

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

St John

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 23 February 2015

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*Final Report*

# 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:	St John
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	2 Harrison Rd, Mt Wellington, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Wellington; Dunedin; Mt Wellington, Auckland; Palmerston North; Christchurch; Hamilton
First registered:	1 February 2000
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basic Life Support</li><li>• First Aid (Level 1)</li><li>• First Aid (Level 2)</li><li>• First Aid Refresher</li><li>• Child First aid</li><li>• Pre-Hospital Emergency Care</li><li>• Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Refresher</li><li>• Clinical Education (Level 5)</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 66,971 (on short courses) International: nil
Number of staff:	Figures not provided
Scope of active accreditation:	Follow the link below: <a href="http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-">http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-</a>

[accreditations.do?providerId=732137001](http://accreditations.do?providerId=732137001)

**Distinctive characteristics:** St John is a large organisation, perhaps best known in New Zealand for running a public ambulance system throughout most of the country. A smaller part of its operation is providing First Aid training courses to the public, and corporate training for specialist safety-oriented corporations. St John also provides in-house training to its own operational staff.

**Recent significant changes:** There have been a number of changes in the training arm of the St John organisation in recent years, including a change of base from Wellington to Auckland. There has also been a change of management from a regional basis to a more centralised operation, delivered throughout New Zealand but largely administered from Auckland. The number of regional training centres has been cropped to three. Temporary classrooms are leased in other centres as they are required.

**Previous quality assurance history:** The previous evaluation and external review (EER) by NZQA was held in November 2010. On that occasion, NZQA was Confident in the educational performance and Confident in the capability in self-assessment of St John.

NZQA Tertiary Assessment and Moderation (TAM) results have been steadily improving since 2010, with one moderation issue in 2013.

The industry training organisation, The Skills Organisation, also moderated assessment material from St John in 2013, and The Skills Organisation report shows that St John meets the national standard.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The agreed scope of the EER of St John included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management and strategy

The other focus areas were:

- First Aid (Levels 1 and 2)

These courses make up by far the largest proportion of training activity at St John, and are facilitated to the general public throughout New Zealand.

- Clinical Education (Level 5)

This programme is taught in-house to carefully selected trainees who go on to become ambulance officers. The programme is quite different in nature to the first aid focus area above. Together, these courses and programmes form a good representation of the training activity commonly carried out by St John.

## 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 EER took place with a team of two evaluators and a subject matter specialist, who visited the St John northern regional training office in Mount Wellington, Auckland, and the training centre in Palmerston North over three days. Before the EER visit, St John supplied the lead evaluator with self-assessment materials and descriptive information about the organisation, including developments since the previous EER. This assisted the lead evaluator in developing the scope of this EER.

During the on-site visits, the evaluation team interviewed the head of training of St John and members of the national and regional training management teams.

The team also interviewed programme managers, tutors, students and graduates at the northern and Palmerston North regional centres. Other graduates, school representatives and stakeholders were contacted by telephone. A range of documents was examined to confirm and validate information.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **St John**.

St John shows its commitment to a high level of educational performance by:

- Maintaining a high level of trainee achievement with an approximately 95 per cent pass rate in the First Aid training courses. The Clinical Education training programme has an average pass rate of 86 per cent, which is also very high given the nature of the training.
- Anecdotal evidence showing that Māori and Pasifika achievement rates are comparable to those of the overall student body. This was verified by interviewing various groups.
- The professional attitude of the training staff. They were found to be very knowledgeable, competent and passionate tutors. They are excellent representatives of the patient-focused culture of St John which is reflected throughout the training courses and programmes.
- Ensuring that the tutors are qualified in the discipline of first aid and appropriately trained in teaching skills to effectively facilitate the courses.
- Fostering strong training partnerships with key businesses and institutions engaged in first aid and safety training.
- Maintaining and enhancing strong pathways of training within the organisation to assist in the progression of personnel to reach their potential within the organisation.
- Encouraging reflective practice within St John and using this as a key component in the Clinical Education programme.
- Improving consistency and centralisation of the First Aid courses to ensure better standardisation of course content and delivery.

The high levels of student achievement and the progress made because of centralisation and consistency over the last few years indicate that St John is achieving very well. It is meeting most of the needs of its stakeholders and learners. The organisation's processes clearly contribute to valuable learning, and the evaluation team could find no significant gaps or weaknesses.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **St John**.

St John shows its high level of capability in self-assessment by:

- Having good, overarching strategic business and financial plans.
- Maintaining a system of comprehensive data collection and analysis.
- Implementing systematic collection of student feedback on the effectiveness of the training, the delivery and the learning environment.
- Responding in a timely manner to analysis of data to develop and improve resources and delivery.
- Keeping abreast of changes in the emergency response and first aid sector and communicating these changes regularly to training staff through electronic means.
- Engaging independent research to gain an impression on how training could be improved. This research has led to some of the changes in the training organisation.
- Having regular formalised evaluation of individual teaching practices to inform improvements.

These self-assessment strategies lead to a good understanding of the level of learners' educational achievement. St John mostly engages in effective, ongoing self-assessment that covers all of its courses and programmes. The quality of this self-assessment information is good and is used to understand and improve the learning outcomes. A few areas that could be improved are:

- Māori and Pasifika achievement rates could be collected more explicitly to get a better overview of how well these groups perform.
- A more focused approach to student achievement rates would be appropriate, as currently the information is obtainable from the data but is not a paramount priority.
- Further collection of focused employer feedback on the value of the training will assist St John to understand the effectiveness of the courses and programmes.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 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 **Good**.

The courses and programmes at St John are performing very well in terms of student achievement. This is shown by the approximately 95 per cent achievement rate in the First Aid training courses and the average 86 per cent achievement rate in the Clinical Education programme.

St John continues to keep its training courses current, relevant and useful to trainees and employers. It continues to offer the earlier set of first aid unit standards (6400, 6401, and 6402) in the First Aid training courses; this is preferred because of the practical nature of these units. St John will also deliver courses that involve the more recently developed unit standards (26551 and 26552) if required.

The First Aid training involves short one or two-day courses and many of the trainees are sponsored by their employers to attend. The certification gained from attending and successfully completing these courses is a health and safety requirement at many New Zealand workplaces. These are motivating factors that support the high achievement rates in these courses.

The Clinical Education programme also has a very good achievement rate. There are some withdrawals (about 10 per cent), but this is accepted as a positive aspect because the graduates of the programme attain the minimum qualification required to serve as an ambulance officer for St John. St John agrees that not everyone is suitable for this kind of work, and participation in this programme is part of the suitability screening process. St John is well aware of the reasons for student withdrawal. St John uses this programme in a very progressive way, as all students come from within the St John organisation and are recommended by their managers as being suitable for positions on the programme. Assessment is by development of a student portfolio based on reflective learning and real-life scenarios, and an evaluative interview. St John itself covers the costs of training on the Clinical Education programme as an investment in its own future staff resources. Such is the value of this training programme that it is also used by the other ambulance service provider in New Zealand.

The evaluators learned that while achievement rates are believed to be at a similar level to other groups, Māori and Pasifika achievement figures are not specifically

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<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.

maintained at this stage. Trainees' declaration of ethnic status is not compulsory and, in many cases, employers provide trainees' details to St John on enrolment, so this makes these statistics difficult to keep accurately. While there is some study on ethnic representation, St John is aware of the deficiency and intends to remedy it in future.

St John is constantly looking for ways to improve courses and delivery to maintain its high achievement rates in a competitive training field. To this end, the Clinical Education programme keeps a log of the reasons for individual withdrawals from the programme. The reasons for withdrawal are mostly personal or medical in nature.

## 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 **Good**.

The First Aid training courses provide training that is of great value to the community. The inherent social values of trainees learning first aid skills such as facilitated airway breathing, CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and emergency procedures are obvious. St John understands that emergency response is a changing field and so trainees are required to take part in a refresher course once every two years to consolidate the learning and gain updated first aid techniques. The evaluators were shown from student feedback that trainees gain confidence in these skills.

St John facilitates practically based courses which have much value for trainees and industry. Most trainees are sponsored by their employers as the first aid certification requirement is a feature of many occupations. The trainees acquire useful life-saving skills as first responders. They gain confidence in practising these skills. St John also designs and delivers bespoke corporate training courses in first aid and safety for other organisations. It maintains strong and ongoing relations with large industrial corporates and the New Zealand Fire Service, and delivers training for them. The New Zealand Defence Force has a good working relationship with St John to get 'on-road' paramedic experience.

Further value is shown in the Clinical Education programme which is cross-credited to Auckland University of Technology and Whitireia Community Polytechnic, to the Bachelor of Health Sciences programmes in those institutions. This provides a distinct career pathway through these institutions. St John has a long-standing partnership arrangement with a corporate, which assists the continuing facilitation of training as well as other St John activities. St John places great value on its close relations with its corporate partners. The evaluators learned that the national

head of training spends up to 40 per cent of his time working with the corporate partners.

St John has a continuous career pathway internally, from cadet entry level through advancement through the organisation to management level; people sometimes leave for high-level medical careers outside the organisation.

There is considerable value in the Clinical Education programme for both St John and the trainees concerned. For the training of its own ambulance officers, St John provides this programme to selected in-house trainees. It is financed by St John at no cost to the student. Occasionally, accommodation and travel are paid for students to attend training. The graduates of this programme reach the minimum standard required for ambulance officers.

Resources are supplied to first aid trainees for their ongoing use. These resources include the first aid manual, an instructional DVD, and an inflatable manikin for practising resuscitation, which are available for First Aid course trainees. St John shows it will cater for those with disabilities where it is able. The evaluators learned that on occasion St John will train deaf or blind people in the First Aid training courses.

In 2011 St John commissioned independent research to gauge how well it provides training. The information gained from this exercise has helped inform some of the organisational changes and improvements that have occurred in recent years. There is some comparison work done with the training packages offered by other providers. St John uses commonly understood marketing-oriented methods to benchmark its performance with that of other providers and to remain competitive without compromising quality. A further indication of value is the 'good news stories' collected from successful graduates and used on the organisation's website as endorsements for the courses. The provider gathers valuable trainee feedback from an online contractor. The response rate for the survey is approximately 30 per cent, and results show that approximately 80 per cent of the trainees are generally satisfied with the First Aid training courses.

### 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 evaluators saw evidence that confirmed that the training offered by St John very much meets the needs of the learners and stakeholders. St John has an acute awareness of patient-centred practice, and this is evident in the evaluators' discussions with staff members and managers. There is an internal system of filtering and selection of trainees for the Clinical Education programme which itself

acts as a filter, and those who do not enjoy or measure up to the programme tend to leave.

Students are allowed to withdraw from the Clinical Education programme if they feel they are not suited to ambulance work. This is not seen as a negative by St John, as it finances the training and unsuitable people are probably a liability if they continue.

St John has an inherent understanding of trainee needs. This is shown in the First Aid training courses where employers' needs are met through trainees getting the certification required for the workplace. There is a good understanding of the learners' abilities for the Clinical Education programme as they are already an integrated part of the organisation and, in most cases, continue to be afterwards. Youth cadets often become inspired to take on any one of a variety of medical and first aid career opportunities – such as lifeguard, nurse, doctor, etc.

Feedback from trainees and anecdotal feedback from clients indicates that the training generally meets their needs. The provider uses cultural awareness modules in the Clinical Education programme so that the ethnic considerations of the patients can be addressed. St John provides a great number of first aid accessories and supplies that supplement its training.

St John has extensive resourcing available designed to assist the quality of the training. The 'Hub' is an electronic data and communication intranet designed to keep staff up to date with the latest sector developments. St John staff members are encouraged to use this facility and are actively tested to see whether they have been keeping abreast of sector changes. Email prompts are sent to ensure staff members are prompted to check the Hub. The evaluators learned that this enables staff members to have good awareness of sector developments and updates.

#### 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 and training facilitation are very well conducted and maintained at St John. Teaching styles are varied to make the learning interesting and to suit the differing learning styles. Tutors on the Clinical Education programme have sector experience and have gained unit standard 4098 *Use standards to assess candidate performance*. The National Certificate in Adult Education and Training is provided for the tutors (or exempted if the tutor already has teacher training). Tutors regularly confer with each other to exchange ideas on teaching and sector knowledge. First Aid course class sizes are kept to a manageable size, with a maximum of 20 trainees and Clinical Education classes with a maximum of 12 trainees per tutor. Assessments are sufficiently spaced in the Clinical Education programme to manage the delivery time at a comfortable level. The First Aid

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training courses are approximately half practice and half theory to suit the learning styles of the students and the hands-on nature of the exercises. Much of the practical assessment is done by observation. The Clinical Education programme has a large component of practical experience which is included in the 'on-road' practice in an ambulance. Teaching practice is observed formally once every six months. Extensive feedback is given to the tutor for reflection and continuous improvement. The tutors are involved in a performance appraisal system and operate under the guidance of key performance indicators, a development plan, and consistency criteria.

Tutors have regular evaluation from the trainees and the results are collated and analysed, and timely feedback is given to the tutors. Commissioned research companies collect and analyse the survey material. Some of the student feedback issues that St John has responded to in recent times are that the Clinical Education programmes could be more structured and that classes could be smaller, and this has resulted in some improvements.

There are three-monthly tutor development days, during which any common inconsistencies in teaching methodology are resolved with further training. The trainees in the Clinical Education programme engage in reflective practice and self-assessment practices. Assessments in this programme are held with two assessors present, thereby moderating the outcomes to ensure validity. In recent years, St John has improved its NZQA moderation results to an acceptable level.

The Hub meets trainers' needs as a tool for conveying the latest sector developments, updating clinical practice, and encouraging consistent and contemporary practice.

## 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**.

St John employs effective strategies for supporting learners. It has a good strategy for including different learning activities in course delivery to promote interest and to cater for different learning styles. The resources that supplement this are of a very good quality, as observed by the evaluators; for example a 'virtual' ambulance for training in the Clinical Education programme in Auckland. This facility is used for simulated exercises on the training premises. Further resources have been supplied to the trainees in the First Aid training courses, which are designed to keep the trainees practising their skills after the training ends.

There is valuable support and awareness in the First Aid training courses for those who have literacy or English language issues. From time to time special provisions are made to train disabled learners who may be deaf or blind. Trainees who have difficulty with English language can arrange for their own interpreters.

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There is a great deal of interactivity between the trainees and the trainers. An innovative device for supporting learning is the comprehensive portfolio used in the Clinical Education programme. This is checked often by the trainer and feedback is given frequently to inform the trainee of their progress. Such feedback confirms that the trainers are flexible and approachable, and students feel able to raise concerns. The trainees gain a lot of direct support in the on-road segments from mentors and the trainers. There are numerous occasions where face-to-face sessions are given to discuss issues and answer questions, especially after practical sessions. All tasks are demonstrated and simulated before the on-road practice is undertaken.

A comprehensive prospectus is given to each student before the programme starts. This contains all the academic rules and regulations and provides information about the support available. Enabling Clinical Education students to withdraw if they feel they are not suitable is a positive aspect of the programme, as it ensures that ambulances are staffed with committed and capable people.

St John's responsiveness to student issues is very good. The evaluators were presented with evidence that complaints from trainees are investigated and acted on where necessary. The relatively few complaints from First Aid training course trainees are mostly about administrative problems or strict enforcement of attendance policy. In the instances sighted, St John acknowledges its responsibility when at fault and attempts to rectify any problems, or offers alternative arrangements when the learner is at fault (in relation to attendance and lateness). St John engages in effective analysis and corrective action from its self-reflective practices. It uses evaluative surveys to good effect to improve the courses, or the delivery of them.

## 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**.

There is strong governance and management of the training arm of St John which has separate units for delivery of the First Aid training courses and the Clinical Education programme as the market and method of training for each is quite different. Both training units are currently being restructured to ensure greater efficiency.

The head of training (of the First Aid courses) is actively involved in the NZQA Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ) for the first aid sector, and other training management staff members are on the project advisory group for First Aid Units Standard Review Project Advisory Group (FA PAG). Senior managers are active in national emergency response organisations like the Association of Emergency

Care Training Providers. These managers operate from their home towns, maintain constant communication with each other, and travel often to the training centres.

Changes in the structure of the organisation in the past few years have resulted in a shift from a silo/regional approach to more of a national and consistent approach. There has been a shift in head office from Wellington to Auckland, where most of the training activity now takes place. The evaluators learned that there is a strong sense of family and community within the organisation, and a strong patient-centred approach to the services provided. The process of restructuring is being informed by consultation.

The evaluators learned that there is some turnover of tutors and this is mainly due to internal poaching of tutors for other parts of the organisation. Being a tutor is seen as an intermediary step in the ladder of advancement. St John's leadership supports and implements investment in resources and people.

The board of directors of St John is involved in the governance of the entire organisation, of which the training arm is one small part. Management has a direct reporting link to the board of directors. The head of training reports to a designated director on the board. There has recently been a new appointment as clinical director. A recent initiative is the implementation of St John's certification of its own tutors. This has been introduced as a way to regulate the quality of the delivery of the First Aid courses.

St John has a business plan and a strategic plan which state the direction of the organisation and training targets. Marketing plays a big part in the planning of the First Aid training courses. There is good knowledge of the market for first aid training and of St John's market share in this very competitive market. Self-assessment includes the commissioning of independent research to understand the organisation's performance. If any training problems are uncovered, the relevant staff members are informed by email supplemented by using the Hub and the implementation of continuing clinical education.

While there is very good data collection, there are a few deficiencies in self-assessment strategies which, when rectified, will give a more complete understanding of educational performance. Some focused data-gathering and analysis in the areas of Māori and Pasifika achievement, more focus in the analysis of student achievement overall, and some collection and analysis of employer feedback will give a more complete picture of educational performance and how it may be improved.

## 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: First Aid (Levels 1 and 2)

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

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

### 2.3 Focus area: Clinical Education (Level 5)

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

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

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that St John:

- Collect specific data on Māori and Pasifika achievement to get a better overview of how well these groups perform.
- Adopt a more focused approach to the analysis of student achievement rates to inform course and programme improvements and development.
- Collect employer feedback on the value of the training and analyse this to understand the effectiveness of the courses and programmes.

# 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](http://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/>.*

NZQA

Ph. 0800 697 296

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

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