

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

## Step By Step Training Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 29 August 2012

# Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction .....	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review .....	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results .....	6
Findings .....	8
Recommendations .....	16
Appendix .....	17

MoE Number: 8367  
NZQA Reference: C07542  
Date of EER visit: 26 and 27 June 2012

# Purpose of this Report

*The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.*

## Introduction

### 1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Step By Step Training Limited (SBS)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 3, 21 -23 Andrews Avenue, Lower Hutt, Wellington
Delivery sites:	Training is delivered across New Zealand, including from individual tutors' premises, in learners' homes, and in corrections facilities.
First registered:	1 December 1996 (under previous owners)
Courses currently delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Computer training</li><li>• Personal growth (literacy and numeracy skills)</li><li>• Employment skills</li></ul>
Number of students:	153 domestic students (as at 7 June 2012)
Number of staff:	Two managers, two training coordinators, and 54 part-time tutors
Scope of active accreditation:	<p>Consents to assess in a number of domain areas to level 4 (but mostly at level 2), including in the areas of computing and digital technologies, oral and written communications, business management, administration, sales, and retail.</p> <p>Standard consents to assess at levels 1-4 and in the areas of business, finance, marketing, communications, and work and study skills.</p>

**Distinctive characteristics:** SBS primarily delivers computer training at a foundation level. Approximately 85 per cent of its current business is the delivery of computer training to Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) clients who are seeking new vocational skills post-injury (unit standards can be achieved but this is not a focus for many of these students). SBS also delivers computer training to prisoners and to private clients (who more commonly seek to complete unit standards).

Most training is provided one-to-one and usually takes place in learners' homes or at tutors' individual premises across New Zealand.

**Recent significant changes:** The new owners have only been operational for a short period of time. They took ownership of the organisation in March 2011. The ownership change was approved by NZQA in May 2012.

An advisory group comprising two members with strong education sector backgrounds was established at the end of 2011. The members have since met regularly.

**Previous quality assurance history:** The business ownership change was approved by NZQA after the new owners showed a commitment to meeting all required practices and processes for PTE registration, accreditation, or approval.

The organisation did not meet external moderation requirements in 2011 as it did not submit three unit standard scripts for moderation by December 2011.

Under the previous ownership, the organisation met all but two of the sampled policy requirements for PTEs reviewed by NZQA at a validation visit in January 2011. It did not have a risk management plan that included education provision, and the Chartered Accountant Professional Attestation was not sufficiently independent.

The organisation met all but one requirement when last quality assured by NZQA in 2009. The requirement not met related to the late submission of a financial attestation.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus area Computer Training was selected because it comprises most of the training provided by SBS.

Governance, management, and strategy was the other, mandatory focus area selected.

## 3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.*

The evaluation was conducted by two evaluators over a two-day period at SBS's head office in Lower Hutt. During the two-day visit the evaluators engaged with:

- Two business owners
- Advisory committee members
- Several tutors
- Past and present students
- Key stakeholders (including ACC and the Department of Corrections, NZ).

Documentary evidence reviewed included: a self-assessment summary, student evaluation information, advisory committee meeting minutes, unit standard analysis, training information sheets, training needs assessment examples, training appraisal forms, progress reports, and tutor and student manuals.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Step By Step Training Limited (SBS)**.

A number of good processes have been introduced to facilitate strong teaching and learning since the new owners took over the business recently. These processes are contributing to the way SBS is meeting many of the most important needs of its learners and clients.

From the outset, the new owners used stakeholder feedback to introduce individual learner needs assessments and the tailoring of computer training to pre-identified vocational goals. This has enhanced clients' confidence in the training and resulted in the awarding of a key contract to SBS in 2012.

The introduction of individual learning plans is focusing clients, learners, and tutors on intended training goals and timeframes, and which has also provided SBS with a monitoring tool to assess learner progress and teacher effectiveness.

SBS identifies that 85 per cent of learners have progressed in accordance with their individual learning plans. It does not have comparable data yet to internally benchmark this data, but sees this as a strong outcome given that ongoing analysis of why the remaining 15 per cent did not progress as planned resulted in the identification of additional learning needs, for which SBS was able to provide recommendations for further training.

SBS identifies that 2012 unit standard completion rates of 90 per cent reflect the strength of the needs assessment process which has helped to identify whether unit standard study aligns with students' needs and abilities.

The evaluators' discussions with staff and learners identified that many learners have progressed from having no or very little computer knowledge or skills to becoming digitally literate. Students have learnt to use a computer and the Internet and to use different software and programmes relevant to their vocational goals.

Learners have developed the confidence and motivation to engage in digital communication, which is a key step in their transition to employment. Evidence of motivation is demonstrated by strong attendance rates of 90 per cent, which corroborates student evaluation data identifying strong student satisfaction with the training. However, evidence of the skills and knowledge acquired by learners is not discernible at a macro level because information is not easily aggregated from individual learner progression reports. SBS also does not directly ask students about the key skills and value they have obtained from the training and which potentially could provide more condensed information from which to analyse and understand how well the training has met learners' needs.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Step By Step Training Limited**.

SBS uses robust, good quality data to understand the effectiveness of key activities and computer training, which has enabled useful improvements to be made.

Upon taking over the business, SBS conducted surveys and face-to-face engagement with clients and tutors to assess satisfaction and to identify how SBS could better meet their needs. This resulted in the introduction of individual learner needs assessments and learning plans, which have added significantly to how the training has been tailored to learners' needs. That review has also resulted in SBS's revision of student learning resources.

Ongoing reporting against learning plans has facilitated an organisation-wide understanding of learner progress and provided good information to keep clients up to date with training activities and how well learners are achieving. SBS analyses learner completions at an individual level to discern patterns of overall achievement and teaching effectiveness, as well as unit standard completion and attendance monitoring information and student evaluation feedback.

SBS maintains close relationships with its clients, which involves frequent discussions about the value of the training and how it can be adapted to better meet learners' and clients' needs. This also occurs through ongoing discussions by management with the tutors and advisory group members. SBS's establishment of an advisory group has provided it with strong input from an education perspective and key contributions to ongoing strategic thinking.

SBS has recognised that there was a gap in the sharing of practice across staff and has used the results of a staff survey to plan a two-day staff professional development conference to identify how greater connectivity can be achieved across tutors. It is currently investigating a web-based mapping tool that would consolidate information to provide a stronger assessment of teaching effectiveness.

One further area for strengthening is the information SBS uses to understand the extent to which the training has met learners' needs. The broad nature of the competencies identified in individual learning plans could be more detailed to better align with the comprehensive summary of learner achievement reported in learners' final progression reports. This would provide SBS with pre-defined progression targets against which to gain a more in-depth understanding of learner progress.

SBS is continuing to review and build on already solid self-assessment practices. This reflects that the new owners only took over the new business in 2011 and have had to prioritise the development of some key areas (as identified above). SBS is aware that there are some areas where the quality and validity of self-assessment information needs to be strengthened (such as in its engagement with students to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the value of the training) and is working with its advisory group to consider ways to best respond.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Learners achieve relevant skills and knowledge, as facilitated by individual learner assessments and learning plans which are used to tailor the computer training to foundation skills required for specific vocations.

The strength of learner achievement is seen by the 85 per cent of learners completing the training in accordance with their individual learning plans. For those who did not progress as planned, alternative or additional training recommendations were able to be provided to training purchasers from an early stage because SBS closely monitors progress after each training session.

Students choosing to undertake unit standard assessments have also achieved well at SBS. In 2012, 90 per cent of learners were successfully awarded unit standards. A number of these learners are in prison, and many have told tutors that this is the first time they have successfully achieved in formal education. SBS identifies that the strong completion rates reflect the strength of the needs assessment process which has helped to identify whether unit standard study meets students' needs and abilities.

Most learners progress to the point of independently working alone and with confidence on a computer. This gives them the motivation to continue to develop their skills, which is important to their ongoing vocational rehabilitation. Evidence of motivation is demonstrated by strong attendance rates of 90 per cent, which corroborates student evaluation data identifying strong student satisfaction with the training.

Potentially, SBS could detail the key learning steps proposed at the outset of the training in students' learning plans as currently the information is quite broad, only outlining the general core computing areas to be taught. With more detail, at the conclusion of the training it would be possible to report on what learners had achieved against what has initially been proposed (including reasons for non-achievement).

---

<sup>1</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.



## 1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Learners and stakeholders gain good value from the training provided by SBS. It was clear to the evaluation team that SBS understands the business of vocational rehabilitation and has a strong understanding of the ACC framework through the owners' past and current business roles in this sector.

SBS has used this knowledge to identify and respond to a gap in the way computer training has been provided to support vocational rehabilitation and to develop a training approach that is of relevance to its key clients. This is because the training is based on individual needs assessments and tailored to specific vocational goals. This provides confidence that the training is not generic but rather based on the attainment of relevant key skills. SBS is using these learnings to inform the computer training it is providing to other clients on a smaller scale.

Staff and students interviewed for this evaluation identified how many learners started the training too anxious to touch a computer and with little knowledge or confidence about how to use computer technology. Over the course of the training, learners have become digitally literate and have learnt to use the Internet and computer programmes and documents relevant to their vocational goals (e.g. Microsoft Word, Excel spreadsheets).

Learners also develop the confidence and motivation to use digital technology. This enables them to acquire knowledge necessary to become part of the digital community and to gain wider access to knowledge. This can be significant for a number of the learners who have never engaged with computers because of imprisonment or previous careers in manual labour.

The evaluation team sighted student appraisal forms and final progress reports which tutors complete at the conclusion of the training to identify the skills that learners have developed. The forms also detail the full suite of knowledge that learners have obtained as a result of the training.

However, evidence of the skills and knowledge acquired by learners is not discernible at a macro level because information is not easily aggregated from individual learner progression reports. SBS also does not directly ask students about the key skills and value they have obtained from the training and which potentially could provide more condensed information from which to analyse and understand the full value of the training.

### 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

SBS has a very good understanding of the needs of learners and key stakeholders. On taking over the business, the new owners surveyed the clients to identify their needs and to ask their views on the new approaches SBS was proposing. This identified enthusiasm for SBS's introduction of a new training approach. It also identified that there had previously been some uncertainty about the nature of the training being purchased.

To provide a more relevant service, SBS introduced individual learner needs assessments to identify learners' past skills, knowledge, and experience and the new vocational areas of interest to them. The specific components of the computer training are then determined against the core foundation skills and knowledge relevant to the vocational areas identified. For example, spreadsheet training may be provided if inventory work is an employment interest.

SBS is able to identify the relevant training needed based on a database of skills it has developed in collaboration with others. The database details various occupations and the relevant core computer skills and knowledge required for each.

A stakeholder interviewed for this evaluation confirmed that the alignment of the computer training to actual vocational skills was exactly what was needed and which has seen more people in his organisation using SBS. It provided a more realistic understanding of how computer training at a foundation level could provide relevant key skills targeted to learners' specific vocational goals, as opposed to a generic ten-week computer course. For one client, this change was significant and contributed to SBS being awarded a new training contract.

SBS ensures that it continues to be highly responsive to students and stakeholders through its proactive monitoring of learner progress. Progress reporting at the end of each training session leads to the early identification of issues or additional learning needs which may require a deviation from initial learning plans. SBS also maintains close contact with its clients to confirm that it is meeting their needs, and this seems an approach well suited to SBS's small core client base.

For learners, the one-to-one nature of the training is identified as a key enabler to learning success. Feedback provided to the evaluation team demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach to SBS's responsiveness to students' diverse (and sometimes complex) learning needs. Several learners reflected that they would not have achieved had they tried to learn computing in a group situation, given their

injuries or because of the attention they required as a result of their lack of computer knowledge.

Learners interviewed for this evaluation appreciated the course workbooks as a useful revision tool which helped them to practise and retain their learning. A few identified that some aspects of the workbooks required updating. This aligned with previous staff and student survey feedback which has been used by SBS to undertake workbook redevelopment. This work was informed by a specific survey SBS undertook with staff to gauge areas of priority.

SBS uses student evaluation responses as one tool to identify how well it is matching students' needs (as well as close monitoring of individual learning plans and attendance). However, a 20 per cent survey response rate limits the strength of this information. This is an area of current focus for the organisation. A question or questions more specific to matched needs may also provide SBS with an enhanced understanding of the strength of its training and activities.

#### 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The teaching provided at SBS is consistently engaging learners and meeting their needs. This is demonstrated by the 85 per cent of learners who progress in their learning in accordance with pre-defined individual learning schedules and plans. In addition, strong rates of attendance (around 90 per cent) give SBS confidence that the teaching is motivating and engaging for the students.

Management identifies that it has recruited tutors primarily who have demonstrated an ability to motivate and work with students at a foundation level and who have diverse learning needs.

All learners and graduates interviewed for this evaluation were very positive about their interactions with the tutors and their teaching. They highly appreciated the one-to-one learning and how teaching was tailored to their needs. Commonly, tutors were described as patient and very good at demonstrating and explaining the computer training in clear, simple terms. This information is corroborated by very high response rates of 97 per cent to survey questions asking students whether tutors instructions were clear, and whether they felt comfortable asking questions (although, as identified in section 1.3 of this report, that data is limited by a 20 per cent response rate).

Currently, internal moderation occurs coherently for tutors assessing unit standards. However, in conjunction with advisory group recommendations, SBS has identified that processes of moderation need to be developed as a learning tool for all staff. The new owners also undertook a tutor 'health check' survey when

they took over the business, which identified a need for greater connectivity across the tutors who work individually across the country.

Importantly, as a first key step in responding to these issues, SBS has planned a two-day staff conference for September 2012. It is intended that this will provide a starting point to share teaching techniques and experiences and to identify professional development opportunities and ongoing ways to keep staff connected.

SBS uses a range of information which provides it with a good understanding of teaching effectiveness. Tutors and management track learner progression at the conclusion of each training session. This information is entered into a database and is analysed by management to identify absences or a lack of progress. Where this occurs, the reasons are specifically identified.

Management also analyses this information comparatively across tutors, which identifies that non-completions are not a reflection of individual teaching. Non-attendance is also tracked across tutors with no negative patterns having emerged (rather, this identified that attendance dips occur during school and public holidays).

SBS is currently developing a web-based tool to comprehensively analyse the information it collects to better enable an ongoing review of staff performance.

## 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The guidance and support provided to learners is strong, and the information used by SBS to understand this is robust.

Study information provided to learners is comprehensive and timely. Learners are provided with an information sheet outlining what they can expect from SBS, as well as contact details for head office. The individual training schedule and learning plans provide learners with specific information about the training proposed. Learner workbooks are provided to learners on the first day of their training, and these guide their progress. SBS has recently introduced laptops for hire to enable learners to overcome computer access issues.

The one-to-one teaching assists tutors to be responsive to individual needs and to potential barriers to learning (for example, injuries that ACC clients may have sustained). This is assisted by the individual needs assessments introduced by the new owners to enhance individual responsiveness.

Tutors use the individual needs assessments to inform their engagement with learners and to sensitively ensure that specific physical and learning needs are taken into account and managed so that they do not pose a barrier to learning.

This includes offering to take learning to clients' homes where physical injuries prevent travel, and being alert and responsive to individuals' learning thresholds. Example are stopping the training when fatigue sets in and undertaking refresher exercises at the beginning of the next training session to ensure knowledge has been retained.

Currently, there are no opportunities within the organisation to capture the different techniques used by tutors that work well to support different needs (e.g. how tutors have responded to learners with extreme anxiety or pain). This is a gap as it could contribute to the sharing of knowledge across tutors to strengthen their practices. It could also provide SBS with more comprehensive information to demonstrate its effectiveness in this area.

SBS is very responsive to learners' questions and concerns. Tutors provide their contact details to learners if any questions arise between or post-training. Student survey feedback also identifies that 97 per cent of learners have felt comfortable asking questions. Tutors follow up every non-attendance to ensure that it is not due to dissatisfaction with the training and to seek to assist with any barriers that may be affecting attendance.

SBS identified that in the small number of instances where learners have had concerns about the training, these have been directed to the client organisations that have sent them to the training. Two isolated instances were identified by SBS which are recorded in its complaints folder. This demonstrated a consistent and effective approach to dealing with learners' concerns.

## 1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Key activities undertaken by the new business owners identify their strong support for educational achievement and the allocation of resources to support learning and teaching. Evidence of this includes their:

- Engagement, personally and by survey, with all tutors to understand any areas requiring addressing, and with external clients to identify how the training could better meet their needs
- Introduction of individual needs assessments and learning schedules and plans to better tailor the learning to respond to learners' specific needs
- Introduction of daily reporting processes to monitor learner attendance and learner and tutors' progression against individual learning plans. Resulting information is used to inform clients about the training

- Planned staff conference focused on staff professional development.

As discussed throughout this report, these changes are valued by tutors and key stakeholders and have already led to key improvements. This includes the tailoring of training to learners' specific vocational goals, and the revision of learner resources. Stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation also valued the responsiveness of the new owners, and their ongoing proactive engagement.

The new owners have reviewed and utilised key sources of information to obtain a good understanding of staff performance, including through the comparative monitoring of learner attendance and progression, and analysis of student evaluation information.

They have also identified some key areas to improve, including the student evaluation response rate, and technology being investigated to consolidate information to better understand individual staff performance. The matter of staff safety is a further area under review to ensure that SBS is doing all it can to support staff in their learning environments.

The new owners have established an advisory group to provide oversight of their performance and to bring strong education insights to the organisation's performance and quality assurance processes. It is clear from meeting minutes and discussions with the advisory members that SBS has provided a high level of responsiveness to their queries and insights, and have kept them well informed of key developments. The advisory members are also key contributors to ongoing discussions about the organisation's strategic direction and sustainability.

Discussions between the business owners and the advisory group have self-identified two key areas that require improvement to strengthen educational performance: the better use of moderation as a staff learning and development process, and greater engagement with students regarding educational outcomes. These key areas are currently under review by SBS.

SBS has effective self-assessment capability in place to review and understand educational performance, with the staff and stakeholder survey providing two excellent examples of the gathering of robust data which have led to worthwhile improvements. There are still some gaps to be addressed (e.g. around student feedback). However, this reflects the short length of time the new owners have been in business, rather than a lack of proposed action on SBS's behalf. In addition, the impact of these gaps has been well managed by SBS, which has used other information sources to ensure learners' needs are being met.

## Focus Areas

*This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.*

### 2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

### 2.2 Focus area: Computer Training

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

# Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those expressed or implied within the report.



# Appendix

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.*

*In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.*

*This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the EER process approved by the NZQA Board.*

*The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.*

*External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.*

*External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website ([www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)). Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication *Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review*, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>*

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E [qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz)

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)