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External Evaluation and Review Report

Links Training (2008) Limited

Date of report: 18 July 2023

About Links Training (2008) Limited

Links Training provides first aid training, with a mix of flexible training options for workplaces, community groups and the general public. The organisation offers unit standard-based courses for first aid certification, both validation and revalidation as well as non-unit standard-based workshops.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment
Location:	21 Bristol Street, Levin
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic 2021: 1003 learners; Māori 47 per cent (480), Pasifika 6.8 per cent (69)
Number of staff:	Two full-time equivalents, two part-time/casual, two contractors
TEO profile:	Links Training (2008) Ltd
Last EER outcome:	Highly Confident in educational performance Confident in capability in self-assessment
Scope of evaluation:	First Aid Training Scheme (Level 2) (ID 115260)
MoE number:	7901
NZQA reference:	C50728
Dates of EER visit:	18 and 19 October 2022

Summary of results

Links Training has enabled favourable outcomes for learners and stakeholders, which contribute to individuals, the workplace and the community. Many important needs of learners and stakeholders are met, with overall effective processes. Self-assessment findings are used to make a range of improvements and achieve valued outcomes.

Confident in educational performance

- High achievement leads to successful and valued outcomes, with comparable achievement for Māori and Pasifika learners. Disaggregation and testing of data integrity will better serve the provider's understanding of performance for all learners, and inform organisational improvements.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- The skills and knowledge gained are valuable to stakeholders, including enabling pay rises, further study, building confidence and supporting workplace compliance in relation to health and safety. Frequent collection and collation of feedback will support the organisation's understanding of its value.
- Strong learner engagement is supported by qualified and experienced instructors who use effective teaching styles. Instructors gain development opportunities in education and the industry which contributes to their teaching practice. Documented and systematic processes around staff observations would better inform shifts, trends and staff development areas.
- Staff are active practitioners in the industry, and have strong industry connections through their associations and involvement. As such, the organisation is involved in relevant industry and education conversations to keep abreast of changes and developments as they occur.
- Learning environments are planned and inclusive, and effective and appropriate resources support teaching and learning.
- The programme is well planned and structured, with relevant content targeted at the applicable level.

Assessment practice is appropriate, but formalised, systematic and regular moderation systems with internal and external input will better support assessment that is valid fair and consistent.

- Learners are well supported on an as-needs basis, and instructors and staff are empathetic to learner needs. Positive tutor-learner relationships are maintained, and any issues are addressed as they occur.
- The leadership is supported by a shared responsibility approach which values staff, is innovative, and responds to necessary changes and needs as they occur. Greater stakeholder input would assist future planning and direction for the organisation that is reflective of the needs of relevant communities.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students achieve well, and also acquire useful skills and confidence to perform first aid effectively. Links Training emphasises the importance of gaining the knowledge and successfully completing the training as an essential step to being able to apply first aid when required.</p> <p>Stakeholders such as employers indicated a growth in confidence in those who completed the training scheme. Learners gain skills and knowledge to be able to manage a range of basic emergency situations. In addition, learners indicated the necessity for this training as a basis for essential and practical skills that could assist anyone needing help.</p> <p>Overall, Links Training collects data that shows high performance outcomes, with comparable completion rates for Māori and Pasifika. On average, Links Training has achieved a 97 per cent completion rate over the last three years, with both Māori and Pasifika slightly above. However, these results need to be validated by systematic moderation practice. The current trajectory for 2022 shows completion rates are in a mode of positive growth.</p> <p>The extent to which the data is purposefully extracted or used to understand learning and achievement is not fully apparent. There is a broad understanding of performance, but the disaggregation of performance data, and testing and assuring the integrity of the data, could be strengthened. This includes ensuring the use of accurate and validated performance data.</p> <p>Consistent collection, analysis, use and testing of performance data, with benchmarking against potential similar providers, will better inform the organisation's strategic investment for growth and development.</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.

Conclusion:	<p>Learners achieve well and gain valuable skills and knowledge that can be applied in a range of settings. High achievement rates indicate successful completion by the majority of learners, including Māori and Pasifika.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to strengthen understanding of overall education performance with the interrogation of collective performance data year-on-year to better inform decision-making.</p>
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1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The skills and knowledge acquired assist graduates in real-life situations where first aid is required, in the home and community settings, to respond in an emergency. The value to learners is evident. Learners and stakeholders attest to the value of the skills which give them the confidence to respond appropriately to an emergency, as well as bringing an increase in pay in some workplaces. Students experience personal growth, such as confidence to perform their role in personal and professional contexts. Additionally, certified first aid staff meet workplace compliance obligations and requirements for the Health and Safety Act 2015.</p> <p>Links Training effectively monitors and tracks graduates to provide opportunities for revalidation and updating of skills and knowledge. Revalidation enables learners to gain updates on techniques for dealing with various emergency situations, and Links Training effectively informs graduates of expiring certificates and the need to refresh their learning.</p> <p>Engagement with employers to understand workplace needs strengthens relationships between Links Training and organisations for repeat business and needs-based training. Involvement in the Association of Emergency Care Training Providers (AECTP) keeps the provider connected to industry conversations and workplace needs, thus enabling advice and support to employers.</p> <p>First aid certification provides an opportunity to undertake further learning for school leavers and adults, including study in health</p>

	<p>subjects. Graduates said the first aid training is a precursor to, and/or an entry requirement for further study in the health industry, such as nursing. The additional value identified for high school learners is the scaffolding that the training has enabled to further learning opportunities or entry-level jobs. Links Training collects anecdotal evidence through their networks and engagements that informs them of the value of the qualification and their provision.</p> <p>Formalising mechanisms to collect, analyse and use ongoing feedback will assist Links Training to understand its overall value to the industry.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Links Training provides valuable first aid training to all its stakeholders, including learners who benefit personally and professionally, such as with further study or a pay increase. For school leavers, it opens opportunities for entry-level jobs.</p> <p>Ongoing reflection and analysis of feedback from all stakeholders will strengthen the organisation's understanding of its effectiveness, both to individuals and in the workplace.</p>

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The programme is well planned and structured, with an appropriate learning environment to ensure the availability of resources for all learners. Class sizes are well managed through the enrolment process, and the organisation is well resourced with material and appropriate equipment that supports the learning.</p> <p>Stakeholders and students are prepared for learning as Links Training provides effective and appropriate programme information to students and stakeholders, including expectations and details around the programme. Pre-programme information is provided in a timely manner to both employers and learners, and feedback from stakeholders indicates an easy process for booking. Changes to information systems, such as the website and booking system, have improved and eased the administrative workload around tracking, responding to</p>

	<p>bookings, and monitoring student progress. The introduction of an improved student management system will generate analytical data to better inform decision making.</p> <p>Tutors have an effective teaching style that supports successful learning experiences. Graduates and stakeholders compliment the tutors for the teaching style and engagement with learners and communities. The appropriate mix of theoretical and practical learning – matched with role play, group work, scenarios and individual assessment – meets the expectations of all stakeholders and leads to the successful attainment of knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Teaching is suitably contextualised to the needs of stakeholders and employers, which ensures relevance to the workplace. Providing training in the workplace ensures the learning is relevant in the context of the employer. Similarly, the use of scenarios that are current or recent emergency events, such as the Christchurch earthquakes, also provides relevance for the learners. Programme reviews are informal and undertaken as necessary, according to needs as they arise. A stronger and formalised system of programme delivery will benefit the provider’s understanding of programme effectiveness to support ongoing improvements.</p> <p>Tutors are qualified and highly experienced in first aid and are regularly observed and supported by peers to develop in their teaching practice. Induction processes for staff are valuable for preparing and supporting tutors in their teaching practice, and for engaging learners. Sharing of planners and content for delivery and assessment practices supports new trainers to develop their practice.</p> <p>Some staff are able to engage with Māori communities and learners through the use of te reo. This has been effective in creating an inclusive and friendly environment.</p> <p>The tutors’ knowledge, and experience in adult teaching, is matched with extensive experience in various trauma situations. This provides for engaging training that is relevant to the workplace, personal lives and real emergency situations. A stronger, documented system for observing staff performance and practice would benefit the provider’s ongoing understanding of shifts, trends and development areas for staff.</p> <p>Assessment practice is appropriate, as supported by industry training organisation external moderation in the past. More</p>
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	<p>regular external involvement in moderation could provide wider experience-based perspectives and insights into assessment. An informal internal moderation system could contribute to ongoing improvement and development of the assessment process and assessor judgements.</p> <p>Links Training monitors programme changes to maintain currency and compliance with education requirements such as the expiration of unit standards. Policies also guide education practice. Both learners and employers are appropriately prepared and informed with relevant information and expectations.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Programme design and delivery suitably match the needs of students and other stakeholders, through a well-planned and structured first aid course. Tutors provide an engaging and inclusive learning environment that is contextualised to meet learner and employer needs. Induction processes and observation systems support tutor development. However, the formalising of such processes would provide insight into trends and shifts in practice and strengthen professional development in teaching.</p> <p>Assessment practice is appropriate to the learning. However, a more formal review of internal and external moderation would provide a more consistent and objective perspective. This would strengthen the organisation's understanding of the effectiveness of its assessment practice.</p>

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Links Training has some understanding of learner goals in relation to first aid, provided in part by student surveys and verbal feedback. There is a strong focus on ensuring learners gain confidence in the knowledge and are prepared for any emergency. Stronger self-reflection, analysis and use of the feedback will better inform how the organisation can support the learners to achieve their goals.</p> <p>Support is effectively provided as needed, and when identified. Learning needs are self-identified, and capability building around</p>

	<p>understanding diverse learner needs could assist in creating a more inclusive learning environment, particularly for priority learner groups such as those with learning challenges and disabilities.</p> <p>Tutors have effective methods for engaging and motivating learners to participate in learning, and this is supported by customised programming to the context of the workplace. With just under half of the learners identifying as Māori, Links Training has some understanding of the needs of this group, and has provided targeted support. Tutor capability in engaging with Māori learners and communities, while limited, is evident and effective.</p> <p>Greater support to build the cultural intelligence and world views for all staff, inclusive of working with people with disabilities and/or learning challenges, will support engagement. Greater understanding, organisation-wide, of priority learners is also needed, particularly if the numbers for Māori and Pasifika continue to grow with the staff capacity maintained.</p> <p>The provider reflects on its capacity and limitations in providing support to learners. Access and referral to additional learning and pastoral support is available where needed, as required by the Code of Practice for the pastoral care of domestic and international students. Learners respond to surveys with positive feedback about the courses, and tutors are made aware of the areas of strength.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Learners are well supported when needs are identified. Tutors engage effectively with learners, and motivate participation in activities by building relevance for the learners. All tutors have the capability to work and engage with Māori and Pasifika. The evaluators note the value to student engagement, by having a te reo-speaking tutor and growing the cultural understanding of tutors for working with priority groups, including those with disabilities or learning challenges.</p> <p>Stronger systems around identifying individual learning needs is required. Greater analysis of feedback from stakeholders, including learners, would help the organisation understand how to best assist learners to reach their goals.</p>

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>A small leadership team oversees the running of the organisation, and provides the governance and management support and measures of accountability for all decisions. This shared responsibility is fit for purpose for the size and structure of the organisation. While an emphasis on the operational function and running of the provider exists, leadership focus and future direction and improvements that are reflective of the needs of relevant communities could ensure ongoing applicability to stakeholders and the sector.</p> <p>Leadership is responsive to stakeholders' needs, ensuring that the context of the workplace is considered in the programme design and delivery. Developments in the organisation – including several improvements to infrastructure and information systems, the website and recruitment of staff – are all responses to necessary changes identified by the provider. This innovation has been noticed by stakeholders, and has led to customer-friendly improvements such as an easier booking system for training, as well as tracking of learner progress. Stronger collection, collation and analysis of feedback from stakeholder groups will help the organisation to understand its own effectiveness to help guide and develop ongoing improvements.</p> <p>Staff recruitment, induction and development is effective to ensure quality teaching and knowledge is shared and monitored. Mentoring and shadowing of experienced staff is effective for modelling teaching styles, as well as supporting and carefully observing new staff. This has assisted new staff to understand the expectations and requirements of the role.</p> <p>The leadership values the staff and offers further support to enable their contributions to continue and develop. Professional development is supported to keep instructors up to date with developments in first aid and education. Regular communication across the organisation, while informal, is effective and ensures consistent messaging. Staff value the clear line of communication with the director, which provides direct feedback on strengths and areas for improvement.</p>

Conclusion:	<p>Governance and management is fit for purpose for the size and structure of the organisation and to support educational achievement. Staff recruitment and development is well supported to ensure effective teaching, and staff feel and experience their value through the provisions of the provider to develop further. As described in previous sections, responsiveness to stakeholder needs is strong, and developments across the organisation have been effective in improving processes and learning experiences.</p> <p>Stronger collection, collation and analysis of feedback from stakeholder groups will help the organisation to understand its own effectiveness in the community – and with employers and students – to help guide and develop ongoing improvements. Greater strategic input would also assist future planning and direction for the organisation.</p>
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1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Important compliance accountabilities are effectively managed, with systems to monitor requirements and any changes that occur in education and in the industry. Greater focus is needed to ensure current assessor and assessment practice is valid, fair and consistent, and is supported with systematic processes that inform developments for staff practice and assessment material.</p> <p>Most education requirements are well understood and monitored. The formalising of future arrangements could strengthen relationships and understanding of expectations to better service both Links Training and Te Pūkenga.</p> <p>Where matters arise, the organisation is responsive in a timely manner, such as in updating the website with clear communication about programmes.</p> <p>The introduction and development of the Code of Practice for domestic as well as international students has brought about improvements to systems to enable the collection of learner information, to help their understanding of, and reporting on</p>

	<p>learners. This has also brought about overall improved support and wellness to students.</p> <p>The leadership maintains some purposeful relationships to help keep abreast of industry updates and any changes. Staff across the organisation have connections to relevant organisations, and provide effective insight into industry conversations and activities. In addition, the director is actively involved and committed to key industry committees such as AECTP, with reciprocal benefit to the sector as well as the provider.</p> <p>Links Training currently holds an informal arrangement with a recently transitioned ITO (to Te Pūkenga) for programme provision, and frequently and unsuccessfully sought contact around this. In the shifting education environment – the establishment of Te Pūkenga and introduction of workforce development councils – Links Training is continuing to pursue a formalised approach to its functional relationships.</p> <p>This would also clarify expectations around matters that could impact on learning and the learners, and therefore inform investment and direction for the provider.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Important compliance accountabilities are understood and mostly managed well. Effective relationships and connections in the industry are purposeful and inform relevant updates and changes.</p> <p>Formalised arrangements with organisations that impact learning or learner outcomes will provide clearer expectations and responsibilities for all relevant parties.</p>

Focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: First Aid (Training Scheme) (Level 2)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good

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 Links Training (2008) Limited:

1. Strengthen systems of collection, disaggregation, analysis, use and testing of performance data on a consistent basis to better inform strategic investment, growth and development.
2. Strengthen the formality and use of all feedback and review (organisational and programme) to inform the organisation's understanding of value and effectiveness to the industry and stakeholders, and to support ongoing improvements.
3. Reinforce internal and external moderation systems to provide ongoing validity of assessment practice and decisions.
4. Strengthen the strategic leadership to inform direction and planning for growth.
5. Formalise any strategic and/or programme arrangements with relevant stakeholders to articulate the expectations and responsibilities of all parties, and ensure relevant agencies are informed of developments where appropriate.

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

Table 1. Links Training completion data (2019-21)

	Enrolment/attended	Completions of unit standard	Percentage
2019	853	833	97.66%
Māori	328 (38%)	320	97.6%
Pasifika	83 (9.7%)	83	100%
2020	961	921	95.84%
Māori	471 (49%)	461	97.9%
Pasifika	66 (6.9%)	64	97%
2021	1016	1003	98.72%
Māori	480 (47%)	465	96.9%
Pasifika	69 (6.8%)	67	97.1%

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 fraud²*
- 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.*

² 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 TITOs 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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