

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

SPELD NZ

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 14 May 2014

# 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 .....	8
Recommendations .....	16
Appendix .....	17

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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:	SPELD NZ
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	14 Erson Avenue, Royal Oak, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Main delivery site as above. SPELD NZ also delivers occasional courses, as required, in regional centres throughout New Zealand.
First registered:	August 2004
Courses currently delivered:	Two NZQA-approved courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction to Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 3) (for parents, caregivers and teachers)</li><li>• SPELD (NZ) Certificate in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5) (for teachers and other professionals working with individuals with specific learning disabilities)</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory?:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: approximately 150-200 part-time students each year  International: nil
Number of staff:	One full-time executive officer and eight part-time administrative positions, predominantly in the national office. Part-time course directors are

	contracted as required to deliver courses.
Scope of active accreditation:	The two SPELD NZ certificate courses as above. No other consents to assess.
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>SPELD NZ provides information, assessment, training and tuition to families, schools, businesses and individuals living with specific learning disabilities (SLD), which includes dyslexia, and may involve co-morbidities such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and dyspraxia.</p> <p>SPELD NZ's intention is to work within the framework established by the Ministry of Education to assist in reducing underachievement in education by students with specific learning disabilities. Its goal is to ensure that every learner with specific learning disabilities has 'equitable educational experiences'.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>The structure of SPELD prior to 1 July 2012 consisted of 28 member associations. Each was an independent incorporated society while a member of the governing umbrella of SPELD NZ. The level 3 courses and the level 5 block courses were delivered by the member organisations, whereas SPELD NZ itself delivered the online version of the level 5 course.</p> <p>On 1 July 2012 about 80 per cent of the member associations merged with SPELD NZ and adopted a new constitution and a new board structure. Membership of SPELD NZ became individual membership rather than member association-based, ensuring better engagement and consistency in professional standards for all members.</p> <p>For the last three or more years, SPELD NZ has had a delivery partnership with Aoraki Polytechnic. Due to changes in Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding criteria, this partnership (and the subsequent funding) will end once the current cohort of level 5 students has completed.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	This is SPELD NZ's second scheduled external evaluation and review (EER). The first EER was conducted in March 2010, at which time NZQA was Confident in SPELD NZ's educational

performance and Confident in its capability in self-assessment. NZQA has not noted any risk issues since the last EER.

Other:

SPELD NZ is not directly government funded so relies on fundraising and the goodwill of a highly committed volunteer workforce to supplement the work of a small core of paid employees.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER consisted of the mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management and strategy.

In addition, the following focus area was selected:

- Programme design and delivery. (This effectively includes all of the training SPELD NZ delivers.)

## 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 in February 2014. Prior to the EER visit, the lead evaluator visited the national office in Royal Oak, Auckland and met with the executive officer. The lead evaluator also met with a class of 12 level 5 students who were on site at the time.

The evaluation team consisted of two evaluators. A one and a half-day EER visit was made to the SPELD NZ site in Auckland, where the evaluation team reviewed a range of documentation and met with the executive officer, office administrator and course directors. Additionally, 'Skype meetings' were held with two groups of course directors located in various parts of the country. The evaluators also spoke by telephone with a range of external stakeholders, including representatives from the Ministry of Education, NZQA (school liaison), University of Auckland, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, plus school principals, teachers and graduate students.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **SPELD NZ**.

Key reasons for this include the following:

- Students at SPELD NZ are achieving excellent results (refer Findings 1.1 for detailed figures). In 2013, all but one of the 138 students enrolled in the Introduction to Specific Learning Disabilities successfully completed. In the same year, 92 per cent of students on the online and face-to-face Certificate in Specific Learning Disabilities successfully completed the qualification.
- The EER team interviewed students, directors (tutors), graduates and representatives from a range of professional organisations and government agencies. All expressed a high level of satisfaction with the organisation and management of the programme, and in the course content and delivery of learning and the value created as a result. This was also reflected in a sample of formal feedback by students and the feedback analyses provided by the directors to the organisation's professional standards committee, which meets regularly to review and manage the systems in place for all training.
- The EER team was provided with numerous examples from learners (who are mostly New Zealand-registered teachers, parents and allied professionals), parents, family members, directors and management of how SPELD NZ teaching interventions have been implemented in their workplaces and homes, and made a positive difference for students with learning disabilities, reinforcing the need for this training.
- The EER team found consistent evidence of excellent teaching throughout the organisation (refer Findings 1.4).
- SPELD NZ has student support structures that are appropriate to the needs of the students and minimise barriers to achieving (refer Findings 1.5).
- The organisation is well managed and has a clear philosophy and purpose. As a non-government funded organisation it relies heavily on fundraising and volunteer support. In doing so it uses what resources it has very effectively.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **SPELD NZ**.

Key reasons for this include the following:

- Records indicate that self-assessment is well embedded and has been practised for many years. SPELD NZ has comprehensive systems to gather and collate feedback from learners and client organisations. The quality and validity of the information collected is sound and is used to inform improvements to teaching practice and course delivery.
- The organisation collects performance information which it discusses, analyses and uses openly and effectively to bring about positive improvements to processes and, ultimately, learner and professional outcomes.
- SPELD NZ has established a highly reflective organisation and a culture that encourages students, staff, member organisations and external stakeholders to discuss their performance and put forward ideas for improvement. This information is then systematically used to make organisational improvements as well as to inform course structure, content and delivery, which ultimately results in improved outcomes for students. Staff and management are closely attuned to the needs of the students and their profession.
- SPELD NZ has effectively used external professional bodies such as the New Zealand Council for Educational Research to review the effectiveness of SPELD NZ's activity. The organisation has then acted on recommendations from the reviews.
- Staff members are well supported by management and have plenty of opportunities for reflection on their role, which benefits students through improved teaching techniques and student support.
- There has been a recent significant change in the structure and constitution of the PTE, which has been effectively planned, implemented and reviewed.
- SPELD NZ has followed through on opportunities for improvement identified in the last EER and has engaged well with the key evaluation questions. Self-assessment is ongoing, authentic and transparent, and leads to worthwhile improvements.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Both the organisation and its staff have a strong focus on learner achievement. The courses that SPELD NZ delivers are structured with the presumption that every learner will pass, and course directors expect no less. Student achievement on recent SPELD NZ courses is excellent, as shown in Table 1.

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013 (provisional)</b>
Certificate in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5) (online and face to face)	92%	91%	91%
Introduction to Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 3)	100%	99%	99.3%

Māori make up approximately 8 per cent of the student cohort, with Pasifika students representing about 2 per cent. Completion rates for Māori and Pasifika students reflect those of the cohort as a whole.

Staff at SPELD NZ demonstrate a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement, and regularly analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. The organisation has regular staff meetings where ideas for improving course delivery and learner achievement are discussed and agreed.

SPELD NZ has sound assessment tools and a robust moderation process to confirm that assessment outcomes are valid. Assessments have been moderated externally by Aoraki Polytechnic, which commented in a recent moderation report on the quality and thoroughness of SPELD NZ's assessment processes.

Students reported that they received timely, accurate and supportive feedback on their progress from SPELD NZ staff. The organisation has developed good systems to monitor student progress and acts immediately if a student is not progressing as expected.

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<sup>1</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.



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

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

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

Students enrol on the courses to gain knowledge and skills to inform practice. Evaluations analysed from each course confirm that the majority of students are satisfied with and value the programmes. Students and graduates interviewed by the evaluation team appreciated the immediate applicability of teaching strategies post-course. Employers, especially schools, benefit from having staff with increased knowledge and skills to work with children and clients with SLD.

Although the level 3 certificate is designed for parents and associated professionals as an introduction to specific learning disabilities, a growing number of learners on the level 3 course are practising teachers and teacher-aides. Feedback from participants indicates a strong and positive impact on their understanding of SLD.

Many level 5 learners have enrolled on the courses for self-improvement, career enhancement or professional development. These learners are usually classroom teachers, resources teachers in learning and behaviour, school principals, or special needs coordinators. Some of the learners are sponsored by their schools while others are self-funded, seeking to address the needs of the classroom underachievers.

Since the last EER, SPELD NZ has surveyed students to ascertain their immediate destination post-graduation. Approximately 50 per cent of graduates from the level 5 course enter into the probationary SPELD NZ teacher programme after course completion. They work as self-employed individuals working one-to-one with students with specific learning disabilities that have been referred to them by SPELD NZ. Others may already work privately as specialised SLD tutors and are then able to advertise their skills as being 'SPELD NZ trained'. There is a further opportunity for development to become a registered SPELD NZ assessor. SPELD NZ assessors are recognised alongside educational and clinical psychologists by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research as able to implement the international assessment tool, WJ III.<sup>2</sup>

In 2012-2013, SPELD NZ undertook a study to quantitatively evaluate the effect of SPELD NZ remediation. A cohort of seven-year-olds throughout New Zealand were assessed, taught for 60 lessons by SPELD-trained teachers and then reassessed by SPELD NZ professionals. The statistical 'before and after' results

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<sup>2</sup> The Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities is a set of intelligence tests first developed in 1977 by Richard Woodcock and Mary E. Bonner Johnson. It was revised in 1989 and again in 2001; this last version is commonly referred to as the WJ III.

were analysed by staff at the University of Auckland and the results and analysis were independently peer reviewed by a leading university academic.

The results showed significant improvements in the cognitive and educational outcomes for the children. The report writers were impressed with the 'vast improvements in thinking ability, cognitive fluency and processing speed'. SPELD NZ considers that the project has proven the value of SPELD NZ intervention and teaching brought about by the high-quality SPELD NZ graduates they have trained.

SPELD NZ has actively raised funds to enable them to offer 24 fees scholarships in the level 3 course and six scholarships for level 5, specifically focused on Māori/Pasifika staff or schools. These scholarships are offered to (low-decile) schools who then select the scholarship recipient based on their needs and who they consider is likely to return the best value to the school and local community.

### 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

SPELD NZ's effort to meet the personal and academic goals of every student is a strong feature of the organisation. The organisation believes that the most critical factor in its success is being known to provide good value to its students, which in turn will have a positive effect on the lives of SLD children and their families.

SPELD NZ has regular, ongoing interaction with a wide stakeholder group through varying mechanisms and at all levels of the organisation as a core feature of its operation. These mechanisms include: daily contact with students; student satisfaction surveys; regular staff meetings; surveys undertaken with staff and stakeholders; participation in professional bodies; consultation with teachers, professional agencies and parents; and local liaison committee meetings. The composition and functionality of the local liaison committee network is a strong feature. SPELD NZ has a network of 23 local liaison groups throughout New Zealand, each of which meets at least four times a year. The information from these meetings is fed back to the national office, professional standards committee and the SPELD NZ Board and is used to inform future strategy and programme planning.

Programmes are delivered in various formats (e.g. block courses; consecutive Saturdays; evenings) and venues throughout New Zealand to best meet the needs of students. The level 5 course is available either face to face (in Auckland and occasionally Wellington and Christchurch) or online. Students may, at appropriate points, elect to swap from online to face to face and vice versa to meet their personal needs.

Staff at SPELD NZ have engaged with the (NZQA) Targeted Review of Qualifications process and actively participate in the special education working group.

SPELD NZ regularly contributes to stakeholder surveys (e.g. a submission to the New Zealand Teachers Council about proposed changes) and has been invited by the Ministry of Education to participate in the upcoming review of its booklet for schools on dyslexia.

SPELD NZ engages with tertiary institutions, collaborating with Victoria University medical students on their training programme and with University of Auckland education department students and the psychology department on undergraduate and postgraduate research programmes.

#### 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

There was clear evidence of excellent teaching practice taking place at SPELD NZ. All staff are enthusiastic and passionate about their curriculum and teaching, and they are well supported by management. Every staff member at SPELD NZ has a role in student learning and they take a collegial, whole-of-organisation approach to ensuring that all students achieve.

Course directors (tutors) and students relate well to each other. Students spoke highly of SPELD NZ's staff. They liked the open, friendly style and find their learning activities interesting and challenging. Students have good access to staff outside of formal classes and can make continuous suggestions about improvements. Students noted that staff were responsive to concerns or issues raised. The strong rapport between students and staff was evident from discussions and evaluation survey outcomes.

Staff are well qualified and have in-depth knowledge of the subject material and considerable experience working with SLD children. SPELD NZ directors and teachers re-register every three years. Re-registration criteria are based on New Zealand Teachers Council criteria and include professional development activities and the successful outcome of appraisal. SPELD NZ organises a bi-annual conference with renowned international speakers to raise the awareness of SPELD NZ teaching interventions and to provide networking and professional development opportunities.

The organisation has robust selection and induction processes for new course directors which include observations, peer teaching, and a 'buddy' support system. The evaluation team commented that the level 3 course director based in Christchurch is sometimes, because of geography, forced to work in isolation from

*Final Report*

the three course directors in the North Island. SPELD NZ management immediately undertook to provide increased support for this staff member.

Moderation is systematic and comprehensive, which ensures that assessments are valid and reliable. As well as a very thorough internal moderation process overseen by the professional standards committee, SPELD NZ has used Aoraki Polytechnic for external moderation.

SPELD NZ has a regular and reliable system for students to evaluate and provide feedback on teaching and other aspects of the programme. This feedback is analysed, discussed, acted upon as appropriate, and formally reported to the professional standards committee. Actions resulting from student evaluations are also reported back to students in a timely manner. The formal feedback from students, as well as the wealth of informal comments they receive, provides teaching and management staff with valuable information which is used effectively to identify new or alternative learning strategies.

SPELD NZ has a management and peer observation programme for its course directors. The performance of the teaching staff is formally reviewed on an annual basis, but this does not preclude regular and ongoing feedback of a formative nature. Teaching staff spoke about how they share ideas, experiences and knowledge through their regular interaction and staff meetings. Staff meetings are held (via Skype) at least bi-monthly, where much of the discussion is centred on teaching practice, and staff report that this had led to improved practice.

Although they have extensive industry and professional experience, and an obvious natural passion and ability to engage students, few of the current teaching staff hold an adult teaching qualification. SPELD NZ has identified this as an area for professional development for course directors, and has provided a workshop at the 2013 regional conferences on teaching adult learners. Most of the active directors of the level 3 and 5 courses attended this workshop. The evaluation team believes there is a need for stronger policy and practice in this area.

## 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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 **Excellent**.

SPELD NZ faces different support requirements to those of providers of full-time courses, but what support services it does provide are appropriate to the courses delivered. Course directors have, over time, monitored progress and achievement in order to profile students so that they are able to anticipate which students will need support, what support they will need, and when they will likely need it. This enables them to identify potentially at-risk students and to proactively plan and provide support on an individual basis to ensure that it directly contributes to student achievement.

*Final Report*

SPELD NZ has found through experience that many of the support needs of students, especially level 5 students, are centred on fitting the demands of their study around already busy working and family lives. Although staff go to great lengths to ensure that potential students are informed of the demands of the course, inevitably a few students enrol with unrealistic expectations about the amount of study they will be able to manage. Students interviewed confirmed that they had received extensive pre-enrolment guidance.

At least 10 per cent of students on SPELD NZ courses themselves have specific learning disabilities. As expected, SPELD NZ has well-proven strategies and support to ensure that these students are able to fully participate and achieve.

Students have access to SPELD NZ teaching staff outside of class hours, either in person, by telephone, or by email. Students reported that they feel comfortable contacting staff and always get a helpful response.

SPELD NZ has detailed and robust procedures for resolving complaints. Feedback from students was that any complaint or feedback was addressed promptly and appropriately. However, some dissatisfaction was communicated by students about undue delays in some of SPELD NZ's administration processes.

SPELD NZ does not currently enrol international students and therefore is not a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

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

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

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

SPELD NZ has strong leadership and a clear vision and understanding of its business. The organisational strategy is formally documented, and management and staff have a common understanding of vision and direction. Recent self-assessment documents provide evidence of effective analysis of information from a variety of sources, and additional direction for future actions.

Resourcing is effectively planned and provided for all courses. The SPELD NZ premises in Auckland are ideally located and well suited to the training. SPELD NZ has made very good use of communication technology to engage with and encourage participation by staff throughout New Zealand.

The organisation has, over time, employed, developed and retained a competent, well-qualified and dedicated group of teaching and administrative staff whom it supports effectively to foster educational achievement. All staff have a professional development plan which incorporates both the individual needs of the staff member and the strategic direction of the organisation. Staff reported that they are

supported, and often funded, to attend a variety of professional development events.

Staff obviously enjoy the environment and are valued by the organisation. Management is open in its appreciation of the efforts, loyalty and dedication of staff, especially given the voluntary nature of the organisation. Staff members are equally appreciative of the leadership and passion demonstrated by management.

Monitoring of performance at all levels of the organisation is regular, transparent and open. It is evident that the monitoring of performance, while often challenging, is always supportive and focused on providing the best possible outcomes for students. The organisation enthusiastically encourages opportunities for reflection on its role and how to better meet stakeholder needs. This has led to a highly reflective environment and culture throughout.

## Focus Areas

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

### 2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

### 2.2 Focus area: Programme design and delivery

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

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

# Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.



# 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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*Final Report*