



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Prison Services GTE

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 27 September 2011

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review	4
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results	6
Findings	8
Recommendations	14
Appendix	15

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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

Location:	Mayfair House, 44-52 The Terrace, Wellington
Type:	Government Training Establishment (GTE)
First registered:	1999
Number of trainees:	Domestic: 1,725
Number of staff:	90 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	National Certificate in Offender Management (Levels 3,4, and 5)
Sites:	All training is delivered on the job at all prisons across New Zealand.
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Prison Services GTE is an integral part of the Prison Services Learning and Development work area. The Prison Services is a division of the Department of Corrections. With the Initial Training Centre and the Learning and Development team, Prison Services GTE is responsible for training all prison staff who work within New Zealand's correctional facilities.</p> <p>New prison officers (candidates) begin their induction training at the Corrections Staff College at Rimutaka Prison and then begin their National Certificate in Offender Management (Level 3) as part of their workplace training. Candidates who enter into this training sign a training agreement with the ElectroTechnology Industry Training Organisation (ETITO) which is the standard-setting body for the qualification.</p>

Recent significant changes:	A review of the level 3 qualification was begun in 2010 and the new version is ready to be used. A significant change has been the development of integrated assessments. Integrated assessments for the level 3 and 5 qualifications have been completed. The level 5 qualification is the next to be reviewed.
Previous quality assurance history:	Prison Services GTE has a good track record in previous quality assurance. In 2010, assessment materials and learner samples for one standard managed by NZQA did not meet the requirements and needed to be resubmitted.
Other:	Corrections officers are ranked as Correction Officers (CO), Senior Corrections Officers (SCO), and Principal Corrections Officers (PCO). While holding the national qualifications is not yet a requirement for holding senior positions, increasingly it is specified as a prerequisite for application for promotion. Prison officers receive a pay increase upon successful completion of the qualifications.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The external evaluation and review examined the following focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

This focus was chosen to explore how Prison Services GTE works within the Prison Services division and aligned with the wider strategic goals of the Department of Corrections. The other focus areas chosen encompass the core work done by the GTE. These include the newly reviewed qualification:

- National Certificate in Offender Management (Level 3).

The third focus area is a central component of the work the GTE does supporting the on-job training:

- Assessment and moderation.

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/>

Prison Services GTE supplied the evaluation team with a self-assessment summary which evaluated the GTE against the six key evaluation questions and profiled the outcomes and actions taken or planned. The external evaluation and review team spent two days on site at the offices in Wellington with a trip to the Initial Training College at Rimutaka Prison. During the visit the evaluation team met with key staff, including the manager of Learning and Development, the acting manager of Prison Services GTE, the manager of the Initial Training College, workplace assessors, moderators, prison managers, candidates (trainees), and representatives from ETITO. While on site, the evaluation team viewed key documents, for example project plans and the evaluation of a Principal Corrections Officer development programme, a literacy and numeracy report, assessment of sampled prison sites, and candidate surveys.

Prison Services GTE has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Prison Services GTE**.

There is good value for the candidates who achieve the National Certificate in Offender Management in that they receive an increase in pay and improved opportunities for promotion. Furthermore, the evaluation team heard from prison managers who acknowledged that those who were trained take an active management approach resulting in better engagement with the prisoners and fewer incidents.

There has been a lot of activity from Prison Services GTE in the past few years to improve qualifications and assessments and to improve the training and support for candidates, assessors, and moderators. One of these initiatives involved seconding assessors from the prison officers' workforce and ensuring they receive relevant training and ongoing support. Another worthwhile innovation was moving to face-to-face external moderation with ETITO. While some of these initiatives are relatively new, initial feedback from prison managers, ETITO, graduates, and candidates indicates that these initiatives have resulted in improved achievement. The qualification's value has improved with greater integrity of training and assessment.

The slow rates of achievement in the past were extensively analysed and believed to be caused by poor assessment methods, inadequate guidance and support, and a poor perception of the value of the qualification. The targeted approach that Prison Services GTE has taken to address these concerns gives the evaluation team confidence in its educational performance and ability to improve achievement rates.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Prison Services GTE**.

There is good evidence that Prison Services GTE and the wider Learning and Development group review processes and outcomes on an ongoing basis. Throughout the recent qualification reviews, Prison Services GTE used surveys, interviews, and focus groups to seek to understand what was working well and was valued. These reviews have resulted in a number of changes that, although in their early stages, have been positively received by key stakeholders including prison managers and candidates.

The staged implementation of a new learning management system across the Department of Corrections has meant that Prison Services GTE has held back from creating a database that enables it to track achievement rates. The delay in the introduction of the software has been beyond the control of the GTE, but it limits its ability to measure gains in achievement. The analysis of achievement, prison by prison, is giving the organisation information on whether there are key differences between prisons and regions. However, the new learning management system will provide data integral to a comprehensive analysis of achievement.

TEO response

Prison Services GTE has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Achievement of the national qualifications by prison officers has been slow. An analysis of the reasons behind the lack of progress identified over-assessment of tasks and poor understanding of the qualification across the prison sites. Furthermore, poor assessment practice in the past had undermined the perceived value of the qualification. This analysis, in 2009, resulted in a wide review of the qualifications and the role of assessments and assessors in determining competency.

The new integrated assessment of tasks aligns with the work and generic skills required of prison officers, and the appointment and improved training of full-time assessors has improved rates of achievement. Prison Services GTE has moved from having over 200 assessors working across the prison sites, inconsistently, to just 17 full-time trained assessors who work together and across the different prison sites supported by moderators. This structure ensures the consistency of, and gives greater validity to, the standards being achieved. Feedback collected by the organisation indicates that the integrated assessments and dedicated assessors have made the qualification not only more attainable but more meaningful.

Achievement has been strengthened by a shift in approach from assessing a candidate's capability to perform a specific task, for example escorting a prisoner, to assessing the candidate's competency through collecting naturally occurring evidence that the candidate has performed the duty effectively a number of times in different contexts.

Another initiative to improve achievement has been the implementation of "advancement days" to target those Principal Corrections Officers and Senior Corrections Officers who have a history of slow progress, and working with them through individualised achievement plans. Initial reports indicate that these days are effective and will increase the achievement rate among this group.

The staged implementation of a learning management system across the Department of Corrections has meant Prison Services GTE has held back from creating a database that enables it to track achievement rates. The delay in the introduction of the software has been beyond the control of Prison Services GTE. When the new software is available, it will be possible to create a dedicated database which is essential to ensuring that the new training initiatives are tracked and monitored.

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

While the results of the new initiatives have not yet been quantified, the increasing number of credits reported to ETITO and the feedback collected by the organisation indicate that achievement is improving.

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 **Adequate**.

There is value for the candidates who achieve the qualification in that they receive an increase in pay and gain improved opportunities for promotion. Initial feedback indicates that the advancement days have resulted in staff feeling more motivated and open to change. However, there is an identified need for a communications plan to raise the profile of the qualifications and to ensure their value is more widely understood throughout the prison system.

Corrections Officers are responsible for the safe, secure, and humane containment of prisoners and for managing prisoners consistent with the Prison Services mission to reduce reoffending. The value of training in ensuring that this work is done effectively is acknowledged by the Prison Services and the Department of Corrections through the strategic goal of building capability. A recent example of building capability was the introduction of a three-day tactical communications package to be integrated into the national certificate. This training focuses on effective communication to de-escalate issues. Evidence collected indicates that the training has resulted in the reduction of incidents in prisons. The evaluation team heard from prison managers who acknowledged that those who were trained to take an active management approach had better engagement with the prisoners, resulting in fewer incidents on their shift.

The initial analysis of the qualification, which resulted in the major review, is evidence that the organisation reviews outcomes on an ongoing basis. Throughout the review process, Prison Services GTE used surveys, interviews, and focus groups to seek to understand what was valued. A systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the new initiatives is yet to occur.

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**.

The national certificates meet the needs of Prison Services through their continuous alignment to the Prison Services Operations Manual (PSOM) which guides and regulates the national standards to be achieved in all aspects of prison work. All the training refers back to this key document and the relevant legislation, which were significant in the review of the qualification. For example, changes to the PSOM occurred in response to the

recognised need to identify at-risk prisoners, which in turn required an adjustment to the unit standards in the qualification. The department-wide focus on building capabilities has been partially met through the work of Prison Services GTE, lifting the status of the qualifications and the capabilities of prison officers. The evaluation team heard a common theme of a shift in perception from prison officers as just “turn-key” people to a workforce skilled in their complex roles, actively managing prisoners in a safe, secure, and humane way that contributes towards reducing reoffending. Prison Services GTE has a key role to play in this shift.

Prison Services GTE is meeting the needs of the candidates better through the integration of assessments and the matching of standards with the competencies required for the job. Using new forms of evidence, including logbooks and professional conversations, integrated assessment can occur using naturally occurring evidence, resulting in more candidates completing successfully within a shorter timeframe. Advancement days were adopted when it was recognised that some candidates needed more support to complete their qualifications. This initiative, which has been trialled across a number of prisons, has proven very successful for those involved.

Prison Services GTE has been proactive in consulting widely with prison officers, managers, and other relevant personnel to ensure that the qualifications match the needs of Prisons Services. Results of that feedback include the extensive review and integration of assessments in the level 4 qualification and the wholesale reviews of levels 3 and 5 of the qualification. A number of methods are used to gather feedback, including surveys, focus groups, and interviews, and recording and acknowledging the importance of “water cooler” feedback. Prison Services GTE has recognised that to keep the content current it needs to review the different levels more regularly.

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 **Adequate**.

Prison Services GTE was cautious about asking this question of its work, given that its core business is the development of qualifications, and moderation and assessment. However, it became clear to the evaluation team that, increasingly, the GTE has had to involve itself in guiding candidates to successful completion.

The GTE has recognised the important and integral links which exist between the Initial Training Centre, Learning and Development, and Prison Services GTE and has acknowledged this in a recent move towards a shared quality management system and better communication processes.

The shift to full-time assessors represents a positive step towards ensuring that candidates are properly assessed and receive the correct guidance as to their next learning goals. The advancement days are another initiative that appear to be improving achievement among candidates who were slow to progress. Included in the level 5 National Certificate in

Offender Management qualification are adult teaching unit standards and these support the delivery of on-job training in the prisons.

Prison Services GTE has been increasing the validity of its assessments through improving assessment and moderation. ETITO representatives attested to progress in the moderation record of the GTE and noted the new processes of face-to-face and group moderation activities. Prison Services GTE believes that the opportunities these moderation sessions give for development of understanding are invaluable. A key shift in the role of assessor has resulted in better training and support being provided and greater coordination, ensuring consistency across the many prison sites. The work that has been done on assessment and moderation has lifted the perception and integrity of the qualification and the learning it represents.

The planned implementation of the new learning management system will enable Prison Services GTE to analyse candidates' achievements more effectively. For example, currently there is no baseline data against which to measure improvements. Better data would also enable the GTE to identify prison sites where extra development work may be needed.

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**.

There has been a marked improvement in the guidance and support given to candidates. This report has already mentioned the advancement days, a new initiative to support candidates to complete their qualifications. The anecdotal evidence collected by Prison Services GTE attests to these days being a positive initiative which will support achievement. The consultation and support of prison managers is vital to the success of the candidates and the GTE has assumed a liaison role to ensure that candidates are guided and supported towards gathering the necessary evidence to complete their assessments. It is positive to note that in a candidate survey, conducted after an advancement day, 96 per cent of learners indicated that they were adequately or better prepared for their assessments and 98 per cent understood what was required prior to the assessment.

The organisation has adopted a literacy and numeracy strategy which promotes the use of plain language in all official documents and will look at embedding literacy into training material. This initiative will address the significant literacy gaps identified in a recent report among a range of prison staff, including candidates.

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**.

Prison Services GTE is very clear about the vision and goals for its work area and these guide the organisation's work. The work directly supports the Department of Correction's people capability plan. The evaluation team heard from a number of key stakeholders that a focus on organisational development was improving performance and making staff feel more valued.

There has been a move to align the work of the Initial Training College and Learning and Development with that of Prison Services GTE, and this breaking down of the silos has resulted in work being more effective. For example, the work that the Learning and Development team conducted with training corrections officers in behaviour management has fed into the qualification review. The recent decision to have a combined quality management system and to adjust the timeframes on programme reviews will result in better coordination of the different work streams. The wider Learning and Development work area is very careful to delineate the work it does separately to human resources. However, it became clear that, at times, the information held by these separate work areas, if shared, could enhance their respective activities.

Prison Services GTE is a small team which works well together. There is an open, consultative approach taken to their work, and the roundtable moderation meetings are an example of this. The team uses multiple methods to engage with key stakeholders and is flexible and open to feedback. A proactive approach is taken to solving problems which has resulted in a marked improvement in the content and delivery of the qualifications over the past three years.

The delay in implementing an effective learner management system means the team lacks quantitative data to measure its effectiveness. At this time, when achievement appears to be improving, the lack of baseline data is a concern.

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: National Certificate in Offender Management (Level 3)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Assessment and moderation

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 implied in the body of the report.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

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 courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses 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 policies and criteria 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).

*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/>*

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