External Evaluation and Review Report

Learner Me 2018 Limited

Date of report: 3 October 2023

About Learner Me 2018 Limited

Learner Me 2018 Limited (Learner Me) delivers information technology (IT) programmes. These are self-paced using an online learning platform, and are designed to enable students to progress to further study or employment in the local IT industry.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	127 Gill Street, New Plymouth
Eligible to enrol intl students:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 67 students – 14 Māori, one Pasifika, 17 learners with a disability
Number of staff:	Nine full-time staff plus two part-time iwi liaison staff
TEO profile:	Learner Me 2018 provider page on NZQA website
Last EER outcome:	No previous EER; Learner Me was first registered as a PTE in September 2020.
Scope of evaluation:	• New Zealand Certificate in Information Technology (Level 5) (delivered under sub-contract to Whitecliffe College)[1] • Hangarau Akoranga (non-NZQA approved programme, delivered in collaboration with regional iwi)[2]
MoE number:	6673
NZQA reference:	C53690
Dates of EER visit:	26 and 27 July 2023

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[1] Learner Me has a sub-contract with Whitecliffe College for delivery of level 4 and 5 certificates and diplomas in information technology.

[2] The programme is fully funded through He Poutama Rangatahi, a Ministry of Social Development (MSD) initiative, and targets rangatahi who are regarded as NEET (not in education, employment or t raining).

Summary of results

Learner Me is providing students with pathways towards IT careers in a supportive and inclusive learning environment, and is making a valued contribution to the local community. Learner Me is using information to understand student performance and identify opportunities for improvement. Systematic analysis would strengthen self-assessment evidence.

Confident in educational performance

- Certificate and diploma students are completing recognised qualifications, developing relevant technical and professional skills and gaining employment.

- Hangarau Akoranga students are achieving important life skills, enhanced wellbeing and cultural knowledge, as well as basic IT skills. On completion, they are well positioned to succeed in further study, which is a creditable achievement for this learner cohort.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Stakeholders attest to genuine and effective partnerships with Learner Me, in which iwi aspirations and other stakeholder objectives are being met.

- Learner Me and iwi liaison staff provide highly effective wrap-around support for students with a variety of personal and educational challenges.

- Learner Me is innovative, responsive and well organised, with a strong commitment to supporting growth and diversity in IT. The PTE is mindful of the need to further develop academic and self-assessment capability to support planned growth and expansion.

- Learner Me has established effective processes for managing compliance accountabilities.

Key evaluation question findings[3]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learner Me has achieved good rates of programme completion for the Certificate in Information Technology in 2022 and 2023 (refer Appendix 1). Māori, female and disabled students have achieved at lower rates in 2023. Achievement overall compares well with other Whitecliffe College cohorts. Moderation outcomes confirm that pass rates are credible.
	Despite high withdrawal rates[4], the picture of achievement for the Hangarau Akoranga programme is positive considering the particular challenges for these learners who have disengaged from education. Students who complete the programme gain knowledge and enhanced wellbeing which contribute to increased confidence, improved self-management and motivation. They also develop cultural awareness and practical IT skills. Some students achieve their driver's licence. Disaggregation of achievement data for priority group learners in this programme would support further self-assessment.
	Learner Me monitors student progress closely and understands how to support students to succeed. A process for measuring soft skills acquisition is not yet in place.
	Learner Me is reviewing results reporting and analysis as part of its annual self-assessment process. Achievement information is reported regularly to stakeholders.

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[3] The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

[4] Stakeholders confirm that Learner Me withdrawal rates (approximately 50 per cent) are consistent with the usual high rates of withdrawal in similar programmes. Reasons for withdrawal are understood by Learner Me.

Conclusion:	Overall student achievement is strong. A more systematic approach to thinking about achievement data to identify trends for cohorts and over time would strengthen self-assessment.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learner Me provides effective support to graduates for their transition to further study and employment. More than 80 per cent of Hangarau Akoranga graduates transition to further study and are succeeding in the certificate programmes (which exceeds the rates for students enrolling directly). Most certificate students progress to diploma programmes, and then employment. Although the data set is as yet small, these are excellent outcomes for the students. During the evaluation, Whitecliffe College confirmed satisfaction with Learner Me as a reliable delivery partner, providing opportunities for regional expansion and greater student diversity. Regional agencies, MSD and iwi stakeholders all value the opportunities for rangatahi to build cultural connections and to succeed in education and gain employment. Whānau confirm the positive impacts on their young people. The local community is benefiting from community projects. A valued outcome of the Hangarau Akoranga programme is the digital platform for sharing information and strengthening iwi connections. This programme was delivered recently to Taranaki iwi. The success of Learner Me's engagement with iwi is reflected in the recent expansion of the programme through an agreement with Ngāti Ruanui and delivery to the first cohort at a regional site. Stakeholder feedback is routinely gathered and captured. Learner Me is collecting and recording destination information for graduates. Further analysis of medium and

	long-term outcomes will provide useful insights into the value of Learner Me's educational provision, such as retention of young people for local employment.
Conclusion:	Learner Me is providing an excellent pathway for students from diverse backgrounds to further study and employment in IT. The programmes are relevant and useful, delivering high value to key stakeholders and the wider community.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learner Me programmes provide capability for regional needs and are well matched to the needs of students.

IT certificate and diploma programmes use Whitecliffe College's courseware and online learning platform along with additional industry and local resources, including guest speakers. Students are required to attend in-person at least two days each week.

Facilitators monitor student participation and progress (self-paced) through the structured courses, and communicate regularly through group forums. During daily workshops, which are recorded, facilitators answer questions and expand on topics and support group activities. Assessments are varied and authenticity is monitored. Whitecliffe College confirms, through weekly communications and moderation, that Learner Me is meeting academic standards.

A partnership approach underpins the development and delivery of the Hangarau Akoranga programme, which supports students to engage with the adult learning environment and, over time, become independent learners. Students are required to attend Learner Me four days a week for this programme. They are encouraged to participate in blocks of learning which are facilitated by support coordinators, learning facilitators and iwi liaison staff. The learning blocks include health and wellbeing and IT (via industry training modules). Cultural connections are |

	strengthened through marae visits, meeting with local kaumatua and community projects. There is no formal assessment, but regular participation and personal development is recognised and celebrated. Regular staff and stakeholder meetings support programme delivery in all aspects, and student feedback is sought regularly. However, the delivery and review of all programmes would be strengthened by further development of staff and contributing processes, such as internal moderation.
Conclusion:	Learner Me has an excellent understanding of industry and stakeholder requirements. A variety of facilitation and support strategies are used to meet learner needs. The PTE has not yet established a formal programme review cycle for all delivery.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learner Me provides highly effective guidance and support to students from diverse backgrounds and with different learning needs. Student attendance, progress and wellbeing is monitored, pastoral care records are maintained, and information is shared at weekly staff meetings. Learner Me fosters an inclusive environment and minimises barriers to learning, including the provision of additional assistance or technologies for disabled learners. Support is comprehensive and embedded in the six-month Hangarau Akoranga programme. At initial meetings, staff establish learner backgrounds, interests and needs as the basis for wrap-around support during the programme and for six months after. Learning goals are reviewed each month. Students enjoy small classes and a whānau atmosphere, where trust and confidence can grow. Opportunities are available for them to engage with activities when they are ready and to explore IT interests at their own pace. Talking with others who have achieved

	success provides motivation. This approach is highly effective in supporting student success and wellbeing.
	Students are encouraged to offer suggestions and comments regularly and to complete end-of-course surveys. Learner Me is responsive to feedback, but it is not currently collated or analysed in any systematic way.
	Management has completed self-assessment against the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 (the Code). Staff were not involved and have little awareness of the Code requirements, although the PTE is performing well in relation to key outcomes.
Conclusion:	Learner Me is providing highly effective wrap-around support and guidance for its students. Greater staff awareness of the Code is required and would support self-assessment in relation to this key evaluation question.

1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learner Me is part of a group of companies delivering a variety of technology-based solutions and has a vision to develop talent and support diversity in the IT industry. This vision, together with a strong commitment to the Taranaki region and authentic relationships with local iwi, underpins Learner Me's strategy and planning.

Capable governance and management have established sound processes for stakeholder engagement and programme delivery, which are delivering credible results and valued outcomes. The PTE is planning for steady growth to achieve long-term sustainability, including the development of micro-credentials and further regional delivery. Options for building academic capability are being explored as there are regional shortages of suitably qualified individuals for appointment. Learner Me is accessing |

	professional expertise to develop academic policies, systems and processes to assure quality.

Learner Me has a strong team culture and a shared commitment to achieving organisational goals. Learner Me is maintaining records and sharing information to manage educational performance, although a more systematic approach would strengthen self-assessment. Meetings are purposeful and regular. Completion of adult teaching qualifications is supported, although formal performance management and organisation-led professional development processes are not yet established. |
| Conclusion: | Learner Me is a well-connected and innovative PTE with strong management and data capability. A systematic approach to collation and review of information – and the development of academic capability for oversight and management of delivery, support and assessment – will support educational performance as the PTE grows. |

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learner Me has sound processes for managing its compliance accountabilities. These include a management checklist and delegations, and a specific calendar for meeting NZQA requirements.

At the validation visit conducted by NZQA in June 2022, the PTE met all requirements of the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules.

Appropriate processes for managing course delivery and compliance with NZQA Rules include:

- ongoing review and documentation of programme delivery and assessment (consistent with the |

	requirements of the sub-contract with Whitecliffe College) including moderation[5]
	• a system for timely and accurate credit reporting
	• timely submission of attestations, including attestation and self-review for the Code
	• documentation and review of the quality management system.
	Learner Me is meeting the reporting and other requirements of its various formal agreements including:
	• Sub-contract with Whitecliffe College
	• Memoranda of understanding with local iwi
	• Outcome agreement with the Ministry of Social Development
	• He Poutama Rangatahi Funding Agreement.
	Learner Me has suitable processes and documentation relating to health and safety and working with at-risk youth, including regular police vetting of all staff.
Conclusion:	No compliance concerns were identified during the evaluation. Learner Me is currently reviewing key policies and procedures. Processes and documentation of the self-review against the Code could be strengthened.

[5] Learner Me has not consistently internally moderated assessment. However, the PTE has met the external moderation requirements of Toi Mai for unit standard delivery as part of its Gateway programmes.

Focus areas

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

2.1 New Zealand Certificate in Information Technology (Level 5)

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Students are achieving a basic introduction to IT skills in this four-module, six-month programme, which provides a good basis for further study and specialisation.[6] The programme is largely self-paced, but students interviewed during the evaluation confirmed that they enjoyed the opportunity to be part of a learning community and to work together when it suited. Programme information sets out assessment deadlines and requirements, and students are receiving useful feedback on their progress. There is a minimum participation rate of 80 per cent which is reported to Whitecliffe weekly.
Conclusion:	Achievement and student satisfaction rates in this focus area programme are generally good. It is part of a useful pathway to further study and employment.

2.2 Hangarau Akoranga

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Stakeholders, including learners, confirm the success of this programme. For some students, the impact has been profound and life-changing. Success in subsequent study is

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[6]The certificate is the first part of the level 5 New Zealand Diplomas in Web Development, and Design and Information Technology Technical Support.

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	compelling evidence of value.[7] In addition, MSD confirms that completion of the programme is a key indicator that clients no longer need their support. Success is celebrated and students receive a testimonial, with special recognition for those who achieve 80 per cent attendance.
Conclusion:	The programme is delivered in collaboration with iwi and is highly effective in improving opportunities for students seeking to be part of the IT industry, as well as supporting iwi aspirations.

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[7] More than 80 per cent of students who complete the programme progress to further study. Of those, the majority are achieving excellent pass rates in Whitecliffe programmes.

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that Learner Me:

- establish a more systematic approach to data collection relating to priority areas to strengthen evidence-based self-review and improvement

- take steps to engage staff with the requirements of the Code, and to strengthen related review processes and documentation

- explore options for strengthening academic capability for oversight and management of delivery, support and assessment.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix 1

Table 1. Achievement data for New Zealand Certificate in Information Technology (Level 5) at Learner Me 2022-23

	Total	%	NZ European	Māori	Other	Disabled	Female
2022							
Enrolled (#)	7	n/a	6	1	2	2	1
Successful completion	6	86%	4	1	1	1	1
Unsuccessful completion	1	14%	-	-	1	1	-
2023							
Enrolled (#)	22	n/a	16	4	2	9	6
Successful completion	15	68%	12	2	-	5	2
Unsuccessful completion	7	32%	4	2	1	4	4

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud[8]*

- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*

- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

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[8] NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

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Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and

- maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs excluding universities, and

- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, micro-credentials and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022. 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). All rules cited above are available at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/.

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Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz