

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Learning Innovations Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 29 February 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	9
Recommendations	17
Appendix	18

MoE Number: 7627
NZQA Reference: C05687
Date of EER visit: 4 and 5 October 2011

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:	Ground Floor, Tower Building, 215 Railway Road, Hastings
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1 May 2003
Number of students:	230 domestic students
Number of staff:	11 staff (including two directors)
Scope of active accreditation:	National Certificate in Employment Skills with a focus on Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programmes (ILN) (which includes ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) literacy and numeracy).
Sites:	Learning Innovations Limited (LI) operates from three sites: Hastings, Napier, and Waipukurau.
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Although stating that it caters for all New Zealanders, LI has a clear focus on targeting Māori, Pasifika, and refugee/migrants in the Hawke's Bay region. LI is the only provider in the Hawke's Bay region specialising solely in ESOL, literacy and numeracy, and foundation skills training. Programmes are delivered using funding from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and Ministry of Social Development (MSD).</p> <p>LI meets TEC priorities by concentrating on improving language, literacy and numeracy and skills outcomes at levels 1-3, as confirmed by meeting targets in the Intensive Literacy and</p>

Numeracy programme.

Recent significant changes: In recent years, LI has taken note of the increase in school leavers finishing school with little or no qualifications and presenting with very poor literacy and numeracy skills. LI has begun to tailor programmes that provide second-chance learning opportunities for these school leavers to begin, or in some cases complete, credits towards a qualification. LI has experienced increased growth to the extent that the organisation has moved to a central location within the CBD of Hastings and occupies the whole bottom floor of the building. This provides easy access to all enrolled learners.

Previous quality assurance history: LI was last quality assured by NZQA by audit in April 2007. This was a scheduled audit and the TEO substantially met the requirements of the standard in force at the time.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review included the mandatory governance, management, and strategy focus area. In addition, the following focus area was evaluated:

- National Certificate in Employment Skills with an in-depth focus on the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy programme.

In the initial scoping of this EER it was intended that the chosen focus area would be the National Certificate in Employment Skills. It was envisaged that this focus area would allow for a comprehensive review of the provider's primary work which is in literacy and numeracy.

However, it became apparent at the outset of the EER that this qualification was ineffective as a focus area as it would not enable the evaluators to make conclusive evaluative judgements in relation to that qualification. Learners were only required to move up one level and therefore would in most cases not complete this qualification or, because of their limited literacy, numeracy, and/or English skills, be unable to complete the qualification. Given that LI specialises in literacy and numeracy programmes, it was decided to use the ILN programmes as the most appropriate area to focus the review. The ILN focus area would also include ESOL learners.

The Foundation Focused Training Opportunities programme provided by LI was also incorporated in the EER as it also highlighted the emphasis on literacy and numeracy, with a number of learners recently finishing secondary school with little

or no credits, or requiring between one and four credits to gain an NCEA qualification.

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 external evaluation and review was conducted over two days by two external evaluators at the provider's main office in Hastings. The evaluation involved engagement with:

- The two directors of LI
- Eight staff members
- Stakeholders of LI from Crown agencies and a local iwi authority
- Learners from the focus area programmes selected.

Documents sighted included a range of self-assessment, planning, and strategy documents, 2011 and 2012 investment plans, and a variety of quantitative data relating to student achievement and satisfaction, and related analysis.

Learning Innovations Limited has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any 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 **Learning Innovations Limited**.

Learner achievement expectations have been set at realistic levels and take into account the learning needs and capabilities of learners enrolled with LI, including Māori, Pasifika, youth, and migrants. Learners undertaking the ILN training are only required to move up one level in accordance with the ILN Online Assessment tool.¹ Within the Training Opportunities programme, the TEC required an achievement rate for 2010 of 60 per cent for labour market outcomes for LI. LI showed an achievement rate of 80 per cent. In addition, learners on the Training Opportunities programme on average achieved 16.45 credits in 2010. The TEC-expected credit achievement rate is between ten and 13 credits. These figures show that the learning environment at LI is engaging, non-threatening, supportive, and effective.

All EER participants commented on the supportive learning environment that exists at LI. Feedback gathered from learners showed examples of positive outcomes acquired. These included:

- Increased confidence
- Completion of NCEA qualifications
- Changed attitudes to learning
- Goal-setting and attainment
- Increased employment options
- Greater application and commitment to attend programmes
- Improved capability in the command of written and spoken English
- Better engagement with government agencies such as Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) and Immigration New Zealand
- Overall improved communication skills.

ESOL learners who enrol with LI with little or no English are achieving relevant credits to enable them to comply with WINZ beneficiary requirements. More importantly, with their growing knowledge in the language, learners are able to actively and confidently participate in their communities. Individualised learning plans prepared during the initial assessment stage are a key process in identifying and matching the needs of the learner with appropriate training.

¹ The ILN Online Assessment tool was introduced this year.

LI has experienced an increase in the number of referrals coming from agencies such as WINZ who were concerned at seeing many young people leaving school with little or no qualifications. WINZ had identified LI as a quality provider of literacy and numeracy programmes that could address those concerns. In addition, the strong external stakeholder relationships fostered by the directors help promote the profile of LI as well as keeping the organisation current with local market needs and industry developments.

The governance and management structure of LI is clear and simple and provides for active participation by all staff in the strategic and operational direction of the organisation. This creates an inclusive collegial and collaborative working environment for all staff based on mutual respect, which in turn is transferred to the learners by creating a positive learning environment.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Learning Innovations Limited**.

LI has a structured self-assessment process which is regularly monitored and analysed by management. Data is gathered from a range of sources including:

- Learner evaluation feedback
- External stakeholder feedback
- Internal and external moderation
- Enrolments, withdrawals, and learner results.

Data is also analysed across programmes by age, gender, ethnicity, and those involved in the ESOL programmes.

Results are collated by tutors and are prepared for discussion at the monthly management and staff meetings. Any significant issues that are raised are noted and a plan of action is carried out and reported on at subsequent meetings.

With the relatively small size of the organisation, informal assessment discussions take place between staff and management and prove effective in providing quick solutions to issues or changes within programmes. Although not a substitute for proper reviews, LI finds that this process eliminates excessive resources being used for minor matters and also saves time.

LI's 2012 investment plan clearly maps out its intentions for the next year and also provides a realistic forecast for the next three years which will enable adequate planning to occur. LI acknowledges that it is a major provider of adult literacy programmes in the Hawke's Bay region, particularly in the area of ESOL training. The organisation is looking at its future sustainability and is reacting to its identified market by developing programmes to suit the needs of those that enrol with it. This is evidenced in the programmes being developed for youth, who are enrolling with LI in increasing numbers. From the perspective of the evaluation team, the

opportunity exists for LI to be the lead provider in literacy and numeracy while it has a large proportion of market share. This will require management to seriously look at increasing staff numbers as well as looking for better and bigger accommodation. Each of these issues has resourcing and budget implications.

Findings²

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**.

Context

LI provides primarily literacy and numeracy and foundation (life skills and employment preparation) programmes. Learners are able to undertake the National Certificate in Employment Skills as well as levels 1 and 2 unit standards in ESOL, mathematics, and a range of generic unit standards including literacy and numeracy. LI is the only provider in Hawke's Bay specialising solely in ESOL and therefore has a large number of refugees and migrants referred by WINZ attending the ILN programmes. LI also provides opportunities for school leavers (those under 20 years of age) to complete NCEA levels 1 and 2 qualifications to enable them to transition into employment or higher education.

The majority of learners enrolled with LI are undertaking ILN training. In 2010, LI was contracted for 160 equivalent full-time students (EFTS) receiving 100 hours ILN training over two 20-week periods. Although it forecast 230 learners in 2010, LI achieved 261 learners averaging 60 hours training per learner over 12 weeks. LI was still able to achieve its TEC contracted targets. For the 2011 financial year, LI is still contracted for 160 EFTS and has a current enrolled population of 220 learners.

Explanation

Much of the feedback gathered from learners showed examples of positive outcomes. These included:

- Increased confidence (identified through youth completing NCEA qualifications, changed attitudes to learning, having the ability to set goals for future employment and careers, greater application and commitment to attend programmes, improved capability in the command of written and spoken English leading to better engagement with government agencies such as WINZ and Immigration New Zealand).
- Greater appreciation for learning and study leading to greater understanding of subject areas.

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

- Improved communication skills through participation in programme activities, being able to ask for help from peers and tutors without feeling intimidated, and refugees and immigrants being less reliant on interpreters.
- Developing goals focused towards possible career development. Some migrants had been able to apply for better positions at their workplace because of their improved English, and young school leavers were considering tertiary study at the Eastern Institute of Technology. Other youth had used the opportunity to complete their NCEA qualifications to enable them to apply for the armed services.³

Learners undertaking the ILN training are only required to move up one level in accordance with the ILN Online Assessment tool. Within the Training Opportunities programme, the TEC required an achievement rate for 2010 of 60 per cent for LI's labour market outcomes. LI had an achievement rate of 80 per cent. In addition, learners on the Training Opportunities programme on average achieved 16.45 credits in 2010. The expected credit achievement was between ten and 13 credits.

Learner achievement is closely monitored by LI by way of comprehensive data collected and analysed within each programme taught. All staff are involved in the monitoring of achievement results and this is reflected in the regular staff monthly meetings held by the directors. Achievement and labour market outcomes are again regularly analysed and benchmarked against TEC targets. This information enables the directors to assess programmes, monitor achievement and retention rates, and provide information for programme reviews.

Learner achievement is also assessed by tutors through close engagement and relationships with students to identify progress, and through regular monitoring and engagement with learner pathway plans. Stories of achievement are shared at daily staff meetings, at monthly academic forums attended by staff and management, and at monthly board meetings.

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 **Good**.

LI provides its learners with intensive personal support in a caring, holistic environment which enables many learners to enjoy their studies and become committed to achieving positive results. During interviews with the evaluation team, learners expressed a renewed enjoyment in learning and studying which was enabling them to attain credits towards a qualification. They believed that with

³ Four youth were referred to LI to complete subjects to gain NCEA level 2 to enable them to enlist with the NZ Army.

application they could achieve and look forward to higher education and meaningful employment. Many learners were using their study with LI as a structured pathway to better career and employment opportunities.

Many ESOL learners who enrol with LI have very little or no English. The LI programmes they attend have improved some of their communication skills, giving them the opportunity to apply for better employment as well attaining better work conditions from their employers.

LI has experienced an increasing number of referrals coming from stakeholders such as WINZ who were concerned at seeing many young people leaving school with little or no qualifications such as NCEA credits. WINZ had identified LI as a quality provider of literacy and numeracy programmes that could address those concerns. LI is developing programmes to cater to the needs of these young people through smaller classes and intensive one-to-one sessions, and is creating an environment where the young people are supported in their learning, unlike their experience while at secondary school.

The holistic environment promoted by LI is seen by many whānau as non-threatening to the extent that many are approaching LI as a last resort to enrol whānau who finished school without completing or gaining qualifications. A number of stories were told to the EER team by both learners and LI staff, of parents and grandparents in despair of their young person, being brought to LI to attend a programme and then seeing a transformation in the young person while studying with LI.

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**.

LI has a comprehensive and stringent assessment process, developed over a number of years which clearly articulates learner needs and ensures that realistic goals and action plans are put in place for the learner to succeed. The assessment interview includes ratings on reading, writing, mathematics, and goal-setting. In addition, learners are asked to sign a training agreement with LI whereby the learner undertakes to attend and complete their training diligently.

The programmes developed and taught at LI have relevance to stakeholder and community needs. LI is aware of these needs through learner evaluations, community feedback, increased numbers of learners seeking LI assistance, as well as the accumulated data of learner assessments and achievements. Programmes offered by LI provide flexible class times.

An example of understanding learner needs is shown by the programmes being offered in Napier and Waipukurau. Flexible times for classes have been set up to cater for learners' work and family schedules. This allows for greater access to LI's

services by many of its target groups that could not otherwise attend training in Hastings.⁴

LI staff and other stakeholders interviewed said that the two directors maintained strong links with many educational organisations in the Hawke's Bay region. This enables LI to have a strong understanding of the literacy and numeracy industry so that it is able to provide programmes that match current industry and community needs. These links and programmes include meeting with local schools to promote and market training at LI, being involved with local iwi to understand the learning needs of Māori, and providing bridging programmes that pathway learners to higher education.

Agency feedback provided during the evaluation confirmed that learners from LI were sufficiently completing their training with relevant qualifications. Learners indicated that they were more than satisfied with the way in which the tutors look after learners, provide supportive learning environments, and understand the needs of the learner, to the extent that referrals from these agencies had increased significantly in the last two years.

Individualised learner pathway plans are completed during the assessment stage and are used as an ongoing point of reference to review the learner's progress. In addition, LI use learner evaluation feedback, external stakeholder feedback, and monthly tutor reports to assess learner results, and uses retention and withdrawal information to review training programmes and analyse community and industry needs.⁵

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**.

The learning and teaching environments are planned and structured for the benefit and needs of the learners. Teaching is individually focused; classes are kept to a size that enables the tutor to spend quality time with each learner. At interview with the evaluation team, learners said they felt comfortable with their tutors and in the classroom. Many of the young learners said the class work was completely different to that experienced at school. There was less pressure, the class sessions were relaxed, and they were given sufficient one-to-one time with their tutor. These learners had identified goals such as uncompleted NCEA credits and were focused on achieving these realistic and tangible goals instead of seeing the task as one whole qualification. The ESOL learners interviewed also said that they

⁴ These include Māori, Pasifika, and youth.

⁵ The LI student assessment and tutor report forms were sighted during the EER. Student evaluations were also sighted during the EER.

enjoyed their sessions because the trainings were interactive, simple, and conducted in both group and one-to-one sessions. Class activities are practically focused to incorporate real-world contexts. These include activities such as completing tenancy agreement forms, writing a curriculum vitae, completing passport applications, and answering employment applications. This type of environment stimulates excitement and determination for learners and provides motivation to learn and to achieve.

Learners interviewed commented on the personal teaching styles of tutors at LI which made learning more enjoyable, provided an environment that was conducive to learning, and created a desire by the learner to want to learn and achieve results.⁶ The individualised learning plans allow the learner to dictate the pace of their learning and therefore provide them with the sense that they are in control of the process rather than being dictated to as experienced at school. Learners were highly appreciative of the time and energy tutors gave to them and valued the relationship, with some commenting that their tutor understood the difficulties they were experiencing in relation to learning, which motivated them to want to achieve more.

The teaching staff at LI are highly qualified and are actively encouraged and supported by LI to undertake professional development. This includes adult teaching and literacy and numeracy workshops to enable staff to keep abreast of the latest research and to incorporate new material and skills into their programmes. Tutors have monthly peer training and their performance is monitored on a regular basis by the directors, creating an environment of support among colleagues as well as maintaining good standards based on learner results. Regular analysis is undertaken of learner training evaluations, stakeholder feedback and learner results, and retention and completion data, as part of tutor self-assessment and reviews.

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 **Good**.

LI provides strong guidance and support which is actively endorsed, from management through to the teaching staff. This holistic learning environment creates a culture of encouragement and support for learners where tutors actively go out of their way to assist the learners. This kind of support is mirrored in the interaction between management and tutors. Tutors commented that the small number of staff at LI allows for a much closer relationship between management

⁶ One tutor was described as patient, relaxed, and a motherly figure who made one-to-one teaching enjoyable, leading to an increase in learning achievement and confidence in learners.

and tutors, with one of the directors actively working as a literacy tutor and the other director providing internal moderation.

Learner well-being is taken seriously, to the extent that some tutors support students at WINZ-related interviews. Active engagement with learners by tutors occurs which ensures that learners' needs are understood and articulated clearly in individual training plans.

All students commented on the one-to-one support provided by their tutors and how this helped them overcome difficulties with their learning. Learners attributed their successes at LI to the individualised support and the fact that the smaller classes gave them better and more effective contact with their tutor. The personalised nature of the tutoring creates a non-threatening environment and places minimal stress on the learner, leading to better concentration and enjoyment during training.

As mentioned previously, the relatively small size of LI allows for immediate and responsive support for individual needs, including those of tutors. Tutors are sufficiently resourced for external activities outside of the classroom. This enhances the close relationships and engagement between tutors and learners. The attendance of learners is also closely monitored, with absences immediately followed up by administration staff to identify particular support needs. Individual learning plans are regularly reviewed by students, staff, and management to ensure sufficient progress towards desired goals.

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**.

LI has sound governance and management systems in place. Its focus is to promote educational achievement within its targeted populations to enhance community well-being and effective integration of immigrants into New Zealand society, and to provide alternative learning opportunities for youth who have finished school with little or no educational qualifications. This focus is evident across the organisation's activities and is ably led by its two directors through staff recruitment, simple, straightforward policies, adequate resourcing, and active participation in local, regional, and national organisations.

At the governance level, the two directors are responsible for setting and implementing the strategic direction. They actively promote an inclusive environment that encourages staff to contribute to organisational direction. Staff commented that they are aware of the line between management and staff, but the inclusive environment of the organisation makes them feel part of a team. This provides a good workplace environment where tutors are happy and transfer that attitude to their students. The high retention rate among the teaching staff provides an indication that staff are happy with the workplace and the culture of the

organisation. The directors at interview with the evaluation team commented that their staff recruitment strategy of choosing teachers with experience in teaching the types of learners that are presenting and enrolling with LI, rather than by qualification, has proven effective for their requirements.

The small size of the organisation allows the two directors to split the management of the business into academic and business developments, with each leading one of the two areas. This allows for better and efficient management of the organisation as well as acknowledging the individual strengths and passions of the two directors.

Close community and industry relationships and engagement are achieved by LI through its directors actively participating in education forums within the region and at a national level. One of the directors is heavily involved in advisory and governance groups within the education sector in Hawke's Bay. She sits on the Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga education board (an iwi education initiative in Hastings), MOE PI Advisory Board, and the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) Pasifika advisory board. She also sits on the Ako Aotearoa tertiary teaching panel. The other director is heavily involved in the adult literacy sector, providing advice at both a regional and national level. LI has an ongoing relationship with EIT. Currently, LI and EIT are in discussions about providing literacy training to students lacking skills and NCEA credits as part of a bridging programme prior to enrolment at EIT. The proposal also includes EIT students on trade certificate programmes who require literacy and numeracy support. Involvement in a range of activities enables the two directors to keep abreast of relevant information in the literacy and numeracy fields as well ensuring LI has a strong presence in the education sector and maintains the profile of the organisation within the Hawke's Bay region.

The implementation of monthly staff meetings, where all staff are required to travel to and meet at the central office in Hastings, allows for active involvement of staff in reviewing programmes and discussing matters of interest. There is clear evidence of actual improvements being made as a result of self-assessment at multiple levels, including changes to teaching using learner feedback, the restructuring of course activities to better engage students, and organisational refocussing of staff on qualification achievement, all leading to enhanced outcomes.

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: Intensive Literacy and Numeracy training

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 already expressed or implied within 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-eeer/introduction/>*

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz