

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Learn Plus Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 21 November 2012

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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.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Learn Plus Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Auckland
Delivery sites:	Public venues or clients premises within Auckland and nationally
First registered:	1 September 2009
Courses currently delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adult Education and Training• First Line Management
Code of Practice signatory?	No
Number of students:	Domestic: approximately 58 at the time of the visit International: N/A
Number of staff:	One full-time equivalent
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adult Education• First Line Management
Distinctive characteristics:	Learn Plus provides tailored packages to corporate clients and individuals wanting to formalise their adult teaching or programme design and development experience to help them further their careers or for career change. Training is conducted during short workshop courses at public venues or corporate clients' premises, and individuals receive one-to-one support throughout to achieve their goals.

Recent significant changes: None

Previous quality assurance history: Learn Plus met NZQA's national external moderation requirements in 2011.

There is no other previous quality assurance history for this organisation as this is its first quality assurance visit since it was registered in 2009.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review (EER) was determined in consultation with the organisation using its self-assessment summary, and included the mandatory focus areas: governance, management, and strategy; and student support. The scope also included a focus area on Adult Education, which includes all short courses that the organisation offers.

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.

The EER was conducted at the organisation's head office in Greenlane, Auckland, by two external evaluators, over one-and-a-half days. The evaluation team reviewed supporting documents including the organisation's business strategy, programme planning and review documents, student evaluations, internal and external moderation reports, as well as spreadsheets and files for tracking student progress towards outcomes.

The evaluation team also spoke with the organisation's two directors, one of whom has overall responsibility for the design, development, and delivery of training programmes. The second director is responsible for providing advice on financial decisions and providing input into the organisation's direction. The team also spoke to the two contractors involved in programme design and development and moderation, as well as a range of clients and former and current students to gather further information about the organisation's educational performance.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Learn Plus Limited**.

There is clear evidence that Learn Plus meets the most important needs of learners and their employers. The learners' results show that close to 100 per cent have completed their course, and achieved a qualification where that is relevant to their needs. The 95 per cent satisfaction rating collated from client and learner feedback since the organisation was registered shows that the training is helping corporate clients and learners to achieve their goal, whether it is upskilling a work team or providing individuals with a formal certificate to advance their careers.

The niche programmes meet the needs of corporate clients and individuals. The programmes are tailored specifically to the client or individual needs using actual work examples where relevant. This provides students with helpful tools for developing training programmes that they can use back in their workplace.

Strategic planning and ongoing monitoring by the organisation's directors help to ensure that the training remains relevant and is to a high standard for all stakeholders.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Learn Plus Limited**.

The organisation comprehensively measures the success of learners by unit standard and qualification achievement within expected timeframes, as well as by client and learner satisfaction. Another measure is the annual turnover from repeat business. Self-assessment is well organised, transparent, and monitored to show the organisation is meeting the needs of its clients.

Although this is a small PTE, the directors hold formal meetings for planning and monitoring operational matters. External input is utilised to ensure that the organisation is providing relevant programmes and continues to meet the needs of its clients. The organisation's meeting minutes demonstrate that it is systematic in identifying possible issues and is able to address them promptly and appropriately.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

The organisation's records show that 99 per cent of learners complete their course, which is a result of the programmes being tailored to individual needs, well structured, and continually monitored to ensure learners are progressing and completing within their required timeframe. For the small number of learners that do not complete, this has been attributed to changes to the learner's role, which means they no longer require the training, or to changes in personal circumstance. Learn Plus does not compare individual learner results against one another because learners enrol throughout the year and complete different programmes, according to their objectives and work requirements. Instead, the trainer monitors individual progress on an ongoing basis to identify which learners are doing well and which ones require more structured guidance around deadlines to meet individual objectives.

The organisation aims for an 85 per cent satisfaction rate to monitor whether the programmes are achieving learners' expectations, but the actual rate is higher than this, with 95 per cent of clients and learners rating their satisfaction with the programmes as good or very good. Feedback is sought either by email from individual learners or by formal evaluations from workshop clients. The high return rate – nearly 100 per cent – is another indicator that learners are achieving desired outcomes. A sample of feedback from past learners showed that the training led to significant changes in their lives as a result of the understanding gained from attending courses and achieving goals, including completing higher levels of study and application of conflict management.

The evidence of learner achievement is well documented, although there is only one trainer presently delivering programmes. The level of self-assessment of learner achievement is very good for an organisation of this size and nature.

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

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

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

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

Learners gain practical skills and tools to enhance their own training and development roles within their companies. Gaining a formal qualification in adult education also enables practitioners to gain recognition for their experience gained on the job. Learners develop understanding of how to work with different learners and learning styles, as well as developing their coaching and mentoring skills.

The constant theme of the training is the value that tailoring of the programme gives to the client or learners. Much of the learners' feedback shows that they gain the skills they need to advance their career or to change jobs (around 10 per cent of learners indicated this was a factor). Employers' feedback demonstrates that they value the training because employees develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to meet the needs of the company, giving them assurance that Learn Plus's training helps produce competently trained staff.

The wide range of corporate clients that continue to use Learn Plus, and the high number of referrals from word of mouth from previous learners, also indicates that stakeholders highly value the training.

Learn Plus provides free spaces for employees of not-for-profit organisations so that they can gain skills and formal adult education qualifications.

The organisation understands the value of the training in changing people's lives through understanding what they need and delivering to this, which is evidenced by the positive feedback from all stakeholders.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

The achievement of learners is the organisation's priority, so matching the programmes to learners' needs is essential to the business. Training programmes are developed for learners based on analysis of both the employer and learner specifications, including ensuring the timing of the outcomes is aligned to their roles and the workplace.

Each programme is planned with the client and/or learners, using existing company resources where appropriate, to ensure training activities are meaningful, are suited to the workplace context, and are fit for purpose. Adult education principles are

applied during the programme development and delivery using the ADDIE model of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. Modules state that the learning outcomes and activities for learners and assessments are designed to enable the learner to apply adult education principles and models when developing their own training programmes.

Programmes are designed to suit the needs of adult trainers, instructional designers, and training managers. Learners enrol through their company or individually, often following a previous experience at another workshop. Workshops are held at the clients' premises or temporary sites where learners work in small groups to complete case studies and group activities, which helps them to develop their skills and knowledge. The programme is flexible and responsive to learners' requirements to complete within a timeframe that suits their workplace needs. The organisation is developing an online resource centre for learners to download materials and work towards following the workshops, which is intended to help those that are working full-time.

Following each session, the trainer makes notes on the materials if there are changes required and then a formal review is conducted annually using feedback from learners and corporate clients on the delivery, content, and resources. This in-depth analysis, development, design, delivery, and review helps to ensure that programmes are up to date and are meeting the needs of clients.

Comments from stakeholders show high satisfaction with the contextualised resources and programmes tailored to their specific needs. Other comments from learners were that the training programmes were 'exciting' and had 'varied course activities'. Learners also liked the manuals provided to them and which they found useful to refer to in the workplace.

Overall, the programmes strongly match the needs of corporate clients and learners. The organisation's monitoring or feedback is inherent in all that it does and it is responsive to any specialised needs, which is in accordance with the organisation's motto: 'Your pace, your place and your style'.

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 **Excellent**.

The excellent feedback from learners and their high level of success demonstrates that the trainer is engaging with the learners and they are learning new skills. Strategies used by the trainer to adapt to differing learning styles include group learning/discussions, self-assessment, and case studies. The trainer's ability to use flexible training activities to meet individual learning styles demonstrates a learner-centred approach to training.

The trainer is able to adapt the learning approach to meet the needs of learners, based on a pre-analysis of needs conducted at enrolment.

One of the directors is the sole facilitator and has extensive experience delivering adult education training. This director has a degree in adult education, qualifications in human resource management and employee relations, and a certificate in teaching and training adults. The director/trainer presents findings at international conferences on adult education and workplace learning, and is a member of the New Zealand Association for Training and Development.

Learn Plus is meeting NZQA national external moderation requirements and ensures that assessment validity and consistency are maintained by moderating all assessment activities before they are used as well as sampling a number of assessment decisions against the appropriate marking schedules.

As well as moderation reports, the trainer uses feedback from workshop attendees to review course sessions and teaching delivery, showing an intrinsic, reflective nature and good practice. Examples of stakeholders' feedback provided by current students to the EER team included, 'facilitation skills are fantastic', the trainer has the 'right flow, right engagement level', and 'assessments were challenging but appropriate'.

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**.

Learner guidance and support is encompassed within all the organisation's activities and is suitable to individual learners' needs. The trainer establishes specific learning targets in agreement with the learner, based on their role and their previous experience. Literacy and numeracy issues are addressed on an individual needs basis. However, many learners are adult education trainers themselves or managers and have the skills to participate in training and/or achieve the required qualifications.

The trainer monitors learners' progress throughout the training to identify whether anyone is struggling. The learners interviewed by the EER team all commented that the trainer was always available, either by email or telephone, if they needed any support. The high retention of learners and the numbers that complete the courses shows that the guidance and support is appropriate in order for learners to achieve their goals.

Learners receive a course outline prior to attending a workshop to help familiarise themselves with the training programme and Learn Plus. The information they receive contains the learning outcomes and information about the course, including assessment details, workshop arrangements, car parking, and what to bring prior to the course. This helps ensure that learners fully understand what is required of

them and how the course works prior to commencement, which also contributes to good completion rates. Feedback from learners analysed by the organisation shows that the workshops provide an environment where learners are comfortable to contribute. Overall, Learn Plus demonstrated that it has comprehensive guidance and support systems to enable learners to succeed in their chosen programme.

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

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

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

The evidence of planning and target-setting shows that the organisation is capable of setting realistic goals and monitoring the achievement of them. Learner achievement is the organisation's priority and the trainer recognises that learners can change their lives through undertaking relevant, tailored training and education. This shows a very learner-centred approach by the organisation. The director, who is involved in the day-to-day business as a trainer and a consultant, has a business background as well as strong educational experience. This helps to ensure the organisation operates ethically and within sound education principles.

The director/trainer reviews outcomes and discusses any issues with her business partner as well as external business advisors to ensure that decisions about the business direction are based on actual need and work within budget. Evidence of regular meetings was found to support this, for instance meetings held to discuss issues such as implementing a new learner management system, online learning, and future planning.

The organisation's business overview shows a steady growth pattern based on reasonable goals and monitoring of success towards them. Learn Plus started out as an adult education provider and is now branching into training supervisors in first line management. This will mean that more workshops are planned and possibly another trainer will be employed. The organisation is trialling a couple of people already and will implement processes to ensure they meet the organisation's standards for training, using learner feedback and observation. Currently, Learn Plus has two contractors involved in the development and assessment of programmes. They also shared the learner-centred approach provided by Learn Plus and felt that this was evident in the support that the trainer provides.

Overall, the ongoing dialogue between directors, reinforced by regular, formal meetings and advice from its advisory network, provides a sound process for ensuring plans are meeting goals. Evidence that this is succeeding is the growth of the business by word of mouth, high satisfaction from clients and individual learners and the high rate of completions.

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: Adult Education

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

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

Recommendations

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

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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