

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Real World Education

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 1 September 2015

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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:	Real World Education
Type:	Private Training Establishment (PTE)
Location:	22 Manuka Street, Hokowhitu, Palmerston North
Delivery sites:	Three permanent delivery sites: Fonterra Cooperative Group Ltd (Temuka); Citilab Holdings Ltd (Dunedin); Cawthron Institute (Nelson)
Courses currently delivered:	Laboratory Technical Assistant Programme (LTAP) (Level 4, 60 credits) leads to the New Zealand Certificate in Applied Science (Level 4, 60 credits); Laboratory Technician Programme (LTP) (Level 5, 120 credits) leads to the New Zealand Diploma in Applied Science (Level 5, 120 credits). These make use of the newly approved qualifications.
First registered:	27 August 2013
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 13 (eight students in the laboratory skills programme; and five students in the Laboratory Technician Programme).
Number of staff:	One full-time equivalent
Distinctive characteristics:	A combination of online distance learning and workplace-based learning at laboratories.
Recent significant changes:	Applications are currently with NZQA for the 'School Science Laboratory Technician Programme' (leading to the New Zealand

Certificate in Applied Science (Level 4)) and the 'School Laboratory Manager Programme' (leading to the New Zealand Diploma in Applied Science (Level 5)). If these programmes are approved, Real World Education will apply for Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding to deliver them. Real World Education does not currently receive any TEC funding.

Previous quality assurance history:

This is the first external evaluation and review (EER) for Real World Education.

Real World Education was exempted from NZQA moderation in 2015 due to good results in 2014.

Other:

The blended learning model is primarily delivered through video-rich, interactive lessons. Learner progress is intensively monitored and tutorial support is available.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected were the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy and the Laboratory Technical Assistant Programme (LTAP) (Level 4) (60 credits).

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.

A lead evaluator visited the Real World Education director at the Fonterra Temuka site for one day. The evaluator spoke with the Real World Education director, two Fonterra laboratory managers who have responsibility for coordinating learner training and the two learners on site.

The evaluator also reviewed a range of documentation, including the comprehensive self-assessment documentation, the organisation's website and online learning materials.

After the review, the evaluator spoke with the manager of the Cawthron Institute in Nelson, who has responsibility for coordinating learner training, and a Real World Education learner at Cawthron Institute.

Final Report

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Real World Education**.

- The current learners and partner laboratories are highly satisfied with all the programmes offered. There has been a 100 per cent completion rate. One learner has successfully completed the Laboratory Technical Assistant Programme, eight learners have successfully completed the Laboratory Skills Programme and four learners have successfully completed the Laboratory Technician Programme. A number of learners have also completed short taster courses.
- Learners complete a pre-enrolment online short course that includes an assessment, and receive information about where the qualifications lead, before they are accepted into the Laboratory Technical Assistant Programme. This pre-enrolment system increases the likelihood of a good match between the learner, the programme and industry requirements.
- Learners are provided with high quality online materials and timely ongoing one-to-one academic assistance from the experienced and knowledgeable director.
- Learners consistently reported that any academic inquiries were responded to promptly and appropriately and that they were encouraged to seek support. This positively enhanced the learner/tutor relationship.
- Learners are assessed both online and on-job, by the director and/or experienced workplace assessors. This provides a good balance between knowledge and practical skills, both important requirements for the workplace.
- Learners are provided with appropriate pastoral support to help them complete their training. This includes regular contact from the director when a learner is on a placement in a laboratory.
- The mix of 'on-the-job' and online learning meets both learner and stakeholder needs well. Learners consolidate their learning through hands-on practice in the laboratory and through working alongside experienced practitioners who guide and mentor them. Learners also inject enthusiasm and new ideas into the workplace.
- Industry requirements at partnering laboratories reinforce and extend learner performance and good practice. Learners are expected to meet industry standards, after appropriate training and practice, in the same way permanent employees are.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Real World Education**.

- Real World Education has developed online resources that demonstrate deep knowledge of the relevant academic information. They are informed by the director's extensive teaching and work experience both in New Zealand and overseas, and by ongoing consultation with external stakeholders and advisers.
- The learning resources are also informed by extensive research around distance/blended teaching and learning principles. This has led to the development of interactive learning modules that are learner-centred, varied and sequential.
- Learner and employer feedback is sought regularly and improvements to materials and resources are ongoing. This ensures that the materials remain relevant and are industry-informed.
- Real World Education has been actively involved in the targeted review of qualifications. This indicates strong commitment to the industry and that the director is well regarded in the industry.
- The director anticipates and responds to change. Real World Education continues to work with new stakeholders, such as secondary schools, to respond to identified needs. This has led to the development of two programmes, currently awaiting approval by NZQA.
- Real World Education is assisted by four advisers who are drawn from various relevant industry sectors and have a range of skills. These include skills in information technology, secondary school science programmes, laboratory specialist skills and a colleague from outside New Zealand who offers a different perspective. This input is highly valued by the director, who consults them individually, as required.
- The purpose and direction of Real World Education is clear. It has developed policies and procedures to cover all aspects of its business and to accommodate future growth in learner numbers. The director's approach is systematic, focused and responsive. Self-assessment is ongoing, thoughtful and robust. These factors allow NZQA to be highly confident in Real World Education's capability in self-assessment.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Learner achievement is currently 100 per cent. One learner has successfully completed the Laboratory Technical Assistant Programme, eight learners have successfully completed the Laboratory Skills Programme and four learners have successfully completed the Laboratory Technician Programme. A number of learners have also completed short taster courses. All learners consistently reported that the online programme was easy to log onto, easy to navigate, increased in difficulty as the modules progressed, and that assistance was only a phone call or email away.

The organisation has given considerable thought to the learner experience, including reviewing research on distance learning, consulting others experienced in this form of learning and trialling a few options. Patterns of learner use show that learners are making very good choices about when to deviate from the module pattern, indicating that the navigation part of the learner interface design is working effectively. It also indicates that learners are taking responsibility for their learning experience and achieving one of the acknowledged advantages of online learning, self-paced learning.

Learners have the opportunity to provide formal feedback as part of the online programme. They can also give feedback informally when they seek assistance or the director visits them on site. Learners can give feedback easily through the 'submit feedback' button in the learning interface. This function can also be used to ask a question or submit a suggestion. Learners are introduced to this feature in the first lesson and have to use it. The organisation responds to all learner questions appropriately and usually within four hours.

¹ 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 **Excellent**.

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

Learners acquire useful and meaningful skills and develop their cognitive abilities (including learning to learn and self-management). They also improve their well-being and enhance their abilities and attributes. Learners discussed how the learning and work experience had led to increased confidence that was reflected in both their work and daily lives. One learner commented that she had always wanted to be a laboratory assistant and that this qualification was a great mix of theory and practice, which suited her learning style. Another learner commented that it enhanced her university studies, as she was able to use her high-level study to understand and inform the reasons behind practical tasks and vice versa.

The partnering laboratory staff and managers have the opportunity to observe the learner, over several placements. If the learner possesses the requisite skills, knowledge, work ethic and personal attributes they may be offered permanent employment. Real World Education acts as an informal employment broker for the laboratories by linking learners and employers. This is an important role, as laboratories are always looking for good staff.

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 **Excellent**.

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

The director's experience and insight, in consultation with others in the field, informed all aspects of the programme. His teaching experiences, over many years, indicated that several years of study at tertiary organisations offering laboratory training did not necessarily produce work-ready graduates. This view was shared by many inside the industry. The decision to establish Real World Education was a result of these collective viewpoints.

The blended learning environment of the Laboratory Technical Assistant Programme engages learners, as it is planned and structured for the benefit and needs of learners. The learning activities and resources support learner achievement through the sequential online modules, timely access to tutorial support, and regular on site visits by the director. No learner has ever asked to use the lessons offline; therefore there has been no need to modify the online only programme.

Learners have opportunities to apply knowledge and skills at partnering laboratories, where permanent staff assist and observe them. Learners are exposed to a variety of contexts within the laboratories and, after appropriate training and practice, are expected to meet the 'industry standard' of the laboratory.

Feedback systems are well developed and useful to all stakeholders. The director regularly seeks informal and formal feedback from learners, partnering laboratories and advisers. For example, feedback from one partnering laboratory led to a specialised dilution scenario being added to the lessons and a learner request for support for use on iPhones is due to be implemented by the end of the year.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Teaching is highly effective and related to the workplace. Learners are provided with high quality online materials and ongoing one-to-one academic assistance from the director, who is knowledgeable and experienced.

The director is the online presenter. He provides continuity by linking different video types, styles and formats. There are also varied ways of presenting content to maintain learner interest.

Assessments are designed to allow the learner to demonstrate competence as a workplace would view it. For example, an assessment on communication focuses on the communication skills valued in a laboratory context. Theoretical knowledge is also contextualised. Learners are assessed on their ability to communicate knowledge to a co-worker, not their ability to write in an academic style.

While the director undertakes the majority of workplace assessments, there are some part-time assessors who also do this. The director accompanies these assessors on site to ensure the assessment is appropriate and at the correct level for competence (competence is the expectation that the skill could be performed to workplace standards, a year after assessment).

Understanding of theoretical concepts is assessed through practical demonstrations at work placements, a reliable indicator that the assessment is fit for purpose. Both on and off line assessment provides learners with useful feedback on their progress. As a result of good national external moderation results in 2014, Real World Education was exempted from NZQA moderation in 2015.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

Guidance and support of learners is comprehensive and timely. It is based on the director's observation that the 'typical learner' attracted to the programme requires some guidance.

This guidance begins with the pre-application contact, prior to enrolment. This is with the director, by email and phone, and includes a discussion of the blended learning format, where the qualification leads to and the commitment required to successfully complete the programme.

All applicants must complete a short online course prior to enrolling. About two thirds of those who complete the short course apply to the programme, indicating that the short online course aids learners' decision-making.

About 10 days into the programme, a learner will receive a toolkit containing a: pipette, pipette bulb, micropipette and digital balance. This is very useful, as most learners are 'hands-on' learners. The access to the equipment enables them to practice at home. It also keeps them interested and motivated and allows them to begin to develop a set of core skills prior to the placement.

The director rings the learner on the first night of the placement to discuss the first day and to anticipate any issues. Any issues are discussed and dealt with appropriately.

Pastoral care is also offered by the laboratory staff and management. This includes inducting learners around the laboratory rules and regulations, providing them with a buddy to work with, issuing any equipment required, and discussing the work ethic of the organisation. This guidance also includes direction around health and safety considerations, such as safety glasses, which must be worn at all times in the laboratory.

Effective guidance and support is provided both during and after completing the programme. The after-programme contact may be by email or when the director meets a learner face-to-face at a workplace.

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

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

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

Real World Education is highly responsive to learner needs and intends to grow learner numbers responsibly. It is realistic about the sector and the number of partnering laboratories that are available to accommodate growth in the Laboratory Technical Assistant Programme. It has good systems in place for when learner numbers grow.

The director is highly committed to learner achievement and providing learners with good theoretical and practical skills and knowledge to meet industry requirements. The industry is small and well connected, and the small number of learners makes maintaining contact with graduates easy. Thirteen learners have graduated, indicating that the programme is meeting the most important needs of all its stakeholders.

Real World Education has been actively involved in the targeted review of qualifications. The director believes that the recently developed New Zealand qualifications will serve the sector better, as changes to the Graduate Profile Outcomes have allowed Real World Education to make changes to the Laboratory Technician Programme. This means that learners can accept employment and continue upskilling through Real World Education. The study-while-working option and a clearer differentiation between the two qualifications (based on level) may increase interest in continuing onto the level 5 programme. The current programmes are similar to each other, with the level 5 option going further, but with no major difference in focus. Few people take up the current level 5 option.

The new qualifications open up other possibilities, for example, medical laboratory technology. However, Real World Education's self-assessment indicates that there is not a significant unmet need in this area.

It has, however, been working with the Science Technicians' Association of New Zealand (STANZ) and the New Zealand Association of Science Educators (NZASE) on an identified training need for secondary school science technicians. Real World Education has two applications currently with NZQA for the 'School Science Laboratory Technician Programme' (leading to the New Zealand Certificate in Applied Science, Level 4) and the 'School Laboratory Manager Programme' (leading to the New Zealand Diploma in Applied Science, Level 5).

These programmes would be similar to current programmes, with the level 4 being the first semester of the level 5. They would also use blended learning and be workplace-based (in school laboratories). However, unlike current full-time programmes, they would be part-time.

If these programmes are approved by NZQA, Real World Education will consider applying for TEC funding to deliver them (Real World Education does not currently receive any TEC funding).

Other areas of development include short courses and attendance at Career Fairs, to gain greater visibility for Real World Education, and offering workplace assessments against NZQA unit standards.

Real World Education has identified gaps through its robust self-assessment. These include:

- The need to collect ethnic data
- Clearer procedures between Real World Education and placement employers regarding drug testing
- Police reporting
- Succession planning, particularly for the director and the IT developer roles.

The director continues to upskill and was recently accepted into a doctorate level distance education programme at an American university. This indicates that he is committed to ensuring his skills and knowledge continue to grow and inform teaching and learning.

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 **Excellent**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Laboratory Technical Assistant Programme (LTAP)

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

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

Recommendations

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

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

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 External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

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).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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Final Report