

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Future Skills Academy

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 22 August 2012

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

Name of TEO:	Future Skills Academy
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	5A Earl Richardson Ave, Manukau
First registered:	1 December 2000
Courses currently delivered	A number of courses are offered for Youth Guarantee and Foundation Focused Training Opportunities (FFTO) students including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to Carpentry• Introduction to Audio Communication• Bridging to the Armed Forces• Business Administration• Computing and Information Technology.• Intensive Literacy and Numeracy• Training for Work
Code of Practice signatory	Yes – for students aged 18 and upwards
Number of students:	Domestic: 150 equivalent full-time students <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 70 per cent are aged 16 or 17 years• 46 per cent are Māori• 45 per cent are Pasifika (some students report more than one ethnicity)

	No international students at present
Number of staff:	17 full-time equivalents
Distinctive characteristics:	This organisation works largely with at-risk youth and those referred by Work and Income New Zealand and Youth Transitions services.
Recent significant changes:	In 2011, Future Skills began working with the Ministry of Social Development to deliver Training for Work schemes. The initial contract has been extended for 2012. The organisation has recently signed an agreement with Otago Polytechnic to jointly deliver English language and a degree programme in central Auckland.
Previous quality assurance history:	At the previous NZQA quality assurance visit, an audit in 2008, Future Skills substantially met the requirements of the standard then in place. The requirement not met related to the timely submission of attestations. External moderation records with NZQA show improvements, although there are ongoing issues with computing unit standards (level 5). An improvement plan submitted by Future Skills has been accepted by NZQA.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the external evaluation and review (EER) consisted of the mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

In addition, the following focus areas were selected:

- Bridging to the Armed Forces
- Introduction to Audio Communication
- Training for Work.

The focus areas above were selected to provide a reasonable representation of Future Skills' activities. The Bridging to the Armed Forces programme has been offered for a number of years, while Introduction to Audio Communication is a new programme. The Training for Work programme is distinct in that it is a 13-week

programme, funded by the Ministry of Social Development and is strongly focused on employment.

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.

Prior to the EER visit, the EER team was supplied with a self-assessment document which summarised the organisation's quality improvements over a number of years.

The evaluation team of two visited the Manukau campus over two days. The team met with the managing director, operations manager, business development and quality manager, and other members of the management team.

Interviews were also conducted with tutors and students, student support staff, and a number of external stakeholders. A large number of documents were also reviewed as part of the enquiry, including the Tertiary Education Commission Investment Plan, the business plan, organisational review documents, course and tutor evaluations, student files, and feedback from, and minutes of, staff and student representative meetings.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Future Skills Academy**.

Students at Future Skills Academy are achieving well. There is a strong focus throughout the organisation on building learners' literacy and numeracy and work-readiness skills. Data viewed during the evaluation and interviews with tutors and students confirmed that these skills were being attained. An indicator of this is achievement of positive labour market outcomes (LMOs) for Youth Training-funded students in 2011. These rates ranged above the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) contractual target of 60 per cent, to between 66.7 per cent and 100 per cent. For FFTO learners, the LMOs averaged 70.7 per cent. The organisation is using the TEC literacy and numeracy assessment tool and the results demonstrate that learners are making significant progress. As Future Skills is working with learners who did not succeed in the compulsory education sector and who are at risk of long-term unemployment, these achievements are very strong.

The good results are due to a strong focus on attendance and engagement of all learners who enrol with Future Skills. The organisation has a policy of developing staff to ensure they consciously use strategies to engage with students. For example, across the focus areas, youth learners told the evaluation team that their tutors made their skills development work in literacy and numeracy interesting and fun.

All cultures are valued and celebrated with a number of activities and functions, including concerts, art competitions, and field trips, as part of a conscious strategy to make all students feel welcome and to give them a sense of belonging. The principles of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga underpin the work of the student support staff.

The organisation has a flat structure and all staff are involved in planning and development. The organisation's response to shifts in policy and funding decisions demonstrates its ability to be flexible and to manage change effectively.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Future Skills Academy**.

The organisation has highly effective tools to monitor achievement across the programmes delivered. Dashboard-style weekly reports ensure that teaching staff are regularly updated on how their students are progressing. The organisation is proactive in giving and seeking feedback from industry, Work and Income New Zealand, Youth Transitions Services, the TEC, and local industry and employers. Other key stakeholders, including staff and students, are given multiple opportunities to provide feedback.

Information is regularly brought together and analysed to inform developments and improvements, which are carefully monitored and refined to ensure they deliver to match stakeholder needs. Having good data collection processes and systems in place to analyse this data has enabled this organisation to undertake comprehensive and ongoing reviews of all of its main programmes, thereby allowing it to respond effectively to change. This ability to act responsively is demonstrated in the decision to discontinue some programmes and to begin others, including the audio communication and Training for Work programmes, in response to the needs of stakeholders.

While the organisation has processes in place to discuss with students the work-ready skills being developed, these processes do not capture the distance travelled or learner gain. This makes it hard to reflect back to learners, and report and analyse across the different teaching teams and programmes. Contact with graduates is occurring regularly, although this is informal, which also makes systematic analysis difficult.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Student achievement is carefully monitored through individual learning plans and monthly meetings with each student to monitor progress and set goals. These goals can be both academic and personal. For some students, working as part of a team and developing time management skills may be a necessary precursor to credit achievement. Work-readiness skills are developed with students being given authentic opportunities to practice. For example, the audio communication students were actively involved in the annual Polyfest cultural event and were required to set up and pack down the public address system and engage with the public. Progress towards the attainment of these skills and setting new goals is reviewed by students and tutors on a monthly basis. Literacy and numeracy progress is also being tracked for all learners and many of them are making significant gains.

Tutors, students, and external stakeholders spoken to by the evaluation team were confident that important work-ready skills are being achieved above and beyond credit achievements. This is supported by the high positive labour market outcomes being achieved. For the Bridging to the Armed Forces programme, there was a 100 per cent positive result in placing graduates into either work or further study. However, despite a strong focus on 'soft' skills, a mechanism to measure and analyse these is lacking.

The rate of credit attainment by youth has improved over the years, from 13 in 2009 to 23.4 in 2011. The focus has now shifted to supporting students to work towards qualifications, with the organisation currently in a transition phase with the shift from Youth Training funding to Youth Guarantee.

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 **Good**.

Future Skills is focused on delivering quality outcomes for its key stakeholders. The TEC is a primary funder and Future Skills has consistently met and exceeded the 60 per cent LMO target set by the TEC for Youth Training and FFTO learners. For example, in 2011 Future Skills reported 83 per cent positive LMOs for Youth Training and 71 per cent for FFTO students. External stakeholders spoken to by the evaluation team were confident that valued outcomes were being gained. One said, 'these kids don't learn well at school and they are getting the skills they need at Future Skills'. They went on to note that the students arrived for work 'polite, motivated, well presented and informed'. This was the Bridging to the Armed Forces programme that achieved 100 per cent positive LMO for its youth in 2011.

In 2011 Future Skills developed a new Training for Work programme to meet the requirements set by the Ministry of Social Development. The organisation attained an 84 per cent successful completion rate and a 64 per cent success rate in placing clients into work. The ministry has expanded and extended the contract it has with Future Skills, an indication it is pleased with these results. Current participants of the Training for Work programme were confident they had gained valuable skills that will enable them to secure employment.

The organisation has good informal relationships with its graduates and a number return to share their experiences with current students. How students get on in further education and employment is partially understood through these informal links. With a focus on building the skills necessary to gain employment, including literacy and numeracy, indications are that Future Skills is transforming lives. A systematic process of engaging with graduates would be likely to confirm this.

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**.

Future Skills works with youth who are at risk of not being in education, employment, or training (NEET). These learners have not engaged well with the compulsory education sector and have low to no credits. As well as youth, the organisation works with adults who are low-skilled or unemployed, often with low literacy and numeracy. Matching the needs of these learners is complex and has included a deliberate strategy of supporting the professional development of tutors, embedding literacy and numeracy, ensuring programmes are relevant, and connecting the learners and making them feel valued and safe. Feedback

collected by the organisation showed that students were highly satisfied with their programmes, and this was confirmed by interviews conducted by the evaluation team.

The Bridging to the Armed Forces programme includes regular contact with an armed services recruitment officer. The environment mirrors some of the discipline of service and fitness training, and the content is directly related to what recruits need to know to make informed choices about their pathways in the armed services. A recent highlight was a trip to Waiouru to witness a recent graduate passing out parade.

Strategies to engage the audio communication students include a recording studio, access to computers and software, a range of industry visits and visitors, and active participation in industry events. Students noted that these strategies made the learning interesting and real. For the Training for Work participants, signing in and out every day and doing mock interviews prepare them for employment.

A large percentage of Future Skills students are Māori and Pasifika. The evaluators heard from a range of tutors and students about the principles of whanaungatanga and manaaki operating, and the value of the student support staff making students feel welcome and safe. Whole-of-academy events, which are run throughout the year, are part of what brings all the students together. They provide multiple opportunities for students to showcase their many cultures and talents and help create a sense of connectedness.

The organisation has strong communication links with key stakeholders, internal and external, and the evaluation team saw excellent examples of feedback being used to develop and improve programme delivery. This included moving to integrate unit standards and adjusting the course content to make the learning more connected to industry.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Tutors require a particular set of competencies to work with students at Future Skills, including a strong belief in and commitment to people realising their potential. Students noted that they engaged well with their tutor. Tutors felt well supported by the organisation in their development as tutors, with a number participating in professional development opportunities including the National Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy Education (Vocational).

The organisation is currently working to integrate the unit standards it is teaching into project-based teaching units, and this work is ongoing. An academic support person has been employed to work with the tutors, and tutors report this as a positive initiative in terms of their programme development. The additional

academic support is also being used to continue to improve moderation processes across the organisation.

A number of strategies are used to reflect on teaching, including performance appraisals, peer observation, student surveys, and weekly reports. The evaluation team heard a number of examples of the management team responding to requests and concerns from tutors. There is a commitment across the organisation to supporting tutors to improve learner retention and success.

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**.

It was noted earlier that the evaluators heard about the principles of whanaungatanga and manaaki operating, and the value of the student support staff making students feel welcome and safe. Future Skills has consciously worked to improve the organisational culture of the organisation to ensure that students feel safe and experience a sense of belonging.

Student support staff have a critical role in welcoming new students to the campus, ensuring they are enrolled in the right programme and settle in well. Students were quite clear about expectations, boundaries, and opportunities. For example, there is a strict attendance policy and clear procedures are followed if students do not attend.

The organisation wants students to feel a sense of belonging and achieves this by giving them responsibility and trust when involved in events and activities. Examples of this include the carpentry students working on school upgrade projects, the audio students running the sound equipment for a fashion show, and the Bridging to the Armed Forces students managing the bookings for the school van. An active student council meets regularly and provides feedback, which is listened to. Students noted that at Future Skills they could relate to their tutors and that they were treated with respect.

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**.

The evaluation team was supplied with a number of documents that demonstrated the varied ways that management and staff monitor, reflect, and review. A wide range of data is collected, including both quantitative and qualitative, and this is regularly analysed. The self-assessment document sent in advance of the review documented a number of changes and improvements that had been made as a result of these reviews. These processes were verified by the evaluation team during the EER.

There is good evidence of planning and responding effectively to change. The funding mechanisms for the demographic of students that Future Skills targets have changed significantly over the past few years, and the organisation has responded quickly and effectively to these changes to ensure they match the needs of key funders. The current challenge is the shift in focus for outcomes, from LMOs to qualifications, for the Youth Guarantee students. Processes are in place to address this shift.

The evaluation team heard from staff that they enjoyed a flat structure where everyone had a voice. They reported feeling supported and valued and were clear about what was expected from them. There is a current challenge to ensure that good communication among management and staff is maintained with the new campus and projected growth across the campuses.

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 Introduction to Audio Communication

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Training for Work

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

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

2.4 Focus area: Bridging to the Armed Forces

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, other than those expressed or implied within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

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

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

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

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

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

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

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

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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