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# Report of External Evaluation and Review

## LearningWorks

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 12 December 2016

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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:	LearningWorks
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	14 May 2004
Location:	Level 1, 408 Anglesea Street, Hamilton
Delivery sites:	Approved temporary sites across the country in the following places: Alexandra; Auckland; Christchurch; Hamilton; Napier; Nelson; New Plymouth; Otorohanga; Palmerston North; Rotorua; Taumaranui; Tauranga; Wellington; Whangarei.
Approved programmes currently delivered:	<p>National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Level 4)</p> <p>The National Certificate in Adult Education and Training (Level 4) is offered under an NZQA-approved subcontract with Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec). Security courses are offered under Ministry of Social Development (MSD) Skills for Industry funding.</p> <p>Short courses offered to corporate clients are based around unit standards for which the PTE holds consent to assess.</p>
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students (2016):	Domestic: 136 (and 750 when students taught

under subcontracting arrangements with Wintec are counted). Of these:

- LearningWorks students: Māori 35 per cent; Pasifika 4 per cent; male 63 per cent; female 38 per cent; under 25 years 13 per cent.
- Wintec programme students: Māori 16 per cent; Pasifika 8 per cent; male 45 per cent; female 55 per cent; under 25 years 4 per cent.

Number of staff: 36 full-time; two part-time; currently recruiting five staff

Scope of active accreditation: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=765761001>

Distinctive characteristics: LearningWorks is based in Hamilton but operates nationally, providing training and consultancy for a variety of clients: corporate, public body, industry training organisation (ITO), and individuals.

Using the trading name, LearningWorks states:

‘Our mission is to grow outstanding people by delivering exceptional learning and training solutions for our partners.

He whakatū kaupapa whakangungu e puta ai he tāngata pūmanawa nui ki te ao.’

The PTE receives no direct Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding, but enrolls TEC-funded students under a subcontracting arrangement with Wintec. It receives funding from MSD for Training for Work programmes. The Learning Design activities are commercially funded from corporate clients and contracts with government entities.

Recent significant changes: Change of PTE ownership – 2012  
Change of board members – 2014  
Change of head office site – 2014  
Change of senior management – 2014

Significant staff turnover – 2014-2015

Change of PTE name – 2015

Previous quality assurance history:

At the previous external evaluation and review (EER) of B R Training (the previous PTE name) in 2012 (reported November 2012), NZQA was Highly Confident in the PTE's educational performance and Confident in its capability in self-assessment. At that time, the PTE taught around 200 students.

**National external moderation results**

Year	Unit standards moderated (no.)	Approved	Modify	Not approved
2012	12	5	7	0
2013	6	4	2	0
2014	1	1	0	0
2015	4	4	0	0

Standards moderated include those from Computing; Core Skills; Business and Management; Communication Skills; Adult Education; and Business Studies systems.

Other:

The PTE maintains relationships with ITENZ (Independent Tertiary Education New Zealand), the New Zealand Association for Training and Development, and the Waikato Chamber of Commerce.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Focus areas and rationale for selection		
1.	Governance, management and strategy	This focus area was mandatory at the time of scoping the EER. It has importance for the quality of the educational experience for students, matching the needs of key stakeholders, the employment experience of staff, and the legal, ethical and compliance context for operating as a registered PTE.
2.	National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Level 4)	NZQA-approved in 2013. This programme has the largest number of students, and is delivered under the PTE's own accreditation as well as by subcontract with Wintec. It was the PTE's only NZQA-approved programme at the time of the on-site visit, when 370 students were enrolled.
3.	Learning Design	This focus area represents a significant proportion of the PTE's staffing and educational work. The PTE creates resources for print-based workbooks, blended learning and e-learning. It also provides technical support to organisations using technology to support formal and non-formal learning. More than half the staff are focused on this part of the PTE's business.

## 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.*

Scoping for this EER was undertaken by phone (including conference calls) and email contact. LearningWorks provided the evaluators with a self-assessment summary and other supporting documents prior to the on-site visit. NZQA database information also informed scoping.

Two evaluators conducted the on-site enquiry phase of the EER over 1.5 days on 20 and 21 September 2016. The evaluators met with or interviewed by phone:

- Members of the board, the chief executive, training manager, sales and marketing manager, the Learning Design manager and team leader

- Staff involved in teaching, supporting students, developing learning resources and leading projects
- A sample of current students and graduates
- External stakeholders, including companies purchasing Learning Design services, employers of students, and an ITO.

Documentation considered as part of the evaluation included: elements of the quality management system and planning documents; meeting minutes; various self-assessment and data analysis-related documents; programme review reports; student surveys. These documents were used to gauge the quality and development of the PTE's self-assessment activities, and to validate claimed improvements in performance and in related administrative processes.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **LearningWorks**.

- This evaluation determined that LearningWorks is in a stabilisation and growth mode after a sequence of changes and unanticipated challenges, as listed under TEO in Context. Responses to these changes have been proactive, risks have been reasonably well managed, and business continuity has been maintained. The PTE has a leadership determined to improve the PTE's performance, and staff who are now more engaged with (and clear about) the goals, values and future direction of the PTE.
- LearningWorks provides programmes that seem relevant to the contexts of the learners they enrol, and lead to qualifications that offer career progression or new opportunities for numerous graduates. Course and qualification pass rates ranged from very good to rather poor in 2015 (for the largest programme in particular). Student retention and success has been variable overall but looks to be markedly improving for the 2016 cohorts. The focus area programme – National Certificate Business (First Line Management), the PTE's largest – rated as Adequate in this EER.

Stakeholder and student surveys report satisfaction with the programmes and activities provided by LearningWorks. Useful content and transferable skills are available in each of the programmes offered, and teaching quality is good.

- LearningWorks employs staff with the appropriate knowledge, skills and qualifications to implement the goals of the business. These staff enjoy good working conditions and participate in relevant professional development. The PTE has invested in both capacity building and improving the organisational culture, which are now showing the benefits of this investment.

The PTE has particular expertise in developing innovative resources which support learning for their own students and a growing range of external clients. This is a very important and lucrative growth area for the business, and is meeting an increasing range of needs in New Zealand and internationally.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

- Self-assessment at LearningWorks is rigorous, fact-based, well documented and very clearly directed towards making measureable performance improvements. The use of the 'balanced scorecard' and an innovative self-ratings approach using performance indicators (including relevant Tertiary Evaluation Indicators) are notable examples of self-assessment. At the delivery level, student surveys are used, for example to monitor consistency across sites. Programme reports from the training manager to senior management are deeply analytical and improvement focused, with good evidence of completing the specific actions identified in documented processes.
- The quality and analysis of achievement data is at least acceptable, and is very clearly improving from a relatively low base. Management now has a comparison point from the time they assumed responsibility for the PTE in 2014.
- A wide variety of documentation sampled during this evaluation supported a view that the PTE's self-assessment activities are actively in use. Self-assessment is still developing in many respects, but is sufficient to demonstrate that claimed improvements in performance and in administrative processes have and are occurring.
- The evaluators encountered a PTE open about its performance, strengths and weaknesses and the issues that the new ownership and management and staff have faced. The PTEs hiring of a suitably experienced quality and compliance coordinator and the production of critical self-audit reports also support confidence around ongoing quality assurance.
- Raising the level of educational performance as reflected in student achievement, and more evidence of the extent and nature of the valued outcomes for graduates need to occur before higher confidence can be placed in LearningWorks' self-assessment.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## Learner results summary

LearningWorks sets what it sees as reasonable targets for course and qualification completions. In the largest (TEC-funded) business programme the PTE did not reach either its own target or the TEC target in 2014 and 2015. In the much smaller corporate or self-funded business programme, LearningWorks met its targets in 2014 and in 2015. The results for the sizeable (also TEC-funded) adult educator qualification are better than the business programme results, but mirror the same performance drop in 2015. Preliminary data for the two 2016 intakes suggests a considerable improvement based on comparing credits now achieved with those achieved at the same time in 2015 (a 32 per cent increase for the March business programme intake, and a 23 per cent increase for the July intake).

**Table 1. LearningWorks Course (and qualification) completions (%) 2014 and 2015**

	2014	2015	2016
National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Level 4) SAC-funded			
Number of learners enrolled	161	220	370
Course completion (TEC target)	69% (76%)	57% (76%)	In progress
Qualification completion (LearningWorks target)	64% (70%)	48% (70%)	In progress
National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Level 4) corporate/self-funded			
Number of learners enrolled	14	10	9
Course completion (LearningWorks target)	86% (85%)	89% (85%)	In progress
Qualification completion (LearningWorks target)	79% (80%)	80% (80%)	In progress
National Certificate in Adult Education and Training (Level 4) SAC-funded			
Number of learners enrolled	243	230	244
Course completion (TEC target)	76% (76%)	62% (76%)	In progress
Qualification completion (LearningWorks target)	70% (70%)	57% (70%)	In progress

<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.

Source: LearningWorks (using a variant to the TEC measures).<sup>2</sup>

Overall, the quality and analysis of data is acceptable and is very clearly improving, but this needs to continue. Management now has a point of comparison from the time they assumed responsibility for the PTE in 2014. Achievement data is being tabulated and shared both internally and with the board. This data also presents priority group pass rates, and these too are variable. Timeliness of monitoring is of concern, and the poor performance recorded in 2015 was detected far too late to make a difference for those intakes. Interim data provided to the evaluators does suggest that changes made to course delivery have succeeded in arresting student disengagement, with a likely improvement in course and qualification pass rates.

LearningWorks also delivers an MSD-funded security programme nationally, the trainee numbers for which doubled to 100 for 2016, indicating good performance under these contracts. These programmes provide Work and Income clients with skills to enter the security workforce. A good proportion reportedly achieve that goal (well over half, and higher for Māori clients in particular). Overall, the results are very good for this learner group, based on suitable monitoring and reporting by LearningWorks and feedback sought from MSD by the evaluators.<sup>3</sup>

Although there are certainly useful content, transferable skills and recognised qualifications available in each of the programmes offered, the ratings under the key evaluation question for learner achievement are Adequate on both scales based on the data and findings summarised above (see Key Evaluation Question ratings).

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<sup>2</sup> The PTE sector median was also presented as a benchmark, but given that LearningWorks has developed a variant to the TEC measure this is not a useful comparator.

<sup>3</sup> Data was also provided for LearningWorks' corporate security and other topic-based short courses.

# Focus Areas

## Focus area 1: 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**.

The board and senior management have been working through a major change process at LearningWorks. The board, management and staff were particularly candid about this. Their approach has been rigorous, although not without unexpected difficulties such as staff departures, but delivery of programmes has been maintained and outputs from the learning design department have even increased. The PTE is in a stronger financial position than it was three years ago, and now provides a return to the owner.

Staff surveys and external human resource assistance has been used to gauge the organisational climate. These processes have been well managed and open, with evident improvements. High staff turnover in 2014 and 2015 has been halted. Management has established a benchmark around staff satisfaction and engagement and has more clarity on where to invest time and energy. Recruitment of new staff indicates that additional and new expertise is available to manage training and growth in the Learning Design activities. A strong example here is in IT expertise related to Learning Design.

The board has identified a need for a skills-based addition to their membership, and the evaluators certainly concur with this view. The hiring of a suitably experienced quality and compliance coordinator shows recognition of skill gaps critical to maintaining ongoing quality assurance and compliance with TEC, MSD and NZQA requirements. These skills are relevant to mention considering that senior management does not have extensive PTE or sector-specific experience.<sup>4</sup> That said, the PTE's business acumen and hard skills are amply evident in the growth of the Learning Design side of the business.

A very clear priority is raising the level of educational performance as reflected in student achievement, and better establishing the extent and nature of the valued outcomes for graduates. Both need to occur before higher confidence can be placed in LearningWorks' capability in self-assessment across numerous ratings. The effectiveness of current student support processes (including their resourcing) and related to that the viability of the growth in student numbers should also be topics for critical reflection (and the PTE's budget setting and planning does

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<sup>4</sup> Noting that the current learning design and technologies manager has 15 years' experience in tertiary education, and the training manager was employed at Wintec prior to joining the PTE

consider these factors). There are currently gaps in performance, which in some way relate to each of these areas.

## Focus area 2: National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Level 4)

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

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

Three appropriately qualified and experienced contract facilitators teach on this focus area programme. Oversight and review of their teaching is provided by student surveys which are well conducted from an ethical and validity point of view, important given that they teach at locations distant from the PTE headquarters.<sup>5</sup> A recently introduced teaching observation by another staff member will add value to monitoring processes.<sup>6</sup> The facilitators have met together on occasion and, given the blended delivery programme model, this is an area that should occur more often for consistency sake, as is planned for November 2016. Survey feedback on teaching from students is highly positive, as reflected in ratings derived from the rating scale in use. Where there are low ratings or critical comments, these are followed up by management. Facilities used are assessed and subject to the PTE's quality assurance requirements and have been approved by NZQA. A recent thorough internal audit of this programme identified that it largely conforms to the approved programme, but is being taught over a longer period of time than approved.<sup>7</sup> As for oversight of teaching and attention to compliance, LearningWorks is performing soundly.

Students' comments to the evaluators were largely very positive. Students valued the anecdotes and case studies to contextualise course content, the professionalism and ease of contact with teachers, and the quality of learning materials provided. Crucially, they found the facilitators responsive to requests for guidance outside the contact hours. One respondent stated that he found that a recent 'tutorial was not up to level of the related assignment...[which was] quite a hard assignment'. He believed that the tutorial did not prepare students adequately for it. This is relevant to note as there were indications from others interviewed that colleagues had dropped out because they found this level 4, open-entry

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<sup>5</sup> Survey findings (2014-2016) indicate that for NCB4, satisfaction with the facilitators' delivery ranges from 87-94 per cent for combined results, with individual group scores exceeding the 94 per cent score.

<sup>6</sup> A Learner Attendance Summary report for all groups is updated monthly, providing additional monitoring information.

<sup>7</sup> The programme is taught 52 weeks in most offerings, as opposed to 32 weeks. Teacher contact hours were correct in all but one offering reviewed.

programme too challenging. Conversely, another student observed that those she knew who found it too difficult [simply] did not follow the clear assessment timeframe provided at the start of the programme. After the on-site visit LearningWorks provided additional detailed analysis of students' reported reasons for withdrawal. Very few learners (4) identified academic difficulty as their main reason for withdrawing. Factors for high rates of non-completion proposed by the PTE included staff 'churn' at some corporates, lack of financial commitment given the fees-free nature of the programme, and difficulties balancing work and study.

Support towards success for the reasonably significant number of Māori and Pasifika learners is not demonstrably different in approach than that offered across all groups. Students did, however, indicate that collegial support occurs among cohorts, particularly among those employed by the same company.<sup>8</sup> Personal contact by phone is made with each student, and this is highly valued by students and facilitators. Monthly reports documenting tracking of at-risk learners are a useful tool here as well. However, the programme relies on technology-enabled and self-directed learning. Many of the 2015 cohort of students had a poor experience with online assessment and subsequently disengaged from the programme. Therefore, the overall support for students to succeed can be described as only adequate in its effectiveness at this time.<sup>9</sup>

Reasons for non-completion need to be much more clearly understood by LearningWorks, and attrition needs to be reduced dramatically before higher ratings for both teaching and student support are warranted (see Key Evaluation Question ratings). The PTE's recent internal audit indicated that original needs assessment protocols are not being adhered to. This is potentially a highly significant self-assessment finding.

There is some general evidence that for graduates, completion of the programme has led to promotion or pay rises for some, and confidence to take on new roles or even move jobs. For some this is a first qualification, and for some their highest qualification. Relatively recent stakeholder surveys found that 88 per cent stated that their organisation's training goal had been met, with 38 per cent of this sample indicating that the training results were 'highly evident within the workplace'. Essentially though, LearningWorks' weight of evidence from self-assessment is still developing in relation to establishing the value of the outcomes for learners and other stakeholders, and these positive results need to be tempered by the high number of programme non-completions recorded for 2014 and 2015 (see Key Evaluation Question ratings).

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<sup>8</sup> Many of the students enrolling are also in employment (or structured voluntary work) as is anticipated in the programme design and specified in pre-enrolment information.

<sup>9</sup> PTE investigation of this instance was rigorous, reported in detail in December 2015 and acted on by management as per recommendations recorded.

National external moderation results show good and improving performance across a range of standards since 2012. These results support the validity of assessment results and also the quality of learning material provided. Current internal moderation processes are sufficient. One facilitator, who teaches at several PTEs on different types of programme, described the moderation feedback through the LearningWorks/Wintec partnership as ‘the most constructive [moderation] process’ he had experienced. The PTE has expertise in assessment design, and this is reflected in the quality and variety of materials provided to sector clients through the learning and design team.

### Focus area 3: Learning Design

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.<sup>10</sup>

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

The important indicators for success under this focus area relate to providing useful learning materials and technical support that meets learner and client needs (‘engaging with communities’ and ‘knowledge dissemination’<sup>11</sup>), capability development within the PTE (‘organisational learning’), and business sustainability at the PTE as a corollary to that. Evidence suggests that the Learning Design side of LearningWorks is highly effective. The PTE’s increasingly critical self-assessment processes, which need to ensure a balance between creativity and innovation and accuracy, support that view.

The Learning Design staff skills and qualifications include graphic and web design, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teaching, secondary teaching, linguistics and embedding literacy and numeracy into learning. Staff with IT expertise (software and hardware) have recently been recruited. Business processes for project management contracts are well developed and have improved, according to those staff following them. Needs assessment processes, including pre-scoping and trialling products, are robust. Where projects have encountered problems, valuable learning has occurred for staff which actively informs later work. Clients pointed to a well-managed, iterative development process. The quality of manuals and learning materials (presentations, handouts) has in the case of the focus area, National Certificate in Business, also improved since the previous EER. Examples seen on site were of a high standard. The use of case studies, scenarios and examples drawn from students’ workplaces – which

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<sup>10</sup> In arriving at these ratings, the importance of matched need, value to stakeholders (and by inference their learners and other clients) and organisational capability assumed most significance. Determining achievement and outcomes is more difficult for this focus area.

<sup>11</sup> Tertiary Evaluation Indicators: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Registration-and-accreditation/registration-accreditation-evaluation-indicators.pdf>

range from hospitals to factories to cleaning companies – enrich the programme, as attested by students and graduates.

Clients for whom LearningWorks has successfully delivered contracts since the previous EER include major corporate clients, ITOs, local bodies and regional councils. Written testimonials, numerous re-contracts and comments from clients made directly to the evaluators indicate their needs are being well met and effective products are in use by many learners. A key indicator of performance monitored and reported by the Learning Design manager include indicators on win/loss ratios for proposals to clients and the number of contracts. These show strong growth and increased income and have improved the business's bottom line.

Staff are supported to participate in industry forums and conferences such as the Wintec Shar-E-Fest. This needs to be encouraged to ensure the widest critical exposure of their work. The Learning Design and Technology team is apparently one of the largest groups involved with the digital transformation of learning materials in New Zealand, and in that respect is important to the sector.

## Key evaluation question ratings

*There are six key evaluation questions that provide the structure and direction for the enquiry. The key evaluation questions were developed as an integral part of an evaluative approach. The intention is to answer questions focused on ‘what matters most’ – the quality, value and importance of tertiary education in meeting the needs of learners and other relevant parties. These high-level, open-ended questions focus on either the outcomes achieved or the key processes contributing to the outcomes.*

The key evaluation question ratings reflect that LearningWorks is performing soundly. Where there are gaps and weaknesses in performance, they are mostly managed effectively. Inconsistent performance in the large focus area programme, the National Certificate in Business (First Line Management), with significant non-completions in 2015, has affected ratings under key evaluation question 1 in particular. Although additional staffing resources and, for example, more proactive contact with students has occurred, overall support to succeed can only be described as adequate in its effectiveness, and performance is currently inconsistent.

Key Evaluation Question	Educational performance rating	Capability in self-assessment rating
1. How well do learners achieve?	Adequate	Adequate
2. What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?	Good	Good
3. How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?	Good	Good
4. How effective is the teaching?	Good	Good
5. How well are learners guided and supported?	Adequate	Good
6. How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?	Good	Good

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that LearningWorks:

- Continue with developing a fit-for-purpose, timely data analysis and reporting structure which will provide timely monitoring and reporting of learner achievement.
- Continue with completing the key recommendations from the PTE's draft internal review report on its compliance with programme approval (20 September 2016).

# 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)