



Report of External Evaluation and Review

The Learning Wave

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 21 November 2014

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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:	The Learning Wave Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 2, Suite One, 582 Karangahape Road, Auckland CBD
Delivery sites:	As above, and client company sites as required
First registered:	2007
Courses currently delivered:	Workplace Literacy, First Line Management, health and safety short courses, sales development
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	551 trainees in total Approximately 73 equivalent full-time trainees (EFTS) – 390 on Workplace Literacy (40 hours training = 13 EFTS) and 161 National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Levels 3 or 4) 45 credits = 60 EFTS
Number of staff:	Twelve head office staff and 20 'associates' (part-time contract trainer/facilitators) and approximately 20 further contractors on call as required
Scope of active accreditation:	NZQA-approved course – National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Levels 3 and 4) Consent to assess a variety of domains and unit standards up to levels 4 and 5

Distinctive characteristics:	<p>The Learning Wave provides customised training for client companies, primarily in New Zealand but also in Australia.</p> <p>Training is delivered to client companies' employees through short and long courses to meet business needs across a wide range of skill and knowledge areas, including leadership, literacy and numeracy, time management, health and safety, sales performance and working in teams.</p> <p>The Learning Wave also offers a consultancy service covering, for example, organisational improvement and organisational design.</p>
Recent significant changes:	N/A
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>The Learning Wave was most recently evaluated by NZQA in November 2010, resulting in NZQA being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly Confident in educational performance • Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment. <p>The Learning Wave has consent to assess for unit standards on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, and the most recent external moderation of its assessments by NZQA indicated minor issues with two pieces of assessment. The errors identified have been addressed and improvements put in place prior to further assessments occurring.</p> <p>External moderation is also carried out by Competenz ITO for industry trainees completing off-job training delivered by The Learning Wave. Competenz notes that assessments are at the national standard.</p>

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This evaluation reviewed the Workplace Literacy and First Line Management programmes, because they include approximately 50 per cent of The Learning Wave's training activity and provide an insight into the organisation through two quite different lenses. Governance and management were also reviewed to explore the extent to which the organisation maintains a focus on quality education

processes and outcomes, and keeps abreast of changes in the tertiary education environment.

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 the Karangahape Road head office in Auckland for one and a half days. The evaluators held face-to-face interviews with two of the three owner-directors (the third was overseas). Phone interviews were held with a sample of contract facilitators, trainees and client company contacts to gain their views. This evaluation also included a review of a range of the organisation's documents and records.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **The Learning Wave**.

- The Learning Wave is exceeding its contract commitments to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) for the Workplace Literacy programme. In the last three years, while the contract target for trainees improving their literacy and numeracy has remained at 80 per cent, The Learning Wave has achieved approximately 10 per cent above this. Māori and Pasifika trainees make gains at similar rates to all others.
- First Line Management trainees are completing their qualification at consistently high rates, between 88 and 91 per cent in the last three years.
- Training materials are developed and adapted to suit individual client company needs including the company ‘look and feel’, incorporating company graphics, signage, language and terminology. This embedded literacy is resulting in a high level of value gained by trainees and the client companies.
- Client company surveys highlight a wide range of value added benefits resulting from training over a number of years. These include a range of ‘soft skills’¹ such as confidence, problem-solving, accuracy and timekeeping, but they also extend to workplace efficiencies such as improved documentation, productivity, and understanding of written instructions.
- The Learning Wave has hired staff and contractors with appropriate skills, experience, qualifications and attitudes, to develop training and assessment materials that are fit for purpose, and to deliver that training. In many cases this includes successfully motivating reluctant learners with little or no previous educational success.
- The organisation has a clear vision and core values, effective and innovative leadership, and management processes and styles. This has resulted in a high-performing organisation, as indicated by long-term repeat business with a number of major New Zealand companies, and an ongoing contract with the TEC for workplace literacy.
- There was clear evidence at this evaluation that The Learning Wave ‘delivers what it promises’ as stated by one stakeholder. This was consistently evidenced at this evaluation through the organisation’s self-

¹ ‘Soft skills’ are varyingly referred to as transferable skills, workplace-readiness skills, employability skills or capability skills.

assessment and documentation, management and staff interviews, and external stakeholder interviews.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **The Learning Wave**.

- The Learning Wave has effective data collection and analysis processes across all aspects of its business; this information is used effectively to review and improve performance. There was a good level of evidence that the organisation develops innovative responses that are effective in matching and meeting the needs of client companies, trainees and other stakeholders.
- Client company needs analysis is very strong. The Learning Wave actively involves client company staff in the design of programmes and programme materials to directly incorporate the look and feel of the company. Training achievement rates and added value confirm that both the client companies' and trainees' needs are appropriately assessed, understood and met.
- Trainee and client company surveys are conducted. The data is collated and analysed effectively and used for ongoing improvements to processes and programmes, resulting in improved educational results and improvements for trainees and client companies. Many practical examples were evidenced at this evaluation, demonstrating how the training had directly benefited trainees and client company processes and outcomes.
- The Learning Wave management and staff provided evidence of ongoing high performance and strong self-assessment – supported by reflection – and improvements, and there were no significant gaps in self-assessment noted at this evaluation.

Findings²

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**.

All trainees are in employment, and training is arranged through their employers, who are client companies of The Learning Wave. Results for the Workplace Literacy programmes have consistently exceeded the TEC's contracted target of 80 per cent of trainees making a gain as tested by the TEC's adult literacy and numeracy learning progressions tool. For the past three years, 89 per cent of Workplace Literacy trainees have shown a significant gain.³ Māori and Pasifika trainees have also exceeded the TEC target, with an average of 83 per cent making a significant gain over the last three years. The results for Māori and Pasifika trainees are slightly below the total group, but it is noted by The Learning Wave management and client company personnel interviewed at this evaluation that many Māori and Pasifika start with lower levels of literacy and numeracy and often have lower levels of education, and therefore their rates of improvement are significant. Overall comprehensive data recording and analysis shows that The Learning Wave is enabling the overall trainee group to achieve at a consistently high level.

The qualification completion rates for First Line Management trainees in the last three years have averaged 90 per cent across all trainees. The number of Māori and Pasifika trainees put forward for First Line Management training by their employers is relatively small. However, over the last three years all Māori trainees (11) completed their qualification and four of the five Pasifika trainees completed their qualification. These achievement rates are consistently high and reflect the close matching of training material and training style to employers' specific context, needs and requirements. The extent of embedding of company context, technical terms and culture is covered further under 1.3 and 1.4.

First Line Management trainee achievements are resulting in significant quality and productivity improvements within the workplace, as well as real personal improvements in trainees' soft skills. This added value is explained in more detail in 1.2.

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

³ A significant gain is beyond the margin of error as calculated by the assessment tool, i.e. it is statistically significant.

The organisation has a clear understanding of trainee achievement rates. A range of appropriate data is collected and analysed and used to make ongoing improvements to trainee achievement as well as across all aspects of the organisation.

1.2 What is the value of 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**.

The value of outcomes from the training are many and varied, and documented in detail by The Learning Wave management and staff, as well as by the trainees, tutors and client companies contacted during this evaluation. The value added through training ranges from trainees gaining confidence to companies noting significant productivity gains, in one case in millions of dollars. Another case was identified at this evaluation where training had directly resulted in an employee identifying more efficient work processes, resulting in savings of NZ\$1.4m.

The Learning Wave's self-assessment identifies that trainees are making significant gains in soft skills, such as confidence and problem-solving skills, as well as growth in literacy and numeracy abilities. This is reflected in improved outcomes for client companies, such as recording incidents or work tasks more accurately. To illustrate, in one food preparation company where personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn to minimise food contamination, a normally quiet worker had gained the confidence and understanding of workplace risks to be able to speak up and stop his employer from entering the factory floor because he was not wearing correct PPE. This illustrates significant development in confidence for the worker and effectively minimised the financial impact of potential product contamination for the employer.

The value of outcomes is consistently tracked through trainee surveys, client company surveys, ongoing contact with companies and unsolicited emails. This information is collated and used effectively to review and monitor where changes are required to better target training.

Trainee surveys completed after each course have also noted value added beyond the workplace, such as in one case improved reading and speaking skills to help children with homework.

1.3 How well do the 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**.

All stakeholders contacted at this evaluation, including trainees, companies and contract trainers confirmed that the programmes and activities closely match the needs of trainees and client companies.

The Learning Wave customises its programmes and activities to closely match the needs of client companies and their employees (trainees), with training managers and supervisors actively involved, contributing to training programme content and design. This was clearly evidenced at this evaluation. For example, training materials include the client companies' look and feel, with the integration of corporate logos, signage, technical terms, colour schemes and various aspects related to the training such as health and safety or specific procedures. The organisation has also used external training specialists to add value to the programme design.

The training packs include a wide range of interactive materials, which may include PowerPoint slides, workbooks and custom-designed board games. These are designed to both engage and challenge trainees. Trainee surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction and a close matching of the training to trainees' needs. The results and value added, as already noted, attest to the success of the organisation's strategies.

The Learning Wave enjoys a high level of repeat business, including a number of large national client companies, with one extending over nine years. Approximately 75 per cent of the organisation's training is repeat business, indicating a high level of satisfaction that company needs are closely matched. Outcomes matching employers' needs have been reviewed in the past through ongoing contact with companies, collecting and collating the strong, regular and consistent anecdotal feedback. This year The Learning Wave has instigated a formal company survey to further strengthen the documentation for objective analysis. Ninety-two per cent of clients surveyed indicated the programmes and materials were superior to other training providers they had previously used.

Māori and Pasifika trainees achieving at similar rates to all trainees is evidence that their specific learning needs are well matched. In one client company, 99 per cent of employees are Pasifika, and their experience of the training has been consistently positive.

1.4 How effective is 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**.

The design and delivery of training are highly effective in engaging trainees in the learning and, as noted, linking the content to trainees' specific workplaces. This is resulting in the meaningful application of the new skills and confidence, benefiting the trainees and client companies. This was well evidenced at this evaluation, as noted under 1.1 and 1.2 above.

The organisation has hired appropriately experienced training facilitators and supported them with ongoing annual professional development, and has monitored their performance through a range of effective processes including observations and discussions.

New tutors are prepared, supported and trained for their roles, through a range of processes including 'boot camps' and mentoring. The Learning Wave provided evidence showing it has excellent communication channels across all staff, ensuring issues are raised early, and staff regularly share good practice.

The Learning Wave has a flexible approach to the timing of training to best match client company operations. The evaluators noted a high level of understanding across the organisation when dealing with 'reluctant learners'. For example, trainers have good motivation skills, engagement strategies and a wide variety of teaching and learning tools. Examples of the level of motivation of trainees were provided at this evaluation, where trainees had attended training on their days off and during their annual leave.

The organisation has strong processes for the moderation of assessments and is mostly deemed to be meeting the national standards by the relevant standard-setting bodies (NZQA and Competenz). Where issues have been identified by the standard-setting bodies, The Learning Wave has taken appropriate action and made improvements prior to re-using assessment materials, and has worked with trainers to ensure their understanding of new processes.

The organisation uses client and trainee surveys to review their satisfaction with the training and learning, and these indicate a high level of satisfaction over time. The value and impact of training in the workplace, as noted, is a key focus for The Learning Wave when monitoring the effectiveness of its training.

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**.

Trainee guidance and support is excellent, for a number of reasons.

The Learning Wave provided consistent and strong evidence showing that it operates an inclusive learning environment which supports the trainees, who commonly have low levels of prior educational success and in many cases relatively low levels of literacy and numeracy. The results of training indicate the level of support provided is highly effective and appropriate to the context; in the last three years, between 89 per cent and 93 per cent of trainees showed a significant gain in their literacy and numeracy as measured by the TEC adult literacy and numeracy learning progressions tool, well above the 80 per cent contract target. Similarly, as noted, the achievement rates for First Line Management trainees attest to the effectiveness of the support provided.

Information about training is effectively communicated through client company personnel: training managers, line managers and supervisors of the trainees. Satisfaction with the information prior to training, and support provided while on training, is closely monitored through regular face-to-face or phone contact with companies, as well as through the client and trainee surveys. The Learning Wave monitors and reviews this information effectively and has made changes to improve support for both the companies and trainees to succeed in training. Examples of improvements have included the timing of programmes and the range of teaching strategies to motivate and engage trainees. Achievement rates and repeat business are two key indicators of the effectiveness of this.

1.6 How well does governance and management support learner 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 Learning Wave has a very strong focus and innovative approach, not only to support trainee achievement, but also to develop creative solutions to meet the wider needs of its client companies, including training and other business consultancy services. In the words of one stakeholder contacted at this evaluation, ‘The Learning Wave is astonishing, the best company I’ve worked with, and they genuinely care about clients, associates [contracted trainers] and trainees’. This was strongly evidenced at this evaluation at all levels. Learners achieve well both in terms of technical and soft skills, and trainees and client companies gain significant value from the training. The training is closely focused on company

needs and context. The Learning Wave employs appropriate staff and supports them to perform highly and achieve outcomes consistently. Appropriate support mechanisms are in place for trainees, trainers and client companies, resulting in satisfied trainees and clients, improved career prospects for trainees, improved productivity, reduced wastage and improved reporting for the companies, as noted by employers and survey responses.

The organisation is owned, governed and managed by its three shareholders, with two owner-directors providing governance and strategic leadership to the organisation. The Learning Wave develops appropriate strategic and business plans, including an ongoing investment plan with the TEC for workplace literacy funding. These processes and functions are well planned and conducted and are communicated effectively with staff and contracted associate trainers. The evaluators observed a coherent understanding of the organisation's purpose and values across all personnel interviewed, indicating the effectiveness of the organisation's governance, management, communications and information-sharing.

The organisation has eight separate 'arms' to its business: leadership (including First Line Management training), health and safety compliance and improved awareness training, literacy and numeracy training, learning design and e-learning, business consultancy, organisational improvement, and organisational design. The combination of the business consultancy, design functions and training ensures that The Learning Wave has ongoing business connections with a variety of organisations, understands a wide range of business contexts, and has the design capability that matches and meets organisational needs on several levels. This combination supports the delivery of focused training to meet the business outcomes of a private training establishment.

The organisation's personnel have appropriate capabilities and practices to reflect and review their performance in regard to the delivery of training. The organisation has a range of electronic support software such as a customised client relationship management system, online databases and spreadsheets which are used to effectively monitor and review: repeat business; trainee progress and achievement; trainee satisfaction rates; and client company needs, aspirations and satisfaction rates.

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: Workplace Literacy

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

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

2.3 Focus area: National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Levels 3 and 4)

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

NZQA recommends that The Learning Wave:

- Continue to develop its analysis of factors affecting success for differing groups of trainees in each of its programmes in order to continue to improve outcomes where possible.

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).

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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