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External Evaluation and Review Report

The Learning Wave Limited

Date of report: 11 January 2023

About The Learning Wave Limited

The Learning Wave provides customised training for a diverse range of client companies. Programmes are designed to meet industry needs to develop staff teamwork and leadership, literacy and numeracy, health and safety, digital technology capability and project management.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 3, The Learning Wave House, 9a Hargreaves Street, St Mary's Bay, Auckland
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students (2021):	Domestic: 448 (8.5 funded and seven unfunded equivalent full-time students)
Number of staff:	Full-time: eight; part-time/casual: six; associates/contractors: 35
TEO profile:	The Learning Wave Limited
Last EER outcome:	The Learning Wave was last evaluated by NZQA in 2018, when NZQA was Confident in their educational performance and Highly Confident in their capability in self-assessment
Scope of evaluation:	This evaluation looked at two focus areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Level 4) (ID: 2456) (FLM4)• Quality assurance of assessment
MoE number:	7846
NZQA reference:	C50443
Dates of EER visit:	21 and 22 September 2022

Summary of results

Learner achievement at The Learning Wave has relevance and value for both employees and the companies that commission their training. Programme delivery is informed by learner needs assessment and ‘stakeholder wants’. There is standardised delivery which aligns well with NZQA requirements, but also customised and innovative training to match industry needs. Course design and delivery focuses on the needs of the learner. The PTE is well managed and uses self-assessment, including external feedback, to continuously improve performance.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- The goals, purpose and values of the PTE are clearly stated and align well with programme delivery and funder and stakeholder needs. The Learning Wave makes a high value contribution to their learners and stakeholders, and the training quality and impact is well monitored and measured.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- The types of relevant programming and the needs to be matched are well understood in relation to specific industry sectors. Programmes are reviewed and updated regularly and remain relevant to learners and the industry.
- Learner achievement in the focus area and in other programmes is reasonably strong, but there has been some attrition and decrease in expected completions, directly related to the Covid pandemic and lockdowns limiting activity.
- The Learning Wave employs suitably experienced facilitators with diverse education and training experience. They are supported by a strong central team and useful policies, procedures and resources to enable consistency of delivery, maintain academic standards, and assure quality.
- Results for external moderation by NZQA have been weak, but robust work to remedy this has occurred (see summary, Focus Area 2.1).
- The recently revised PTE structure, current management and staff capability, and processes and systems are working well for The Learning Wave. Equally, they serve industry stakeholders well.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Learners achieve relevant workplace communication, teamwork, digital skills and leadership content, tailored to each specific workforce's needs. Learners develop the soft skills important to their roles and responsibilities. Literacy and numeracy achievement occurs in the context of workplace needs. This has involved over 800 students since the last EER. Programme delivery reaches into new migrant, Pasifika and Māori learner groups.</p> <p>Student course completion has dipped since the last EER, which is reflected in both the focus area data (See Appendix 1) and other programmes.² The PTE analysis is that, 'Between 2019 – 2021 the data shows a slight decline in numbers signing up for and completing FLM4 as a direct result of disruption from COVID...there is [also] a relative drop [in literacy and numeracy achievement] across all learner groups in 2021 which is due to a number of factors including programmes put on hold and momentum being lost for learners (during Covid lock downs and employer business workload decisions)'. This analysis was confirmed with stakeholders.</p> <p>Good records and year-on-year comparability support the monitoring and review of achievement. Data often has 'unknown' as a demographic, and lacks a disability grouping, potentially reducing the visibility of priority group learners and limiting information on participation and equity. Between 2019 and 2021, the number of learners of unknown demographic has decreased, but this is still a limiting factor in accurate analysis of achievement across groups, leading to a recommendation at the end of this report.</p> <p>External moderation with NZQA has been poor. Added resource, time and attention has been directed to rectifying</p>

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

² The PTE only monitors course completion in the focus area. Qualification completion is monitored and reported by the respective industry training organisation (ITO).

	this, and the sought-after improvements are robustly captured in detailed self-assessment records (see Focus Area 2.1).
Conclusion:	Learner achievement in the focus area and in other programmes is reasonably strong, but there has been some attrition and decrease in expected completions, directly related to the pandemic and lockdowns limiting activity.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>A key value proposition made by The Learning Wave is to ‘build the capability of people, and the organisation will benefit as a result’. Industry stakeholders confirmed that they continue to work with the PTE as its various training offerings directly support their succession planning, development of new leaders, enhancement of workforce soft skills, staff retention, wellbeing and adaptability.</p> <p>The Learning Wave has successfully engaged with a number of significant industry players nationally on an ongoing basis to design and deliver employee training which meets their needs. Further collaborations include innovations such as a digital skills micro-credential and, in conjunction with WorkSafe, delivering the ‘Maruiti – safe haven’ workplace safety programme.³</p> <p>Literacy and numeracy teaching arising in the context of workplace needs and using workplace delivery has reached hundreds of learners since the last EER. The Learning Wave won Skills Highway Innovation Awards in 2019 and 2021 for innovative practices in this area.</p> <p>Alongside industry and the Employers and Manufacturers Association of New Zealand, The Learning Wave developed a digital capability learning programme in 2020 for manufacturing. In 2022, The Learning Wave is developing an advanced manufacturing learning journey with the sector.</p> <p>The PTE says that ‘clients are also seeing tangible improvement in agreed measures which are specific to their business performance, such as attrition rates reduced, rework reduced,</p>

³ [Wānanga on workplace safety incorporates tikanga Māori perspective](#)

	communication improved and so forth'. Evidence supporting this includes comprehensive performance impact reports and client debriefs occurring at the end of programmes.
Conclusion:	The Learning Wave makes a high value contribution to the learners and stakeholders, and the training quality and impact is well monitored and measured. The PTE strives to directly align programmes to need and to measure impacts and outcomes.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>In addition to programmes funded by Te Pūkenga Work Based Learning and workplace literacy funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), approximately 40 per cent of The Learning Wave learners are enrolled in workplace-based, non-formal, customised programmes. After careful self-assessment, the PTE adopted and gained accreditation from a reputable, international training design approach which 'focuses on impact and transfer of learning'.⁴ The programmes and courses delivered are based on sound needs assessment practices. The PTE has done some standardisation of programmes and some innovation and trialling of fresh approaches.</p> <p>Programmes are reviewed and updated regularly to maintain relevance to learners and clients. Video and other documentation of post-programme reviews show that effective, documented self-assessment is occurring with full industry and workplace involvement.</p> <p>The Learning Wave employs only suitably experienced contract facilitators with diverse education/training experience. Selection and appraisal of facilitators is well managed, and structured observations of teaching occur on a reasonably regular basis by peers or a line manager. There is an opportunity to increase the frequency of observations post-pandemic (see Recommendations).</p> <p>In the FLM4 focus area, students' projects are always related to their work – ensuring the application of knowledge occurs in a</p>

⁴ [High Performance Learning Journey accredited](#)

	<p>meaningful way. A facilitator described it this way: 'I really go overboard on trying to think about their project...that it would be in context'. Student motivation, value of the learning process, and practical outcomes aligned with stakeholder priorities are clearly evident in programme delivery and assessment.</p> <p>Facilitators regularly connect with other PTE staff and colleagues to review content, make changes, and maintain consistency of programme delivery to ensure it is matching student needs. Stakeholders interviewed said The Learning Wave will design or update programmes in response to changing client and learner needs and respond as flexibly as they can within the limits of their funder and quality assurance constraints.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>The Learning Wave well understands the types of programming and the training needs of specific industry sectors. Programmes are reviewed and updated regularly and maintain relevance for learners and industry. Staff and student feedback is also gathered to gain insights into what works well or needs improvement. The performance under NZQA external moderation has been a factor in arriving at the rating for self-assessment (also see 2.2 below).</p>

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The PTE's policy and student guidance information makes this clear statement outlining the nature of student support and involvement: 'the learner experience and pastoral care is formally supported by The Learning Wave facilitator team in partnership with the client organisation and their nominees, supporting the learning commitment and on job application of learning'. Providing this support to learners who are studying within the context of their job involves mostly administrative, functional and technology guidance or other support on an as-needs basis from the PTE central staff. There is also sound evidence that programme advice and support and assessment guidance from learning facilitators occurs and is timely and useful.</p> <p>Facilitators are provided with guidelines for setting up the learning environment to ensure consistency, and that desired</p>

	<p>learning principles are embedded with sufficient flexibility to meet learner needs. Student surveys are routinely used to gather and compare delivery and support.</p> <p>The PTE has been responsive to learner needs to minimise barriers throughout the pandemic. For example, The Learning Wave developed best practice guidelines for online learning and sought to ensure that delivery and student engagement was well maintained during a disruptive period. The Learning Wave also provided the evaluators with some persuasive, anecdotal descriptions of working with learners with a disability. This area will now need more evidence to meet the enhanced requirements of both the Tertiary Education Strategy and the Code of Practice (2021). A thorough Code review has occurred.</p> <p>The Learning Wave is paying closer attention to cultural responsiveness. For example, correct usage of te reo Māori is a focus, and the PTE has also undertaken a Pacific Organisational Cultural Competency Assessment. Credible progress is apparent, some at the early stages of maturing, but also with very strong examples of agile and responsive course development and delivery for/with/and by Māori and Pasifika employees and stakeholders.</p>
Conclusion:	Students are well supported and involved in their learning. Monitoring and review of support is thorough and ongoing.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Operational and educational leadership at The Learning Wave is focused and effective. The board structure provides robust governance. Monitoring of both educational achievement and compliance occurs frequently and is systematic and clearly recorded. Continuous improvement is an organisational priority. Extensive sampling of self-assessment material by the evaluators confirmed that this is often focused on learner engagement and success, the quality of programme delivery, and stakeholder satisfaction as well as business sustainability.</p> <p>There is a capable operational hub, with a mix of roles focused on identifying learning and programme needs with industry. A contract model helps with selecting from a stable of facilitators to</p>

	<p>achieve the best match for each training offering. There has also been notably increased resourcing for and scope of activity by the academic quality role since the last EER. Covid brought significant challenges to The Learning Wave, with limited access to workplaces and learners by facilitators and an unanticipated reconfiguration to both the mode of delivery (more use of online or blended) and the organisational structure. This has been well handled, with the quality of delivery well supported.</p> <p>Recruitment and maintenance of high-calibre, well-qualified and experienced facilitators is an organisational priority. The processes followed focus on the PTE's core values, and also around which attributes the students and stakeholders respond best to. Facilitators report that they have sufficient resources to undertake their work. There is clear communication, and ever-evolving use of technology and communication tools for a dispersed training workforce to ask questions, locate or develop training resources, or get central support. Staff and facilitator surveys are used well for monitoring and review.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>The goals, purpose and values of the PTE are clearly stated, and align well with programme delivery and funder and stakeholder needs. The Learning Wave makes a high-value contribution to the learners and stakeholders, and the training quality and impact is well monitored and measured. Oversight and leadership are effective.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>This key evaluation question was rated as marginal at the last EER, and the PTE's responsiveness to the recommendation arising has been more focused and active. The chief executive developed a compliance calendar; more regular attention to regulatory advisories has occurred; and bi-monthly board meetings include compliance items as a consistent item of discussion. Project management groups set up to manage programme offerings also have some compliance oversight at the delivery level, for example appraising needs assessment and employer wants against funding rules.</p> <p>Examples of managing compliance accountabilities well include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual financial audits by TEC have all been satisfactory with two recommendations in the 2019 financial year which have been actioned. No actions were required in subsequent years. • There are clear and current contracts for service with both Competenz and Connexis ITOs regarding training arrangements. The Learning Wave is paid to deliver content and assess towards formal qualifications by these entities. • the quality management system was reviewed; an external viewpoint from a specialist contractor added robustness to this process. • Annual, cyclical or by exception reporting requirements have been routinely provided to NZQA in a timely way. • A programme change to allow face-to-face, or on-line, or blended delivery was lodged and approved by NZQA. • An application for change of ownership (sale of shares) has been processed by NZQA since the last EER. • Student results have been reported within the NZQA timeframe each year since the last EER. • Assessment plans, external moderation samples and improvement plans have also been provided to NZQA.
Conclusion:	<p>Important compliance accountabilities relating to NZQA, the TEC and two ITOs are well managed. Compliance management has much improved since the last EER. No concerns with The Learning Wave's current management of compliance emerged during this evaluation.</p>

Focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Level 4) (ID: 2456)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Learners enrolled in this programme work in industry sectors such as manufacturing and infrastructure.⁵ Some are rostered shift workers. They are supported by their employers to enrol as part of the businesses leadership development strategies. Funding has come via the former ITOs Competenz and Connexis (depending on the industry setting), and additional employer resourcing. Stakeholder comments included: ‘the facilitators ‘get’ manufacturing, they get our needs. All our leaders have been grown internally, we have [low] staff turnover and leadership training has been key to our growth’. Others also described The Learning Wave as highly responsive, flexible, and critical to their human resources strategies, in the context of a skills shortage.</p> <p>The assessment materials for the two standards included in this programme did not meet national external moderation requirements in 2019.⁶ An improvement plan was developed, agreed by NZQA, and fully implemented by The Learning Wave. Comprehensive pre-assessment moderation of the revised assessment materials for both standards was completed by both a contractor to The Learning Wave and by ITO pre-assessment moderation. The internal post-assessment moderation evidence since 2019 showed that 16 learner samples were internally moderated (assessed by four different facilitators), and sampled from seven different cohorts training at different locations. They were found to be assessed appropriately, with a few minor improvements identified.</p>
Conclusion:	The programme meets important learner and stakeholder needs. It provides access to skills and knowledge required for

⁵ Māori and/or Pasifika students make up about 14 per cent of current enrolments.

⁶ The unit standards (29039, 29040) were not re-selected for post-moderation by NZQA, and 2021 external post moderation was deferred to 2022 due to quality assurance responsibilities transitioning from NZQA to the Workforce Development Councils.

	promotion. Assessment has been strengthened. Covid disrupted some aspects of delivery and led to decreasing completions (see 1.1 and Appendix 1 for more detail).
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2.2 Focus area: Quality assurance of assessment

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The main issue of concern for NZQA leading into this evaluation was the PTE's weak performance in the NZQA national external moderation (NEM) cycle. In 2019 NZQA required the PTE to develop an action plan. Although this was fully implemented, the assessments for one business and management standard again did not meet NZQA requirements in 2020. The Ringa Hora Services WDC selected one standard for moderation in 2022. The results of this external moderation are positive.</p> <p>From 2021 the standards that the PTE assess against are being managed by Ringa Hora Services Workforce Development Council. The availability of moderation services and support from the two corresponding ITOs has been limited due to their transition into Ringa Hora.⁷</p> <p>The actions taken by The Learning Wave range from contacting NZQA and the moderator seeking more clarification on their last NEM result; reviewing their quality management system (including the policies for assessment and moderation); re-writing assessments and having a consultant moderate these prior to use in assessment; increased central check marking and, in particular, raising the issues identified directly with assessors and workplace supervisors.</p> <p>Internal post-assessment moderation by two different moderators has been targeted and systematic; a 12 per cent sampling rate across cohorts has been achieved. The PTE has gathered evidence that their assessments are more reliable and that their improvement plan has been well implemented. Although full evidence of the impacts of the improvement plan will only be known in future external moderation cycles, these are well reasoned and comprehensive steps to improve</p>

⁷ External moderation samples were requested and sent to Ringa Hora Services Workforce Development during the EER on-site visit.

	assessment reliability and validity after gaps were identified by NZQA.
Conclusion:	Results for external moderation by NZQA have been weak. Robust work to remedy this has occurred. There has been comprehensive review of policies, procedures, moderation planning, staff development and practice. Extensive check-marking and other forms of post-assessment moderation have been well implemented to confirm and lock-in improvements.

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that The Learning Wave Limited:

1. In conjunction with employers, students, and Ringa Hora Services Workforce Development Council, improve the learner-data gathered to more specifically analyse and report achievement for Tertiary Education Strategy priority group learners. (this relates to key evaluation question 1.)
2. Ensure that the existing structured observations of facilitators include a 'next step' component in the observational checklist. This is to ensure that actions or recommendations arising from these observations receive due attention, and that the desired frequency and teacher development occurs. (this relates to key evaluation question 3.)

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

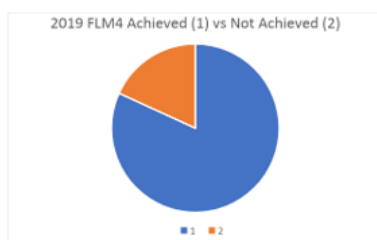
There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix 1

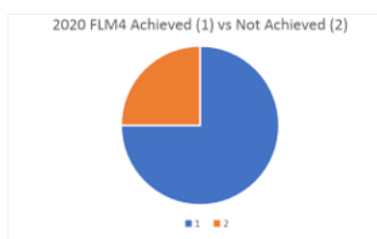
Achievement data with commentary (supplied by TLW)

Focus Area: NZC in Business (First Line Management) Level 4, 60 credits (FLM4)

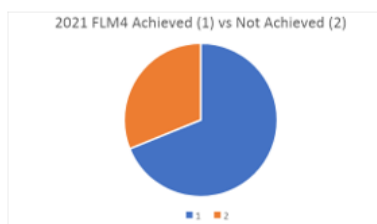
(Key: Achieved – blue; Not Achieved – orange)



2019 - 54 learners started FLM4 and achieved the unit standards (in 2019-20). An additional 12 learners did not complete or were withdrawn, mostly due to leaving employment or workload issues.



2020 - 48 learners started FLM4 and achieved the unit standards (in 2020 -2021) with some extending into 2022 reporting of results. An additional 16 learners did not complete or were withdrawn, reasons given as above.



2021 - 31 new learners started FLM4 and achieved the unit standards (in 2021 -22). An additional 14 learners did not complete or were withdrawn, for the same reasons as above.

During this period durations were extended due to Covid lockdown impacts, causing pauses and [disrupting] the holistic assessment of unit standards in this programme.

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud⁸*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

⁸ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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