

# ACE NEWS

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ACADEMY OF CONSTRUCTING EXCELLENCE (NZ) LTD

## Special points of interest:

- Networking event - SEE BELOW
- Academy Profile - Alex James
- Assessments - Learn from the Assessor
- Courses for Auckland & Christchurch

## The Academy looks to spread its wings in 2010

### Introduction

We are broadening the reach of the Academy's Diploma by rolling out Cohort 4 in Auckland in February 2010, and launching Cohort 5 in Christchurch in June 2010. Cohort 4 builds on an established reputation within Auckland, whilst Cohort 5 is a direct response to market research amongst key industry leaders and a strong South Island client base.

We have also been able to strengthen the Industry Advisory Panel - the body of senior industry figures that guides the Diploma's thinking - with a number of key players. Finally, we have been introducing more Industry Leader presentations into the course, which has been well received by Candidates and their mentors, and will continue through Cohort 4 and 5.

2010 will see the Government focus on raising productivity. For construction, this will manifest through increased procurement integration and a demand for improved cross-disciplinary leadership.

In response, the Course rationale remains generally the same – helping the industry improve succession planning through creating the best industry business leaders from our skilled engineering and project staff. The Courses now focuses on creating leaders with the skill set to effectively influence outcomes across these wider groups. Our Candidates are also seeing growing benefit from opportunities to build broad business networks across client, consultant and contractor groups. Graduates from previous years report that these networks are becoming established communication routes for their businesses.

### Cohort 4 for Auckland

For Auckland, we have already picked up candidates for our February launch. Course dates start on 18th February and details are on the Constructing Excellence web

site - [www.constructing.co.nz](http://www.constructing.co.nz) - and a new brochure will be circulated shortly. Course registrations close 18th December 2009.

8th December is our "HOT TOPIC BREAKFAST NETWORKING EVENT" with NZIM. This Morning Sound Bite with Peter Cunningham, CEO of the UK Construction Client Group, will review the latest UK national construction sector report "Never Waste a Good Crisis." This will be a very informative session and you will also be able to hear a Cohort 4 update, meet the tutors and discuss the course with us. Further details are in this Newsletter.

### Cohort 5 for Christchurch

Announcing the dates for Christchurch is a great step forward for us. A number of Candidates have already been proposed for the course, which starts on 28th June 2010. A full programme is available on the Constructing Excellence web site - [www.constructing.co.nz](http://www.constructing.co.nz)

We will be setting up "breakfast briefings" in Christchurch early in 2010, and also ensuring that local industry has an opportunity to have input by undertaking IAP and other meetings/briefings in Christchurch later in the year.

Again in partnership with NZIM, the Diploma remains an NZQA Level 6 qualification and will be run from their well-appointed city centre training facilities. Running Cohort 5 on the Mainland offers increased value for money and resource utilisation to our large group of client organisations based there – potential travel costs are reduced as are productive hours away from the team, whilst still maintaining the core contact teaching hours, the shared learning and networking experiences.

### Industry Input

The Industry Advisory Panel's (IAP's) collective advice is key to our confidence in expanding the Diploma coverage, so we are very pleased to announce a number of

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## HOT TOPIC BREAKFAST NETWORKING EVENT

**First review of the latest UK National Construction Sector report "Never Waste a Good Crisis"**

**Morning Sound Bite with Tim Warren – Construction Clients' Group**

What the UK construction sector has learnt from 10 years of change, and the hard lessons for New Zealand:

- Why does construction still fail to perform?
- What are the missing links to make changes happen?
- What are the initiatives that work?
- What can New Zealand offer as Best Practice and what can we learn?
- What are the next steps?

There are key lessons to be learned by NZ's construction sector - find out from one of the original Rethinking Construction team contributors and construction sector expert Tim Warren. He will draw on his strong grasp of business drivers and present economic realities.

Join us for this **complimentary** Sound Bite on the 8th December from 7:30-8:45 am. Finger food breakfast and refreshments, followed by a short informal presentation.

*Drop in on your way to work!*

**Location:** NZIM Offices, Philip Fox Tower, Level 4, 209 Queen St, Auckland.

**Tel:** 0800 800 694

*Places are limited*

**RSVP:** [Tait\\_Grindley@nzimnorthern.co.nz](mailto:Tait_Grindley@nzimnorthern.co.nz)  
[www.theacademy.co.nz](http://www.theacademy.co.nz)

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*Academy spreading its wings (continued from page 1)*

new IAP members. They reflect the broad cross-industry base that characterises the Diploma and we welcome:

**Ron MacDonald** – Commercial Director, Hawkins

**Peter Fehl** – Director, Property Services, University of Auckland

**Kelvin Goode** – Group Manager, North Shore City Council

And we can also welcome back Beca's **Gavin Shaw**.

We really appreciate the time, advice and thinking this group put in – it sets our direction and ensures we are “by the industry for the industry.”

One of the great successes for Cohort 3 is the increasing numbers of Industry Leaders who make presentations as part of the Diploma. These people provide key practical learning from their own business experience to complement the taught elements of the course. It is an exceptional opportunity for access to senior figures, to gain insight, and to probe further through dialogue and discussion. We have added both The Property Council NZ's **Connal Townsend** and **Peter Gomm**, Mainzeal's CEO to an eminent cast which includes nearly all the IAP team. Next year we are bringing key leaders and rising stars to the Diploma - **Peter Millar**, Tonkin and Taylor's CEO and **Tristan Ilich**, Aurecon's Asia Pacific Development Manager (ITC), and Ignite

Director **Peter Harris** to name but a few.

Next a “quick plug” (couple of important diary dates):

**8th Dec, 2009** - The Academy Diploma, Cohort 4 - “End of 2009 Review.” This includes an Industry Briefing and Course Review, and will be followed by an opportunity to network with members of the Industry Advisory Panel, mentors, guests and tutors over drinks and some light refreshments. In previous years these have been well attended, lively and entertaining meets, so we're looking forward to seeing you on the day! **Details:** 18:00 Hrs. Venue Auckland CBD, tbc.

**17th Dec, 2009** – Cohort 2, NZIM Graduation. It is worth noting that a strong group is heading for success this year – great news! **Details:** 18:30 Hrs. The Mercure Hotel, 8 Customs St, Auckland.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a well-earned Christmas break and the opportunity to “Never Waste a Good Crisis” in 2010.

*Tim Warren*

Course Director  
The Academy of Constructing Excellence (NZ) Ltd

## ACADEMY PROFILE - ALEX JAMES

**aurecon**



Though now based back in Sydney, Alex is grateful to have participated in the inaugural MEEC course. A civil engineer with 20 years' experience, it was no surprise to Alex to learn that waste in the construction industry embarrassingly exceeded that of manufacturing.

Having started his engineering career in the construction industry on projects such as the Sydney Harbour Tunnel and petrochemical infrastructure Alex is now an executive at Aurecon, having undertaken design management for airports, road tunnels and now rail. In that time Alex has seen things done well, but too often done very poorly.

MEEC outlined the spectrum of ideas that drive construction efficiency, both traditional and emerging ideas, with insight provided by guest speakers from the US, UK and leaders across NZ industry. Management topics valued by Alex included leadership, motivation, customer relationships, conflict management and finance. MEEC also emphasised the principles underpinning the incentive to improve with sharing of risk, continuity of work, performance measurement, and profit certainty. It provided the tools for improvement such as the collaborative culture, lean, agile, ‘last planner’ and innovative approaches. Mostly importantly, he now appreciates that the supplier, contractor, designer and owner all have a role in making construction work better.

Alex's major project regarding KPI development and measurement in Aurecon's Auckland office provided powerful insights with ongoing benefits. Alex fondly recalls the value of fellow student experiences and their camaraderie.

Since returning from NZ, MEEC has been invaluable to Alex in appreciating the intent of the Australian alliance model. While it has much in common with some UK ‘collaborative’ approaches (e.g. NEC), Alex has observed an emphasis on ‘relationships’ in Australian alliances as being the catalysts for improvement. In the UK, however, he understands there is a focus on supply chain engagement and continuous improvement. Alex strongly believes both aspects are mutually important in driving waste from construction.

Alex is currently the Lead Project Development Manager in Novo Rail, an AU\$1.5B programme alliance delivering over 55 rail system projects for RailCorp in New South Wales. Generating new ideas among people who have ‘done it before’ is a challenge, but the knowledge provided by MEEC attracted Alex to Novo Rail, as one of its essential tasks is to do things better.

## Assessments and the DipMEEC student

*Some helpful thoughts from Dr John Tookey,  
Assessor for Dip.MEEC.*

Over the last couple of years I have seen a range of different abilities demonstrated by students on the DipMEEC programme. Some are very good - some less good. Across the board, all of the students are successful in their line of business. If they were not then by definition they would not be eligible to complete the programme - 'Managerial Excellence' is both a starting point and an end state for the programme. The philosophy is, and has always been, taking something that is already good and making it better.

To that end, the first idea that you have to take on board is that the bar has just been raised. Normally individuals working through a career in industry become good at their job by 'putting a shift in' - literally spending time until the job gets done. One of the first things you learn in the DipMEEC programme is about labour productivity.

Productivity is an output measure, not an input measure. Consequently the trick is always putting LESS effort in, in order to get the same output. The staff from the Academy would normally refer to this as working smarter, not harder. So, we work hardly at all and we get the DipMEEC, right? Wrong. That is not the thrust of this piece. What you have to get adept at is the structuring of your effort in order to maximise the effectiveness of the time you spend on it. Consider the standard

*Productivity is an  
output measure, not  
an input measure*

way in which you get asked to demonstrate your understanding with an assignment - "Write 1500 words on subject X". All of a sudden there is a psychological barrier of putting

together enough words to make 1500 of them. Most people then start writing a stream of consciousness, relating everything that they know about a subject until they get to 1500 words and then rapidly wrap up the discourse with "Consequently X is a really useful thing for the engineer to understand" or some such. Having marked many hundreds of exam scripts over the years, I can honestly say that the verbal diarrhoea gets even worse when the stress of a time limit is imposed!

What really counts for any of these types of word count assessments is the structuring of the piece in order to logically present your thought process. At a very basic level, an assessment piece has to have an introduction to sell the subject. Next is an element of literature analysis, in essence relating what everyone else thinks about the subject. Then comes a discussion piece - which is in effect an application of assessment criteria (usually stated in the conditions of the assessment brief) to what you have found. Then comes a set of conclusions, recommendations and/or findings. This simple four element structure can then be refined under logically relevant subheadings - maybe 'past', 'present' and 'future likely developments'. The best piece of advice I can give you then is to structure the piece right at the outset by listing all the headings and subheadings you will need to go through in order to achieve the necessary outcomes for the piece.

Once you have logically structured the piece with headings, allocate a word budget (if you wish) to each element. Pretty soon that '1500 words, how do I get to that' is resolved down to much more easily achievable subsidiary tasks of a couple of hundred words on a particular aspect. Structuring the piece in this way also means that you can leave the piece and come back

to it later when you have a few minutes to spare to work on it. This makes it much easier to tackle since you do not feel the need to write it all in one go.

Once you have the structure tied down, the next important thing to understand is about validating the observations that you make. What you need to be able to get your head around is that the ideas you have about a subject are useful and probably correct. However in order for someone who does not know you well to be able to grasp the validity of the points you make, there is a requirement to contextualise and reinforce those points you make saying "get a couple of blocks of Uranium 235 and bang them together hard enough and they will explode". It is true as you probably know.

However if I contextualise and validate the statement with evidence it makes a huge difference to how seriously you take the point - "A mass of fissile material (e.g. enriched uranium 235) is assembled into a supercritical mass—the amount of material needed to start an exponentially growing nuclear chain reaction based on the theory developed by Einstein (1923) and proved by Oppenheimer (1946)".

Ultimately we view reliability of statements by the quality of your analysis and its contextualisation through literature. When you go down this route of literature citation, the a point I would like to make is make sure that you cite correctly since books and papers you use need to be findable by anyone reading you work later, otherwise they do not have a value per se. For information on citation techniques try here - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citation> and in particular here [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/APA\\_style](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/APA_style) since APA-style referencing is very popular and effective.

Final thought for you to include into your assessments. Most students complete the piece and pretty much conclude simply by saying 'the end'.

Once again you need to think in terms of 'raising the bar' of your thought process. Always try to introduce an element of reflective practice to the assessments that you undertake; in other words what have you personally got out of the learning process? How would you do things differently in light of the findings? *Raise the bar of your thought process* What relevance does this tool or technique have on your professional career? This allows the assessor - usually me - to see that you have actually 'got' the ideas that you are writing about. This is crucial as an assessor to see that you have actually achieved learning outcomes positive to your development.

So the key points to take away from this piece regarding assessments are structure, referencing other works to validate your observations, and emphasising learning outcomes. Leonardo da Vinci said "all problems succumb to rigour"; adopting some of the ideas I have put down here will help you to tackle the assessments that you are set rigorously and move effectively. Achieve that and your productivity (i.e. grades) will increase compared to the input (time) you give - the first step towards working smarter not harder.



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Adding Value to the Construction Industry



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# A CHRISTMAS WISH TO ALL

## 2010 2011 COURSE PROGRAMMES

**18 Feb 2010**

- Cohort 4 (Auckland)
- Launch, Business Excellence, Myers Briggs

**25 / 26 Feb 2010**

- Project Feedback, Supply Chain Management
- Cohort 3 (Auckland)
- MBTI & Supply Chain
- Cohort 4 (Auckland)

**25 / 26 Mar 2010**

- Collaborative Working
- Cohorts 3 & 4 (Auckland)

**29 / 30 Apr 2010**

- Lean Construction
- Cohorts 3 & 4 (Auckland)

**27 / 28 May 2010**

- Team Building / Leadership
- Cohorts 3 & 4 (Auckland)

**24 / 25 Jun 2010**

- Project Review (on line)
- Cohort 3 (Auckland)
- Project Feedback & Customer Relationship Management
- Cohort 4 (Auckland)
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**29 / 30 Jul 2010**

- Leadership & Communication Skills
- Cohort 4 (Auckland)
- Customer Relationship Management
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**26 / 27 Aug 2010**

- Business Strategy, Financial Management & Tools for Excellence
- Cohort 4 (Auckland)
- Leadership & Communication Skills
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**30 Sep / 1 Oct 2010**

- Performance Measurement, Managing Change, Continuous Improvement
- Cohort 4 (Auckland)
- Business Strategy, Financial Management & Tools for Excellence
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**28 / 29 Oct 2010**

- Project Review
- Cohort 4 (Auckland)
- \* Performance Measurement, Managing Change, Continuous Improvement
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**25 / 26 Nov 2010**

- Project Feedback, Supply Change Management
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**24 / 25 Feb 2011**

- Collaborative Working
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**24 / 25 Mar 2011**

- Lean Construction
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**28 / 29 Apr 2011**

- Team Building, Leadership & Communication Skills
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

**26 / 27 May 2011**

- Project Review
- Cohort 5 (Christchurch)

