

Report of External Evaluation and Review

The Learning Place Limited

Confident in educational performance

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 September 2013

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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:	The Learning Place Limited (TLP)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Unit 2, 77a Hinau Street, Christchurch
Delivery sites:	Training is delivered at corporate premises
First registered:	7 June 2011
Courses currently delivered:	TLP is delivering and assessing unit standards in retail, distribution and sales towards Service IQ qualifications at level 2, and courses leading to the National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Levels 3 and 4).
Code of Practice signatory?:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: at the time of the external evaluation and review (EER) TLP had delivered its first training to two cohorts for one client company (a total of 22 learners) and a further cohort was scheduled for September 2013.
Number of staff:	One general manager and one contract tutor
Scope of active accreditation:	TLP has consent to assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unit standards that can be credited towards the National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Levels 3 and 4)

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- Unit standards for three domains in Retail, Distribution and Sales which can be credited towards the National Certificate in Retail and Distribution (Level 2).

Distinctive characteristics: TLP training includes a three-day, classroom-based module, followed by workplace learning and assessment. The close involvement of the client company in the training development and delivery reflects a partnership approach.

Recent significant changes: TLP delivers training as a registered PTE, and also sells training and assessment materials. TLP has only recently gained consent from NZQA to assess New Zealand Qualifications Framework unit standards (November 2012, April 2013 and May 2013). The original intention was to deliver unit standards towards the National Certificate in Business (First Line Management). However, in discussion with the client company, TLP sought and gained consent to deliver unit standards towards the National Certificate in Retail and Distribution. All but one of the 12 unit standards required for this qualification are delivered by TLP. The course materials and teaching delivery have been developed in consultation between TLP, its parent body, Precision Group Proprietary Limited (Precision) and the sole current client, a supplier of work clothing and cleaning services.

Previous quality assurance history: No external moderation has been undertaken as yet.

Other: Precision is a training resources company based in Australia and is the source of the teaching and learning material for TLP, and also provides financial and computer resources. Day-to-day oversight of training delivery is provided out of the Christchurch office. Tutors are contracted to meet training commitments as required.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected for this EER were:

- Governance, management and strategy, which is a mandatory focus area
- Unit standard delivery and assessment towards the National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Levels 3 and 4).

At the EER visit, and to reflect TLP's delivery focus for 2013 on training towards the National Certificate in Retail and Distribution (Level 2), the second focus area was changed to:

- Unit standard delivery and assessment in retail, distribution and sales.

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 TLP over one day. An interview was conducted in person with the general manager. Phone interviews were held with the owner/director of TLP and Precision, the sole contracted trainer, a representative of the client company and two trainees. A variety of documents and resources was reviewed, including an overview of the organisation, learner information, achievement and feedback data, course and assessment materials, stakeholder feedback and the organisation's quality management system. Subsequently, a phone interview was held with a representative of the Plastics and Materials Processing Industry Training Organisation (PaMPITO).

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **The Learning Place Limited**.

TLP is committed to meeting the needs of its client for company-specific training in customer service and sales skills. Feedback from records and interviews confirm that TLP is effective in doing so. The current client values the opportunity to be actively involved in both the training development and delivery, including the development of customised materials and learning content that is directly relevant to the trainees' day-to-day responsibilities. While it is too early to have comprehensive outcomes data, there are indications that the training is having a positive impact on staff commitment and effectiveness in the workplace. Evidence includes a declining staff turnover rate and some regional improvements in sales figures.

Trainees are achieving unit standards and the opportunity to complete a national certificate, as well as increased sales and service knowledge and confidence in their own abilities. Learner achievement data indicates that more than 90 per cent of learners successfully gained the 11 unit standards delivered by TLP and will achieve the National Certificate in Retail and Distribution (subject to gaining the outstanding unit standard for Health and Safety, which is yet to be assessed in the workplace by their employer). This is a significant achievement for learners who are primarily customer service and van sales staff, and generally are not accustomed to classroom learning. Important contributing factors identified by the evaluators include well-designed and clearly written course materials, customised to the client's workplace, and good teaching practices, which ensure that the classroom activities are appropriate and engaging and that barriers to learning are identified and addressed.

Overall, the evaluators found that TLP's owner and staff are focused on quality training and positive outcomes. While the body of evidence is not yet comprehensive, no major weaknesses were identified and there are sufficient grounds for confidence in TLP's educational performance.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **The Learning Place Limited**.

TLP has developed a framework for self-assessment, including targets for educational performance and collection of feedback. The evaluation team found that TLP has been very responsive to feedback, particularly from the client company and trainees in relation to teaching and learning materials and methods. Examples of improvements were provided, as well as confirmation that no further significant changes are required for the next cohort. This day-to-day activity has been TLP's priority, together with establishing effective processes. Appropriate academic and management records are maintained, but as yet there is limited evidence of a focus on collection and analysis of data for improvements or overall reflection on educational performance.

Communication practices are largely informal and reflect a shared understanding of the organisation's goals and individual roles and responsibilities. Frequent phone and email contact between all key players (owner, general manager, tutor and client) ensures that key information is shared on a day-to-day basis. At this stage, it appears there are no plans for periodic reflection or reviews (individual or group) on teaching effectiveness, although examples of sharing good practice were provided. More formal processes for collecting and responding to feedback, and monitoring the impact of changes, would also be beneficial for future development.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Learner achievement at TLP is good, although it is noted that this assessment is based on a small number of trainees over a six-month period. All learners completed the three-day course, although one learner out of each of the two cohorts (one of 10 and one of 12 students) had yet to complete one or more unit standards at the time of the evaluation visit. The remainder of the trainees have each achieved 11 unit standards towards the National Certificate in Retail and Distribution. This is a good level of achievement, taking into account the varied educational backgrounds of the learners.

In addition to the opportunity to achieve a qualification, learners are acquiring useful skills which they are able to apply to their work. Examples include improved customer service skills and the ability to up-sell company services in the course of their routine activities. In addition, the positive learning experience is contributing to increased self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities, such as communication and interpersonal skills. TLP is paying attention to learner achievement and has revised teaching and learning materials and assessments to improve learner outcomes. The evaluators sighted evidence of learner progress and achievement data that is simple and fit for purpose. However, there was no data available, during the visit, on the number of unit standard assessment attempts, although it is understood that monitoring of this is intended. There are positive indications that achievement is underpinned by appropriate assessment practices, although at the time of the evaluation this was not yet supported by internal sign-off of all assessments, or by external moderation.

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 **Good**.

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

TLP has developed a training approach based on understanding the needs of corporate clients for upskilling their workforce and delivering training using customised materials and training methods. The client at the time of the evaluation confirmed that TLP training is delivering valuable outcomes. Front line staff are gaining practical skills which are enhancing their performance at work. Early indications of training impact include improved sales results and customer service, although comprehensive data is not yet available.

In addition to gaining relevant skills, learners who achieve the national certificate benefit from additional work-related opportunities and the potential to increase their income. However, it is too early as yet to determine these sorts of medium-term outcomes, or progression to higher-level training. Trainees feel valued and develop a better understanding of the organisation as a whole. Reduced staff turnover and a strengthening of the organisation overall are attributed to a shared purpose and greater consistency among regionally distributed teams, developed to some extent as a result of the training. The client has confirmed its satisfaction by committing to further training later in the year.

Continuous stakeholder engagement and strong multi-level relationships between the two organisations reflect an effective partnership approach, and there is good evidence of a focus on ensuring relevance and adding value for the client. This has resulted in training resources being in place that are embedded for the client for workforce development in the longer term.

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

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

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

TLP is delivering training that is at the right level and appropriate to the industry and is highly effective in meeting the needs of learners and other stakeholders. Evidence of this effectiveness is found in the development and delivery processes, which provide the client with multiple opportunities to influence the content and design of the block course and teaching material. The delivery model includes supervisory and management staff attending and contributing to courses, as well as each trainee's manager sighting and verifying workplace assessments. This

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approach is working well and ensures that learners feel supported and are confident in the relevance of the material to their roles as front line service staff. TLP has worked closely with the client and has utilised learner and tutor feedback to ensure that classroom activities are varied and engaging and are a good match with activities in the workplace. Examples include the introduction of a basic psychometric tool to help trainees identify how they work in a team, and the use of scenarios and role-plays to reinforce service and sales skills.

TLP is active in seeking feedback and using it to refine the course materials and delivery. The client confirmed that thorough review meetings were held after each of the training blocks and that no further changes are required for the next delivery. Written feedback is collected from all trainees, as well as from the trainer. While there is a high level of satisfaction overall with the training provided by TLP, there is a limited body of evidence as to the organisation's self-assessment capability in this regard. However, the evaluators are confident that TLP has established appropriate processes to ensure that training continues to match the needs of clients and trainees.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

TLP is providing an inclusive and effective learning environment in which learners are supported to progress through the content and to apply their learning in a variety of group activities and tasks. Learner feedback and interviews confirm their high levels of engagement and motivation. The contracted tutor is regarded as extremely effective by all concerned. She is suitably qualified and experienced and, although the teaching guide is very prescribed, the tutor is confident in adjusting delivery to accommodate a varied group of trainees, including those with learning difficulties. The first delivery of the block course was co-taught with the owner, and was followed by a session to identify opportunities for improvement, both in the materials and the delivery. The intentional blending of learner groups by the tutor during the training is serving to build relationships and shared understanding among participants from across multiple, widely dispersed worksites and various levels of the organisation. Assessments are fair, trainees know what is required of them, and they receive useful feedback.

Effective teaching is also supported by good learning materials and appropriate academic processes. The progress of individual learners towards completion of the unit standards is closely monitored, especially in relation to the completion of the workplace component. All learning materials and assessments are pre- and post-

moderated, although there have been some delays in internal moderation. TLP is working towards an external moderation plan agreed with Service IQ.

The evaluators found limited evidence of reflective practice in relation to teaching effectiveness, and it is not clear how teaching performance will be monitored, and how, or if, professional development will be supported by TLP.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

TLP recognises the significant investment by the client in selecting and releasing course participants and works hard to reduce any barriers to learning within the context of a short course. Learners with low levels of literacy and English language competency are supported to understand course content, using a variety of practical and oral activities, including assessment; if necessary, additional tuition is available outside of class time. The contracted tutor has competence in te reo Māori and creates an inclusive environment for all cultures. The value of this supportive approach is reflected in the high levels of learner achievement and satisfaction with the learning experience.

A distinguishing feature of the guidance and support structure is the partnership approach, whereby responsibility for learner well-being is shared between the provider and the client. One example of this is the regular attendance of senior management at the training course, which reinforces for trainees the value placed by the client on their development. When the block course has been completed, supervisors and managers continue to support trainees to complete the workplace component. TLP described the steps taken to ensure these staff understand what is required in providing this support.

TLP is collecting learner feedback, but in general relies on client satisfaction in relation to the effectiveness of guidance and support activities. Currently, satisfaction levels are high and largely reflect confidence in the skills of the contracted tutor. Identification and monitoring of the most effective initiatives for enhancing trainee success will assist in embedding them for future training activities.

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

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

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

The evaluation team found that TLP governance and management are committed to supporting educational achievement and positive outcomes for stakeholders. Although the body of evidence is not yet comprehensive, the training's effectiveness to date was confirmed by key stakeholders. Management and communication practices are appropriate for a small organisation, reflecting clearly defined roles and responsibilities and effective information sharing. The tutor receives appropriate support from the general manager and owner. The client company reported being entirely satisfied with the level of engagement, the opportunities available to influence the training, and the learning outcomes. As a very small organisation, TLP is vulnerable to the loss of key staff with important skills, and it would be prudent to address this risk in future planning.

Until now, TLP has focused on refining teaching materials and establishing academic policies and processes. A quality management system describes TLP's planned approach to self-assessment, including tracking performance indicators, but at this stage fundamental evaluative tools have not been fully implemented. There is limited evidence of data being collected and used for development and improvement, or systematic review and reflection on teaching effectiveness, although TLP is responsive on a day-to-day basis. An increased focus on monitoring the impact of changes would also be beneficial for development.

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 **Good**.

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

2.2 Focus area: Unit standard delivery and assessment in retail, distribution and sales

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that The Learning Place Limited:

- Implement the planned self-assessment framework, identifying practical processes for monitoring performance indicators and identifying developments and improvements
- Identify and implement a suitable process for ongoing appraisal, support and professional development for teaching staff.

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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