

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Solutions in Seafood Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 16 May 2012

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MoE Number: 7677
NZQA Reference: C06952
Date of EER visit: 7 and 8 March 2012

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:	Solutions in Seafood Limited
Location:	416 Suffolk Road, Nelson
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	2004
Number of students:	Domestic: 87 students in 2011
Number of staff:	One full-time and six part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	<p>Solutions in Seafood Limited (SIS) provides training to the seafood industry and food companies. Customised training packages, based on relevant unit standards (up to level 6), are delivered in response to employer/client needs.</p> <p>Programmes are offered in seafood processing, seafood retail, aquaculture, health and safety. Communication and team-building courses are delivered in conjunction with another registered provider.</p>
Sites:	Training is delivered in the trainees' workplace or other off-site venues.
Distinctive characteristics:	SIS is both a training provider and a provider of consultancy services to the seafood and food industries.
Recent significant changes:	Nil
Previous quality assurance history:	The NZQA quality assurance audit in 2008 found that SIS met all requirements.

Other: Seventy per cent of training is delivered within the Nelson/Marlborough region with the remainder delivered nationwide.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review included:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Seafood processing.

The first focus area is mandatory, and seafood processing is a major area of training provided.

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.

A team of two evaluators visited SIS over two days. Interviews were held with the owner-managing director, administration manager, and two trainers. Telephone interviews were also conducted with trainees and employers, as well as with several staff of the Seafood Industry Training Organisation (SITO). A number of documents and other resources were sighted and reviewed.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Solutions in Seafood Limited**.

Nearly all trainees successfully complete the training package (comprising one or more unit standards) they enrol in, provided they remain in employment within the industry. For 2011, 123 of 124 trainees completed (99 per cent), while in 2010, 293 of 304 trainees (96 per cent) completed. The validity of this achievement data is assured by SIS assessment practices which meet the national standards and external moderation requirements of SITO. Trainees are gaining useful and practical skills and knowledge which they are applying to their workplace. Employers confirm that this not only enables them to better meet regulatory requirements, but also adds value to their businesses, such as improved accuracy and food safety standards, and contributes to staff retention. These outcomes confirm the high standard of training and ongoing trainee support provided by SIS, which was commented on by all stakeholders.

Trainees are gaining highly relevant skills and knowledge from customised packages delivered by experienced trainers who are also engaged as consultants in the seafood and food industries. Trainees reported improved study skills and confidence as a result of their learning experiences as well as achievement of unit standards. They also valued the opportunity to network with other seafood workers, which broadened their understanding of the industry.

Employer feedback and documentation confirms that SIS's contribution to identifying industry trends and future training needs is highly valued. Employers are very satisfied with the flexibility and responsiveness of SIS in meeting their requirements for workforce development and compliance. A stable client base and high levels of repeat business are evidence of SIS's reputation as industry experts. This was also confirmed by SITO.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Solutions in Seafood Limited**.

SIS has a strong culture of improvement and striving for excellence in seafood and aquaculture training which underpins the organisation's educational performance. There is good evidence of well-established training and administrative systems and practices, which are comprehensive, well documented, and understood by all staff. The validity and reliability of the achievement data is assured by SIS's thorough assessment and moderation practices, which include monitoring the number of reassessments and the time taken by trainees to complete work-based projects. Documentary evidence of regular meetings as well as informal exchanges

confirmed that all staff are actively involved in reflecting on feedback and data, identifying actions and reviewing outcomes.

Effective self-assessment practices are used to maintain high levels of learner achievement. Staff communicate effectively with employers (who select the trainees) to ensure that learner needs are understood and met. Educational performance at SIS is largely monitored through careful management of each package of training (which typically includes a mix of classroom delivery and workplace-based observations or projects, and assessment) and follow-up on each student's progress. SIS closely monitors completions of training packages and reflects on trainee and employer feedback which is collected regularly. Data from all sources is reviewed at six-weekly staff meetings as well as collated and analysed for trends on a quarterly basis. Evidence was sighted of changes made to training delivery and resources, arising from both formal and informal stakeholder consultation and analysis, which have contributed to improved outcomes for trainees. These changes included revisions to course resources (to match changes in industry or to aid learner comprehension) and restructuring of training packages (such as spreading an intensive two-day course over five days and adding a work-based component).

The frequent engagement of SIS staff with local and national seafood-related organisations and employers ensures that industry needs and expectations are well understood and met. In addition to quarterly meetings of an advisory committee involving two major employers, SIS uses its regular contact with SITO and other industry agencies to identify knowledge gaps and to develop new training packages, as well as to contribute to the development of new unit standards.

While SIS has consistently achieved high satisfaction ratings (greater than 80 per cent) from stakeholder surveys for a number of years, new targets and approaches to analysing the data are being developed. A process for follow-up phone calls to a sample of trainees has recently been implemented and is providing further information for evaluating the ongoing relevance and usefulness of the training in the workplace.

Findings¹

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**.

Learner achievement at SIS is at a consistently high level. Nearly all trainees successfully complete the training package (comprising one or more unit standards) they enrol in, provided they remain in employment within the industry. For 2011, 123 of 124 trainees completed (99 per cent), while in 2010, 293 of 304 trainees (96 per cent) completed. These results reflect a consistent focus by SIS trainers on providing excellent classroom training that is appropriate for learners of varied educational backgrounds. A high level of ongoing support is also available for trainees completing workplace-based projects or observations. As well as achieving the learning outcomes of specific unit standards, trainees are acquiring useful and practical skills and knowledge which they are applying in their workplaces. Trainees also reported having gained improved study skills and confidence as a result of the learning experience, and a broader understanding of the seafood industry. These positive outcomes were confirmed by employers.

While there are limited opportunities for meaningful external benchmarking, SIS maintains a strong internal focus on learner achievement, including regular monitoring, data collection, and analysis, and the validity and reliability of the achievement data is assured by SIS's thorough assessment and moderation practices. In 2011 only one trainee (out of 69 trainee enrolments) in seafood processing did not complete, having left the industry. As the internal target of 80 per cent completion has been consistently exceeded across all programmes for some years, SIS is currently reviewing it as part of the focus on continuous improvement. SIS works closely with SITO, which monitors the completions of trainees working towards seafood-related national certificates.

The evaluators found that SIS systematically engages in organisation-wide self-assessment activity focussed on learner achievement to ensure consistently high standards are maintained. Educational performance at SIS is largely monitored through careful management of each package of training and follow-up on each student's progress. Evidence includes records, dating back to at least 2006, of systematic tracking of individual outcomes by programme, and, since 2010, quarterly collation of data and trend analysis across all provision. Meeting minutes and other evidence were sighted of reflection on programme delivery and changes

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

which have led to improvements in learner achievement, such as programme restructuring to better integrate theoretical training with work experience.

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**.

SIS has a very good understanding of the training outcomes sought by employer-clients and is very effective in meeting client expectations and providing value for money. These outcomes include general upskilling of staff in relation to seafood regulatory and compliance obligations, as well as targeted workforce development initiatives. Employers confirmed that SIS training contributes significantly to their businesses' ability to meet regulatory requirements, and also noted outcomes such as higher levels of accuracy and food safety standards as well as improvements to staff retention. Employers particularly value the responsiveness of SIS in customising training packages to meet identified knowledge gaps. Stakeholders interviewed by the evaluators noted the reputation of the managing director as one of the most experienced and knowledgeable trainers in the industry. A stable client base and high levels of repeat business provide further evidence of SIS's value to employers and trainees. SITO representatives also attested to the high value they placed on the expertise and industry knowledge of SIS, who they noted was proactive in recommending changes to unit standards and recognised as a leader within the industry.

Trainees highly value the practicality and work relevance of the training. It was reported that training provided participants with a greater understanding of the context of their job requirements, which was particularly useful for those moving into new roles. Trainees also appreciated the opportunities the training provided for team building as well as developing their networks within the wider industry. An example was provided where knowledge gained about food preparation and hygiene was shared with whānau and the wider community.

Trainees complete course evaluations, which are analysed and discussed at staff meetings and used to identify areas for improvement. SIS targets a minimum of 80 per cent student satisfaction and routinely achieves well above this level. A process for following up with a selection of trainees after one year has recently been implemented and is providing further information for SIS in evaluating the usefulness and relevance of the learning.

The frequent engagement of SIS staff with local and national seafood-related organisations and employers ensures that client needs and expectations are well understood and met. This engagement includes monthly meetings with key client organisations and frequent emails and phone calls. Informal feedback is documented and reported at staff meetings, alongside the findings of the annual

client reviews, as a basis for identifying areas for future training or further development.

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**.

SIS is highly effective in developing training packages in response to the requirements of employers and the wider industry. Appropriate systems support the identification and analysis of training needs and the programme development process. Examples were provided to the evaluators of improvements being made to training content which maintained alignment with current industry practices. SIS has also been proactive in identifying a knowledge gap within the industry. Subsequently, the organisation was instrumental in the creation of a new unit standard and the development of resources and the initial delivery of the unit.

Training times are flexible, depending on shift work requirements, and may include evening or weekend sessions. This flexibility is highly valued by employers. The Success in Teams programme, which was delivered in association with a local outdoor education centre, was cited as an innovative response to an employer seeking to develop staff capability as trainers and team leaders. In addition, an advisory committee, involving representatives of two major employers, meets quarterly and provides an opportunity to discuss industry trends and developments, and to identify training needs.

Many of SIS's learners do not choose to enrol but are required by their employers to participate, particularly in compliance-related training. Some are initially reluctant or do not understand the purpose of the training, or have learning-related difficulties. SIS works closely with employers to minimise the potential for problems and to ensure learners' needs are understood and met. Steps taken include establishing clear requirements for each training package (such as ensuring relevant work experience is available for each trainee), encouraging advance identification of individual learning needs (such as hearing impairment or low levels of literacy), and reviewing the timing of the sessions (particularly for shift workers or vessel-based staff).

SIS is very effective in developing improvements to individual training packages in response to trainee feedback and tutorial reviews. Regular staff meetings provide opportunities to determine responses which are systematically recorded and implemented before the next delivery. The outcomes of changes are reviewed to ensure intended improvements in educational performance or client satisfaction have been achieved. Examples sighted by the evaluators ranged from minor changes to venue and catering, revisions to course resources (to match changes in industry or to aid learner comprehension), and significant restructuring of packages

(spreading an intensive two-day course over five days and adding a work-based component).

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 **Good**.

Learner achievement and positive client feedback indicate that the standard of training at SIS is high. Client feedback shows that, despite initial trepidation for some learners, most enjoyed the training experience. In some instances, pre-course work is required, which helps to make the learning more relevant. Trainees interviewed by the evaluators confirmed that they had experienced good classroom relationships and were encouraged to ask questions. Additional assistance was available if trainees needed it, particularly in relation to their work-based projects. Course resources are well organised and of high quality, blending theory and practical activities and utilising a variety of teaching aids. Delivery is adjusted as necessary to match the educational backgrounds and needs of the learners.

Effective teaching is supported by regular discussion and the willingness of all staff to share good practice and resources and to support each other. SIS has a stable pool of contract trainers who are also engaged as consultants in the seafood industry. This combination of roles maintains their exposure to changing seafood industry practices and methods, and ensures the currency of their knowledge. The agenda for each six-weekly staff meeting also includes a regular item for technical updates and information sharing. All trainers have relevant academic qualifications for the level at which they are teaching, as well as significant industry experience. They also have prior training experience and/or formal adult teaching and assessment qualifications. Staff appraisals are conducted annually and appropriate professional development is identified and funded, including attendance at conferences and training by professional associations. While some informal teaching observations have taken place, a more systematic approach could provide further opportunities to enhance teaching effectiveness.

SIS has a thorough approach to the development, delivery, and review of programmes. Assessment processes are fair and transparent, resulting in valid outcomes. Procedures for pre- and post-assessment moderation are well documented and staff meeting minutes provide evidence of regular discussions and follow-up actions. SITO confirmed that SIS is assessing at the national standard and meeting national external moderation requirements and is responsive to any issues raised.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

SIS is highly effective in meeting the needs of its learners, both in terms of reducing barriers to learning and fostering achievement. SIS works closely with companies and SITO (which nominates trainees) to ensure that each trainee is equipped to succeed in the units of study, including access to the required practical experience in the workplace. Specific information is provided on the entry requirements for each training package. Advance notice of specific learning challenges (such as hearing impairment, low levels of literacy, or English as a second language) is sought to ensure that suitable adjustments can be made to resources or classroom delivery methods, and translators made available if required. Small classes enable individual attention and support, and verbal, rather than written, assessments are available when necessary.

A number of training packages involve SIS trainers being engaged in ongoing work-based relationships with individual trainees, either observing trainees' practical work or helping them with their projects. Both employers and trainees attested to the supportive quality of these relationships and the effectiveness of this approach in fostering the high level of completions. Steps are taken to resolve any workplace difficulties with the company in the interests of trainees.

All trainees receive a handbook in advance of the training and are given opportunities at the end of the programme to provide feedback on the learning experience and environment. SIS is regularly achieving student satisfaction ratings in excess of the target of 80 per cent. There was good documentary evidence of the ways in which this feedback has been collated and analysed, discussed, and used to make improvements.

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

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

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

The managing director and staff of SIS share a vision for excellence in the provision of expertise and training services to the seafood industry. This is grounded in a reflective organisational culture and supported by plans and processes for all aspects of development, delivery, and assessment, which are particularly comprehensive and well documented for an organisation of this size. Leadership and communication practices are open and inclusive, ensuring all staff members are able to contribute to organisational planning and improvement. The evaluators saw evidence of both regular operational meetings and informal

communications, which were focussed on stakeholder needs and individual student progress. These processes are followed through with systematic tracking of improvements and review of outcomes.

The annual planning cycle provides for full staff engagement with strategic and business planning. This approach contributes to the alignment between day-to-day activities and strategy, which could be enhanced by the inclusion in these plans of specific objectives for educational performance. SIS has the capacity to respond well to change, including the current challenging economic environment which is affecting the type and amount of training requested by external stakeholders, while still maintaining high standards of learner achievement.

Both the consultancy and training programmes of SIS are delivered by the same staff. A number of stakeholders identified this as providing added value for trainees, who are receiving customised training from industry experts who are up to date with the latest industry practices and developments as well as the regulatory environment. The tutorial team is well supported, with well-organised and comprehensive teaching resources and opportunities for professional development.

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: Seafood Processing

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

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those expressed or implied within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>

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