complement what you learn on the job, making it an important piece of your journey.

When discussing your off-the-job training, think about how it has contributed to your development and ties into your overall learning experience. Here are a few points to consider:

- **What skills have you gained through off-the-job training?** Reflect on the specific areas of learning that have helped enhance your skills, whether technical skills, workplace etiquette, or industry knowledge.
- **How has off-the-job training complemented what you do at work?** Think about how the lessons you learned during training have helped improve your performance in the workplace. You may have been able to apply new knowledge directly to your role.
- **How has the training supported your career goals?** Off-the-job training is not just about completing requirements; it's an investment in your future. How has it shaped your career path and helped you prepare for long-term success?

Even though off-the-job training can feel like a separate part of your apprenticeship or traineeship, it is just as important as what you do on the job. This is your chance to explain how it's been a vital part of your journey and contributed to your overall growth.

By highlighting how off-the-job training has supported your development and career goals, you'll show the judges that you are dedicated to learning and improving inside and outside the workplace.

Off the Job Training

TAFE/RTO Results: Showcasing Your Academic Excellence

This section is your chance to highlight how your coursework and studies set you apart.

Completing your qualification is expected, but what makes your journey exceptional?

Key Areas to Highlight:

- **Outstanding Grades & Recognition:** Did you earn distinctions, high marks, or special acknowledgments? Share specific achievements that showcase your academic excellence.
- **Finishing Ahead of Schedule:** Completing your studies early is a great example of dedication and commitment—make sure to mention it!
- **Trainer & Instructor Feedback:** Have trainers or instructors praised your work? Their testimonials add strong credibility to your nomination.
- **Standout Projects & Assessments:** Think about the projects you're most proud of—what challenges did you overcome, and what impact did your work have?
- **Awards & Recognition:** Have you been named Student of the Month or received other academic awards? These achievements help reinforce your commitment and success.
- **Completion Success:** Finishing coursework or projects on time—or even ahead of schedule—shows reliability and strong work ethic.



Off the Job Training

Going the Extra Mile

If you've taken additional courses, workshops, or training beyond your core studies, highlight them. Continuous learning and extra effort set you apart from other candidates.

The judges aren't just looking for grades—they want to see how you've gone above and beyond in your education. Share your best moments, and let your dedication shine! ✨

Integration on the job of skills learnt off the job.

A key goal of any apprenticeship or traineeship is to blend off-the-job learning with real-world application.

Think about how you've applied your skills at work:

- **Did you use your training to improve your daily tasks?**
- **Have you helped update or refine workplace procedures?**
- **Have you used your knowledge to support or train others?**
- **Did your learning give you a deeper understanding of your industry or business?**

The key is to share real examples.

Instead of saying, "Paul applied all his skills to daily operations," tell a short story illustrating how his learning made a difference.

Specific details bring your journey to life and show the judges your true impact!



Off the Job Training

Understanding of the VET System and the Value of Learning

As a potential VET Ambassador, your understanding of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system is key to showing how much you value the learning pathway it offers. You don't need to dive deep into technical details like Training Contracts or administration, but this is your opportunity to reflect on what the VET system means to you and how it has shaped your career journey.

Consider how you would explain the VET system to others, focusing on its practical benefits and impact. Here are some key areas to reflect on:

- **How Apprenticeships and Traineeships Can Kickstart Careers:** Consider how your apprenticeship or traineeship has helped launch your career. Why do you believe this pathway can set people up for success?
- **Why the VET Pathway Appeals to Those Who Haven't Found Their Path:** For those who might feel unsure about their future or haven't found their ideal career, why is VET a great option? What makes it stand out for you, and how might it appeal to others?
- **The Experience and Results You Gain from Your Pathway:** Reflect on the practical experience and knowledge gained through your apprenticeship or traineeship. How has it prepared you for your career and shaped the professional you are today?
- **How Your Pathway Helped You and Why It May Be an Inspiration to Others:** This is your chance to share how your VET experience has made a difference in your life and why it might be an inspiring choice for others. Consider how the hands-on training, support, and real-world experience have helped you reach your goals.

In this section, it's important to tell the story of your journey within the VET system and how it's helped you get where you are today. Your story has the power to inspire others to pursue a similar path and demonstrate how the VET system can provide valuable opportunities for anyone looking to build their career.

If you're unsure about specific details of your VET pathway, you can always contact your Group Training Organisation for guidance—they can help clarify any questions.

By sharing your understanding and personal experience, you'll show the value of VET and position yourself as someone who truly believes in the power of hands-on learning and the doors it can open for others.

Personal Skills

The Personal Skills category highlights your character, leadership potential, and ability to collaborate effectively. This section focuses on how you demonstrate these qualities in the workplace.

Communication & Presentation Skills

Strong communication is essential, especially if you aspire to be an ambassador for the VET pathway. Consider how you've demonstrated this skill in different settings:

- **Team Interactions:** How do you express ideas clearly and listen actively?
- **Customer & Stakeholder Engagement:** Have you handled client interactions professionally?
- **Training & Knowledge Sharing:** Have you led a session or mentored others?
- **External Activities:** Do you engage in public speaking, social clubs, or community events?
- **Workplace Updates:** Have you presented reports or briefings to management?

Even if you haven't had formal public speaking experience, your confidence and ability to articulate ideas effectively are valuable potential indicators.

Teamwork & Leadership

Teamwork and leadership are crucial in any apprenticeship or traineeship. Reflect on how you:

- **Contribute to Team Success:** Do you collaborate well with others?
- **Support Colleagues:** Have you stepped in to help team members?
- **Take Initiative:** Have you led a project or guided others?
- **Seek Opportunities:** Do you volunteer for new challenges?
- **Demonstrate Accountability:** How do you take ownership of your work?

Provide specific examples where you've worked collaboratively or taken the lead to drive success.

Personal Skills

Communication & Presentation Skills

Strong communication is essential, especially if you aspire to be an ambassador for the VET pathway. Consider how you've demonstrated this skill in different settings:

- **Team Interactions:** How do you express ideas clearly and listen actively?
- **Customer & Stakeholder Engagement:** Have you handled client interactions professionally?
- **Training & Knowledge Sharing:** Have you led a session or mentored others?
- **External Activities:** Do you engage in public speaking, social clubs, or community events?
- **Workplace Updates:** Have you presented reports or briefings to management?

Even if you haven't had formal public speaking experience, your confidence and ability to articulate ideas effectively are valuable potential indicators.

Teamwork & Leadership

Teamwork and leadership are crucial in any apprenticeship or traineeship. Reflect on how you:

- **Contribute to Team Success:** Do you collaborate well with others?
- **Support Colleagues:** Have you stepped in to help team members?
- **Take Initiative:** Have you led a project or guided others?
- **Seek Opportunities:** Do you volunteer for new challenges?
- **Demonstrate Accountability:** How do you take ownership of your work?

Provide specific examples where you've worked collaboratively or taken the lead to drive success.

