

Report of External Evaluation and Review

First Training Limited

Date of report: 27 April 2010

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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.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Auckland

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: First Aid courses from four hours to two days in length

Approximately 1200 enrolments per annum

Five instructors, including two full-time and three part-time, and one office support person

Sites: Training is delivered primarily in the Auckland and Canterbury regions, at temporary sites or where it is required by client organisations.

First Training was first registered with NZQA as a private training establishment in 2006, and currently offers a range of first aid courses. These include customised training for specific client organisations, a refresher first aid certificate, and a full comprehensive first aid certificate. Some courses include assessment against unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework for those who require these. First Training has staff with particular strengths in customising first aid training for organisations operating in the outdoors or in remote locations.

The most recent NZQA quality audit of First Training was conducted in 2009, and the organisation met the requirements for ongoing registration.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of First Training.

First Training offers a wide range of first aid courses. These are well designed and customised to suit organisations' requirements. Other courses are more standardised and designed for learners to update their first aid knowledge and renew their first aid certificates, or to get their first aid certificate for the first time. Some of these courses include assessment against unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework, including unit standards for basic first aid and first aid in the outdoors. The achievement rate across all courses is over 95 per cent. Longer-term benefits are gathered through learners' stories and these frequently include reference to the increase in learners' confidence and calmness of mind when faced with real emergencies.

Feedback from learners indicates that courses have an appropriate mixture of theory and practice and that this is delivered in a manner which enables deep learning and confidence using the techniques learned.

First Training has appropriate processes within the organisation, engages external specialists, and maintains membership with professional bodies to ensure the validity and currency of its delivery and assessment material. The organisation is assessing against unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework at the national standard, as deemed by the standard-setting body.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **not yet confident** in the capability in self-assessment of First Training.

First Training has recently undergone some management changes and the current owner is aware of the need to develop staff skills and organisational processes to monitor and review a wider range of activities and outcomes. The organisation has an existing system to monitor the design, delivery, and assessment of the courses, and this is generally working well. However, some aspects of the monitoring system are informal or ad hoc, and while there was no evidence of any major gaps, the informal nature of these checks and balances potentially puts the organisation in a vulnerable position.

First Training has well-developed processes to identify and design courses to meet client organisations' needs. The organisation identifies the individual student's learning needs and is addressing those needs well, within the tight time allowed on its short courses.

It was clear at this evaluation that First Training knows what is working well within the organisation and knows how well its learners are achieving, and these factors are well tracked and monitored. The organisation benchmarks its performance largely through informal networking relationships with other providers of first aid, specifically outdoor safety and emergency management groups, and close involvement with the Surf Lifesaving Association of New Zealand and the New Zealand Resuscitation Council.

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 TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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).

Findings

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

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/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of First Training included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

This evaluation also included the following programme focus area:

- First Aid Training.

Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

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 **Good**.

Context

- Courses range from four hours to two days and result in the achievement of either certificates of attendance for those requiring general knowledge only, or comprehensive first aid certificates
- Between 95 and 100 per cent of students that attend achieve their certificate
- Feedback from learners indicates that they gain deep learning and make real gains in confidence to apply the learning

- First Training is a small company, where the owner and director is also an instructor
- Good management practices are evident, with appropriate planning, and consultation with a business mentor where this is needed
- Office support staff maintain clear and accurate records of learners' achievements.

Explanation

Participants enrol with First Training for a variety of reasons. Many attend to gain a general knowledge of first aid techniques, to renew their comprehensive first aid certificate, or to gain their comprehensive first aid certificate, including unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework. First Training learners achieve a very high level of success, ranging between 95 and 100 per cent.

Course evaluations and subsequent communications indicate that learners achieve a deep level of learning and understanding, and subsequent confidence to use what they have learned in emergency situations. Interviews with course participants and client company representatives confirmed this.

First Training is a small company with one owner and director who is also an instructor. The owner is involved on a day-to-day basis with all staff, providing close internal communications and clarity of direction. There is an appropriate level of business planning for the size of the organisation, including consultation with a business mentor for support. Business records are well established and maintained, and learners' achievements are well documented in an accurate and timely manner.

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 **Good**.

Context

- Learners are trained using current best practice pre-hospital emergency care first aid
- The community gains through the increase in the number of people with first aid knowledge
- Eighty per cent of courses are delivered to existing client organisations
- Feedback from learners and client companies shows the training is very highly valued
- Organisational procedures for monitoring the value of training is mostly informal and ad hoc but largely fits the size of the organisation
- Organisational self-assessment practices are in development.

Explanation

First Training maintains the currency of its course content through appropriate professional associations, such as annual re-certification through the New Zealand Resuscitation Council, ongoing involvement with the Professional Emergency Care Association of New Zealand, and attending annual conferences.

Learners provide written feedback at the end of their training, and this shows overwhelming satisfaction with the training provided and indicates that the knowledge and skills gained are very highly valued. Longer-term feedback from learners and client companies is collected on an informal basis and through ad hoc processes. This arrangement fits the size of the organisation currently.

Around 80 per cent of courses are delivered to previous learners and client companies, and this repeat business is a good indicator that the training offered is highly valued. This confidence and satisfaction with the training was confirmed through interviews with client companies and learners during this evaluation.

Longer-term or wider community-valued outcomes have been more difficult for First Training to measure. However, anecdotally many learners and organisations have stated that the purpose of the training is general readiness in case of an emergency rather than for any personal benefit.

The organisational self-assessment practices are to some extent informal and ad hoc and in development, although overall the manager has a good level of knowledge of where the business is working well and where there are gaps, and is actively using that knowledge to make improvements such as including specific accident scenarios to suit client company workplace situations.

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 **Good**.

Context

- Learners' particular needs are assessed during course registration and on the first morning of the course
- Material is continually updated and adapted to better meet learners' and organisations' specific requirements
- Practical scenarios for first aid treatment techniques are developed to meet specific client company requirements, e.g. in a bush or beach setting
- The length and nature of courses vary to suit learners' and client companies' needs
- Organisational evaluation of this area has some formal processes and some informal or ad hoc processes.

Explanation

First Training asks learners at the time of registration to identify any specific learning needs and on the first morning of a course the tutor monitors the group for any obvious barriers to success. This approach has worked well as indicated by the achievement rates.

The organisation has a well-developed practice of updating and modifying course materials regularly to simplify language, or to clarify scenarios and procedures as issues are identified.

Courses are well matched to meet the specific needs of learners and client companies. Many courses are specifically designed for client company requirements, such as holding the training in a beach or bush setting to match the workplace requirements as closely as possible. A wide range of courses are offered in response to learners' requirements, such as half-day courses for those requiring a general knowledge of basic first aid for children, or two full days for those requiring assessment against unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework.

As already noted, the organisation's self-assessment practices are in development. However, the current processes for collecting feedback from clients are well established, fit the current size of the organisation, and are used to make improvements to the training offered. First Training is currently planning for growth and has appropriate plans to further strengthen its evaluation practices to monitor its performance.

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 **Adequate**.

Context

- There is clear evidence that learners achieve very well
- Instructors are highly regarded by learners and client companies and maintain annual certification with the New Zealand Resuscitation Council
- Many courses are run with two instructors, matched for their strengths
- Tutors are well chosen for the knowledge of first aid techniques, communication, and presentation skills
- Excellent resources are provided and well maintained, and assessments are validated appropriately
- Procedures to monitor tutor performance are informal and ad hoc, and potentially leave the organisation vulnerable.

Explanation

There is clear evidence that shows teaching is effective, such as the very high achievement rates for learners, the very high regard and support from learners, and very positive comments from client companies. All instructors maintain appropriate qualifications and are re-certified annually by the New Zealand Resuscitation Council.

Many courses are run with two instructors due to the number of learners enrolled. The manager of First Training matches team-teaching instructors very well for their complementary strengths, and this is noted and valued by client companies. Learners and client company representatives interviewed during this evaluation particularly noted how well instructors engaged with the learners using a wide variety of teaching strategies, and maintained a fun learning environment in what could otherwise be very challenging subject matter. All personnel interviewed during this evaluation spoke very highly of the quality of the instruction and the subsequent ability of the participants to apply their knowledge in real-life situations. Instructors are provided with excellent and appropriate resources for the theoretical and practical aspects of the training. Assessment practice is validated within the organisation, and externally through engagement with the appropriate standard-setting body which has confirmed that assessments are meeting the national standard.

Organisational practices to monitor tutor performance are currently informal and not uniformly applied, which could potentially put the company in a vulnerable situation. However, as already noted, the manager is aware of the situation and is developing a more structured approach to monitoring teaching performance.

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**.

Context

- Student support is appropriate for the type and length of courses
- Assessments are adapted to allow learners to be reassessed in order to demonstrate competence, e.g. for deaf learners to use a signing support person
- Medical issues and learning barriers are accommodated appropriately, and where competence cannot be demonstrated certificates of participation are issued
- Learner satisfaction surveys show a high level of satisfaction with the level of support offered.

Explanation

First Training identifies participants' barriers to success well and puts appropriate steps in place to accommodate or adjust the theory and practical aspects of the course and the assessment practices to support learners to gain competence. The very high achievement rates of between 95 and 100 per cent indicate that this support is successful.

Where a learner is unable to independently fulfil the requirements of the training and demonstrate competence satisfactorily, First Training issues a Certificate of Attendance.

Learner satisfaction surveys and client company informal feedback show consistently high satisfaction with the level of support provided.

Although self-assessment practices across all of the organisational functions are in development, the current processes for evaluating students' satisfaction and the informal

client company networking processes are providing sufficient and effective confirmation to management in this area.

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 **Good**.

Context

- The organisation has recently undergone an ownership change with one shareholder departing the business. Some aspects of the management of the re-formed business are still in development
- The owner and director of this training is also an active instructor
- The organisation has recently appointed a full-time instructor with the intention of freeing up the manager's time to focus on the business
- Office staff and office systems are well developed to track and monitor achievements and to follow up arising issues
- There is an appropriate level of sophistication to the organisation's quality system for its current size
- Instructors' qualifications and certification with the New Zealand Resuscitation Council is monitored appropriately by the manager
- An advisory network is used to provide external input to the organisation and to provide advice on specialist first aid techniques
- Current self-assessment practices rely primarily on informal processes and face-to-face discussions, although some areas are more formalised and documented.

Explanation

With the recent ownership change to First Training, the owner and manager acknowledges there are some aspects of business planning and quality monitoring that need strengthening. To this extent an external business mentor has been contracted to provide advice and support in the interim. The primary area requiring strengthening is with the organisational monitoring and reviewing practices, to ensure these are sufficiently robust for the planned growth of the company.

The organisation has recently appointed a full-time instructor in the Auckland region and this will free up the manager, who is currently acting as a course instructor, to focus more directly on the management of the company.

First Training employs a dedicated office support person, and has well-developed systems and processes to track learner achievements, student satisfaction comments, and client company comments. The organisation's systems and processes are sufficiently sophisticated for the size of its current operations. However, as the company plans to grow,

the current informal processes for tracking and monitoring the organisation's success may need to be further developed.

Management is proactive in monitoring that all instructors maintain annual certification with the New Zealand Resuscitation Council in order to ensure the quality and validity of the courses. The manager also consults within her informal networks to gain appropriate specialist advice on first aid techniques and current best practice.

Although current quality monitoring practices rely mainly on informal processes and face-to-face discussions, some areas are more formalised and documented. There was evidence at this evaluation that the organisation is making appropriate improvements, such as with course materials and assessment practice. However, this area needs to be further strengthened, especially as the company grows, to ensure that there is a systematic approach to monitoring all parts of the business and using the results of this to make improvements.

Statements of Confidence

The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of First Training.

- First Training provides a wide range of well-designed first aid courses, which are customised to suit the specific requirements of client companies.
- Between 95 and 100 per cent of learners achieve success on these courses
- Evidence of longer-term benefits, although very difficult to define specifically, are recorded to some extent through learners' stories, such as developing the confidence and ability to remain calm when faced with real emergencies
- Courses are very well delivered and engage well with learners. This point was reiterated from several sources during this evaluation
- First Training has established processes to monitor and ensure the quality of instruction, and engages external specialists for external input to enhance first aid techniques for particular situations
- The organisation maintains an active network with professional bodies to ensure the validity and currency of its delivery and assessment material. The organisation is assessing against unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework at the national standard, as deemed by the standard-setting body.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **not yet confident** in the capability in self-assessment of First Training.

- Recent changes to the ownership and management of First Training has meant some of the capability for internally monitoring the organisation's success is no longer in place. Management is aware of this and is currently contracting with a business mentor to build this aspect of the business
- The current systems of monitoring the design, delivery, and assessment of the courses are working well. However, in some areas this is informal or ad hoc and could potentially put the organisation at risk
- One of the strengths of this training organisation is the manner in which it customises its courses for client companies' specific needs. Individual learners' needs are well met within the confines of its short courses which run from four hours to two days
- It was clear at this evaluation that First Training knows what is working well within the organisation and knows how well its learners are achieving, and these factors

are well tracked and monitored. The organisation benchmarks its performance largely through informal networking relationships with other providers of first aid, specifically outdoor safety and emergency management groups, and close involvement with the Surf Lifesaving Association of New Zealand and the New Zealand Resuscitation Council.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Future actions

Because NZQA is Not Yet Confident First Training's capability in self-assessment, NZQA will contact the organisation within 20 working days of this report to agree upon an appropriate quality improvement plan.

The plan is intended to enable First Training to work towards achieving a judgement of at least Confident in relation to capability in self-assessment. Implementation of this plan will be monitored by NZQA. When the plan has been completed, or at any time deemed necessary by NZQA, another external evaluation and review will be scheduled.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from this EER.

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