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# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Horizons Unlimited Limited

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 20 October 2017

# Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction .....	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review .....	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results .....	6
Findings .....	7
Recommendations .....	15
Appendix .....	16

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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:	Horizons Unlimited Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	18 November 2003
Location:	Unit 2 32 Settlers Crescent, Ferrymead, Christchurch
Delivery sites:	Unit 2 32 Settlers Crescent Ferrymead Christchurch Christchurch Ropes Course – Kimihia, The Groynes, Christchurch
Courses currently delivered:	Outdoor Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Certificate (Training Scheme) (Level 3)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outdoor Emergency Care – 123</li><li>• Other outdoor first aid programmes – 150</li><li>• Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme – 10</li><li>• School Camps (two-21 days) – 940</li><li>• One-day ropes courses for schools – 888</li><li>• Other adventure-based training – 1,806</li></ul> International (2017): three students

Number of staff:	Full-time – three  Part-time – approximately 6.3 full-time equivalent staff, mostly instructors
Scope of active accreditation:	<a href="http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=762665001">http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=762665001</a>
Distinctive characteristics:	Horizons Unlimited is a relatively small provider with a largely seasonal workforce of instructors. The main areas of provision are in outdoor emergency care and first aid, and adventure-based learning programmes.
Recent significant changes:	The resignation of a key staff member at the end of 2014 lead to a restructuring of the organisation and recruitment of a new core team.
Previous quality assurance history:	In the previous external evaluation and review (EER), NZQA rated Horizons Unlimited as Highly Confident in both educational performance and capability in self-assessment.  Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom Contract monitoring visit <sup>1</sup> for the Ministry of Education (March 2016) expressed satisfaction.  Adventure Mark audit for the New Zealand Adventure Activities Certification Scheme – certification recommended (April 2017).  Adventure Activities Register (WorkSafe) – current registration.  The Skills Organisation (industry training organisation) (2015/2016) – three unit standards moderated each year. The moderator agreed with the decisions for 16 out of 18 samples.  Skills Active Moderation (industry training organisation) (2016) – assessments for two unit standards successfully pre-moderated (minor changes required). Post-moderation for two unit standards – the moderator agreed the decisions for six out of six samples.

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<sup>1</sup> Horizons Unlimited has a contract for Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom with the Ministry of Education. This was monitored by a site visit conducted by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of this EER included the following focus areas:

- Horizons Gap Year Experience – Adventure Leadership programme
- School Camps programme

These programmes were selected as focus areas in consultation with Horizons Unlimited. The focus areas cover a range of Horizons Unlimited's provision and a variety of students. In terms of student numbers, the Gap Year Experience Adventure Leadership (Gap Year) programme is small, but it was selected as a focus area as it is the only programme that enrolls international students. The Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme is a training scheme that is exempt from NZQA approval. By number of students, the School Camps programme is a significant part of Horizons Unlimited's provision, and this programme requires alignment with the New Zealand Curriculum and a high duty of care for students.

## 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 was conducted over a day and a half by two evaluators. The evaluators visited both the Ferrymead office and the Christchurch Ropes Course at the Groynes. The business and human relations manager, the programme assistant, three contract instructors for the school camps, the tutor for the Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme and a deputy principal of a secondary school (stakeholder) were interviewed at the Ferrymead site. Students on the Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme were interviewed at the Ropes Course. The managing director and additional external stakeholders were telephoned after the site visit, and some stakeholders provided feedback by email. Information was also provided by relevant industry training organisations.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the educational performance of **Horizons Unlimited Limited**.

Outcomes, delivery and achievement are all strong and indicate that learning needs are well met. Student achievement is high, with 100 per cent pass rates and programme completion rates. The validity of these results is supported by the external moderation of unit standards, and the evaluators also saw evidence of effective internal moderation. Students and other stakeholders report high levels of satisfaction, particularly in Horizons Unlimited's responsiveness to identified needs and the quality of delivery. The quality of contributing processes is generally high. However, there is clear evidence of some significant weaknesses in areas that pose some risk. For example, instructors who have not been police vetted have been working with young people, an international student on an adventure-based programme was not insured, staff assessing first aid did not have current qualifications, and a permanent site that had not been approved by NZQA was being used.

Horizons Unlimited has taken steps to address these issues identified during the site visit, but the effectiveness of these actions and any improvement in the systematic management of compliance accountabilities are not yet evident.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Horizons Unlimited Limited**.

Self-assessment is well developed in the delivery of programmes. However, self-assessment is not comprehensive enough to effectively address compliance obligations. For programme delivery and development, self-assessment is systematic and robust – there are good examples of self-assessment resulting in worthwhile improvements for learners and other stakeholders. However, capability in self-assessment in the area of management and compliance is unacceptably weak. The weakness is demonstrated by the non-compliances identified in the course of this EER and Horizons Unlimited's lack of response to important compliance issues that had previously been identified.

Although there is evidence of some effective self-assessment being used to make improvements, it is not comprehensive enough to address some priority areas such as compliance accountabilities.

# Findings<sup>2</sup>

## 1.1 How well do students 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 Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme is a 12-week training scheme focused on developing leadership skills through participation in adventure activities. Course and programme completion rates for the last two years have been 100 per cent. Students learn technical skills relevant to work in the adventure industry, and the training scheme also aims to develop the individual. The success of this is clearly demonstrated by feedback received from both parents and industry stakeholders. Parents of students on the Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme and graduates testified to the significant development they had seen in their children over the period of the programme. Students also identified their own personal growth in areas such as confidence, gaining a sense of direction, and resilience as important achievements of the programme. Following the training scheme, students are supported by Horizons Unlimited to take up work overseas as camp leaders. Feedback from an organisation in Hong Kong, where students gain work, was that the students were well prepared for entry-level positions. The Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme is moderated through peer observation of practical work and external moderation of unit standards.

Horizons Unlimited also runs school camps and one-day programmes for a significant number of schools in the Canterbury region. The Ministry of Education partially funds these activities. The ministry's monitoring of their contract with Horizons Unlimited identified that the alignment of the programmes to the New Zealand Curriculum is well documented, with descriptions of how the PTE addresses the key competencies and specific connections to the relevant strands and levels of the health and physical education curriculum. Feedback from schools indicates that the camps and one-day programmes meet the agreed curriculum goals. Horizons Unlimited is proactive in working with schools to determine how the goals can be best met for different groups of students. Schools also confirmed the value of the PTE's self-assessment processes, and provided good examples of how this process led to improvements. Self-assessment involved pre-camp meetings with the school to establish goals, collection of feedback – both written and verbal – from schoolteachers and students, review by the instructors, and subsequent debrief with the school.

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<sup>2</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

Other delivery by Horizons Unlimited includes a unit standard-based pre-outdoor emergency care training scheme. Achievement in this programme is also high, with a 100 per cent pass rate in 2016. External moderation by the industry training organisation provides confidence in Horizons Unlimited's assessment. In each of the last two years, the three unit standards in the training scheme were moderated and no issues were identified.

Information on ethnicity is collected at enrolment. However, this information is not used for analysis of the participation or achievement of Māori or Pasifika students. However, given the 100 per cent completion and pass rates, this is not currently an issue as both Māori and Pasifika students are achieving at the same rate as others.

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

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**.

Personal growth and development are a valued outcome for students on the Gap Year programme. As indicated in Findings 1.1, students' parents attest to the value of this programme and the students' development. For the last three years, 100 per cent of graduates have gained employment in entry-level jobs in outdoor activities. This employment is often overseas, which further serves to strengthen the independence and personal development of the young adults. Students highly value the preparation for and support in obtaining work overseas. Additionally, the relationship with Horizons Unlimited was valued by a Hong Kong-based employer of the students who indicated they would take more students if they were available and that they were confident in Horizons Unlimited's recommendation of suitable students. The employer found that high levels of enthusiasm and passion, and the ability to relate well to young people, were characteristics of employees from the Gap Year programme. These employees were well prepared for entry-level positions and compare favourably with those from other countries.

The long-standing and repeated use of Horizons Unlimited by schools and other groups to provide outdoor education programmes is an indicator of the value of the services provided. For example, one organisation has used Horizons Unlimited for over 12 years to provide a three-week outdoor experience for youth with low self-esteem, and commented that the instructors were great at running the activity and getting unengaged students to use their brain. The evaluators heard how schools value the development of skills such as self-reliance, communications and teamwork in their students. Instructors are matched to the activities. For example, one school in particular commented on how well instructors served as good role models for their students. Another example was provided of a student who attended school camp and then went on to complete the Gap Year Adventure



Leadership programme before working overseas and returning as an instructor with Horizons Unlimited while completing a degree in outdoor education.

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

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**.

School camp programmes are effectively designed to meet student and school needs, and the programmes are linked to the New Zealand Curriculum (Health and Physical Education Strand). For each camp, the goals and delivery are negotiated with the school. There is good communication with schools about the camps. Pre-camp briefings are held with the schools to establish clarity in how the camps are delivered, and to outline the safety and operational requirements. Feedback is collected from school teaching staff (who attend and observe the camps) and students. The feedback is comprehensive and includes both verbal feedback provided during the camp and post-camp surveys. There was clear evidence that the feedback was reviewed and used in a post-camp debrief with schools and that this informed ongoing improvements. Examples of improvements ranged from better meal planning to extensive restructuring of camp activities.

Delivery of programmes by adventure-based learning is a strength of Horizons Unlimited. It was evident that stakeholders regarded Horizons Unlimited instructors as skilled facilitators with the ability to get the best out of students, and complimented their ability to handle challenging situations that arose from time to time. The selection of instructors to match the student group was also a strength which provided valuable role models for students and enhanced the learning process. Programmes were designed to allow students to have adequate time to reflect on their learning, and there was an appropriate mix of theory and practice. Regular debriefs with instructors allowed the needs of students to be assessed on an ongoing basis and enabled the provision of additional guidance and encouragement to push their boundaries. The integration of Māori knowledge into programmes is being strengthened. Examples provided included a Waka Ama programme for a school and inclusion of the cultural significance of areas used to hold camps.

Assessment of the Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme is both by workbook and through observation of naturally occurring evidence in practical exercises. The evaluators saw limited examples of moderation of practical non-unit standard-based assessment, but the moderation viewed was appropriate. Moderation by industry training organisations also provides good evidence that unit standard assessment is at the required standard.

However, the needs of some stakeholders are not well met. This is evident in the non-compliances identified in Findings 1.6. Examples include operating from sites that did not have NZQA approval, and the use of instructors who had not been police vetted for working with young people, and some assessors not updating their qualifications as required. These issues show that the delivery is not meeting some important needs and requirements of these stakeholders.

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

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 **Good**.

Horizons Unlimited is very effective at using adventure-based learning to involve students in their learning. The strengths in delivery and assessment of student needs, noted in Findings 1.3, contributed to the development of positive and motivating learning environments. Instructors are responsive to student needs, establishing activities that are challenging but achievable, enabling learners' progress towards reaching their potential and achieving the programme goals. Stakeholders provided convincing examples of the ability of instructors to motivate disengaged students and of effective behavioural management.

The lead instructor for the Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme is responsible for the pastoral support of domestic and international students. She was well aware of support options available and where to refer students if necessary. Students felt well supported and provided good examples of the effectiveness of Horizons Unlimited support. International students were knowledgeable about the support available, felt well informed about the programme before they enrolled, and had a high level of satisfaction with their time at Horizons Unlimited. Some of the international students on the Gap Year Adventure Leadership programme had not experienced adventure-based learning before and were particularly positive about their experience.

There is weakness in the implementation of the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016. It was identified during the site visit that the required medical insurance for one international student on an adventure activity-based programme had expired (see Findings 1.6). While this had no direct impact, there was an unacceptable risk that with appropriate care would have been avoided.

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

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**.

The current purpose of Horizons Unlimited is clear and has been established through an annual strategic planning cycle. The managing director identified that there is some uncertainty in the future direction of Horizons Unlimited due to funding constraints, high compliance costs and the lack of financial sustainability of some aspects of the provider's business. At the time of the EER, a new strategic planning round was about to start.

Staff interviewed during this evaluation were clear about their role and how they contributed to the success of the organisation. Management of the performance of instructors is effective, although there are some gaps in management of staff that are identified in Findings 1.6. Although most staff are employed on a seasonal basis, it is positive that Horizons Unlimited has been able to maintain the high quality of staff over several years, with some instructors returning for several seasons. Instructors are regularly observed by managers and their peers, and it was evident that there is effective, constructive feedback and support. Staff felt valued and commented positively on the team approach and the collegiality they experienced at Horizons Unlimited.

Staff valued the professional development opportunities provided by Horizons Unlimited. The induction and site familiarisation camps were good examples of this, which directly related to improving the student experience. Staff development relating to first aid is provided in-house by a doctor. However, the required resuscitation refresher courses have not been kept up to date (see Findings 1.6).

Health and safety appears to be well managed, as evidenced by a recent successful Adventure Mark audit which concluded that Horizons Unlimited conformed to the requirements of the New Zealand Safety Audit Standard for Adventure Activities 2016 for a range of activities covering their delivery. Additionally, a safety audit of the high ropes facility is carried out annually. Horizons Unlimited has current registration on WorkSafe's Adventure Activities Register.

Horizons Unlimited has very small numbers of international students (three in 2017) and uses only one agent to recruit them. When first seen by the evaluators, the agreement with the agent was unsigned, but this was rectified during the site visit. The agent is informally monitored, and this may be appropriate given the low level of international student recruitment. However, documentation of the monitoring of the agent would strengthen confidence in the process. International students said they received accurate information about the programme and that it met or exceeded the expectations they had when they enrolled. Information provided by the agent is controlled by the content of the Horizons Unlimited website.

*Final Report*

Although many aspects of governance and management make a strong contribution to supporting student achievement, this is not consistent across the range of activities required of governance and management. Ensuring that compliance obligations are met is a weakness that is not currently adequately managed.

## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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

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

Management of important compliance accountabilities is inconsistent. Compliance in some areas is well managed, but in other areas it is unacceptably weak. Four non-compliances were identified by the evaluators during the site visit. Identified weaknesses are not always addressed effectively or in a timely manner. For example, it is of concern that in Horizons Unlimited's self-review of the Code of Practice (November 2016) the weakness in the process for confirming international students' insurance was noted as an area to be improved, but this had not been effectively addressed for the next student intake (February 2017). The following are non-compliances identified at the site visit:

- Site approval by NZQA. NZQA had not been advised of new temporary sites, and NZQA approval had not been sought for a new permanent site that was in current use. NZQA requires permanent site approval to ensure the new sites are appropriate for the delivery of education and training. After this issue being identified by the evaluators, Horizons Unlimited initiated steps to address it.
- Vulnerable Children's Act; police vetting of staff. Instructors used for school camps had not all been police vetted, although they were working with young people under 18 years of age. Horizons Unlimited was aware of this. However, schools using these instructors were not advised that they were not police vetted. When a school asked to sight evidence for police vetting, only appropriately vetted staff were used. The contract monitoring visit conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Education in 2016 noted that police safety checks on new staff are routinely completed. However, in 2017 this was not the case, with three instructors from overseas not complying with requirements, and Horizons Unlimited was aware of this. This occurred despite the procedures in Horizons Unlimited's Child Safe Practice Guidelines, which include: 'all Horizons staff will be police vetted prior to working with groups of children'. Once this was identified as an issue during the EER, appropriate steps were taken to ensure that all instructors were police vetted.
- Code of Practice. One international student was enrolled with medical insurance that did not cover the full length of the programme. At the time this was identified by the evaluators, the student had been without insurance for

over a month. This situation was addressed promptly, with the student obtaining insurance cover until the end of the programme.

- Qualifications of staff delivering first aid. Emergency Care Instructor Certificates held by Horizons Unlimited's first aid assessors had not been current for over a year, and no evidence was provided that demonstrated equivalent skills or knowledge. The business and human resources manager was aware that the certificates had expired and it had not been addressed.

After the EER site visit Horizons Unlimited was visited by members of the NZQA Risk Management team. The NZQA Risk Management visit found that the non-compliances identified in this report had been addressed, however their report also identifies additional non-compliances.

It is not clear to the evaluators that systems and resourcing have been improved to a level that will result in the required significant improvement in the management of compliance.

## Focus Areas

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

### 2.1 Focus area: Horizons Gap Year Experience – Adventure Leadership programme

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: School Camps programme

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

NZQA recommends that Horizons Unlimited:

- Undertake a comprehensive review of compliance obligations and effectively address any issues identified.
- Strengthen its compliance monitoring framework and ensure that resourcing is sufficient for effective implementation.

# 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/>.*

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