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External Evaluation and Review Report

The Learning Place Limited

Date of report: 29 July 2019

About The Learning Place Limited

The Learning Place (TLP) is a STAR/Gateway provider to around 400 secondary schools across the country¹, and also delivers both face-to-face and online the Licence Controller Qualification (LCQ). It has four NZQA-approved subcontracting arrangements and had been delivering and assessing assessment standards online through a joint venture, which recently terminated.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	33 Princes Street, Dunedin Central, Dunedin
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 2016: 4,897 (Māori 643, Pasifika, 208) (25.97 EFTS (equivalent full-time students)) 2017: 5,804 (Māori 773, Pasifika 259) (89.35 EFTS) 2018: 7,296 (Māori 1,032, Pasifika 291) (111.73 EFTS)
Number of staff:	Eight full-time equivalents
TEO profile:	See The Learning Place Limited
Last EER outcome:	May 2015: Confident in educational performance Confident in capability in self-assessment
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Licence Controller Qualification (LCQ) Training Scheme (NZQA approved)• Secondary School STAR/Gateway Programmes
MoE number:	7982
NZQA reference:	C34509
Dates of EER visit:	21 and 22 May 2019

¹ The Learning Place, *Innovative Approaches to NCEA 2019*, p3

Summary of Results

The organisation's kaupapa of 'access to education' is clearly reflected in its operation and the variety of programmes being delivered. Achievement is strong and the valued outcomes for learners and the community are evident. However, there are identified non-compliances and weaknesses in the organisation's joint venture activities which led to TLP terminating their contract.

Confident in educational performance

- Overall achievement has been very high for the last three years; Māori and Pasifika achievement is on par with other cohorts of learners.
- Programmes are relevant and provide obvious benefits to the learners and the community. They are well-planned, and the needs of stakeholders are met.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Monitoring of enrolment and achievement is robust, and involves data on resubmissions to clearly understand achievement. Graduate destination data has also been consistently monitored which provides the organisation with an understanding of the valued outcomes of the programmes.
- Individual learning needs are identified and addressed. TLP ensures the learners are well-supported to complete the programme(s).
- Compliance responsibilities are mostly managed well, including the organisation's responsibilities in terms of the approved subcontracting arrangements.
- TLP did not effectively manage its compliance responsibilities with regards its former joint venture – 'Flipped' – with the company LearnCoach. The loose oversight by TLP resulted in non-compliance with Section 292A(1)(i) and (2) of the Education Act 1989, when LearnCoach allowed students to complete practice assessments and led them to believe that credits would be gained when TLP gained approval from NZQA on its consent to

assess application.

- Internal moderation is robust. However, external moderation has identified two assessment standards offered under TLP's former joint venture as not meeting moderation requirements. This confirms that TLP had not been closely monitoring the activities of its joint venture partner.

Key evaluation question findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The overall programme completion rate is high, and Māori and Pasifika learners are generally achieving on a par with other learners.³ The high rate of achievement has been maintained through the years, even with a growing number of enrolments in both the online LCQ training scheme and the secondary school STAR/Gateway programmes. There is good evidence of equity and parity in achievement.</p> <p>Secondary school learners are getting good value in a variety of ways. They develop skills which help widen their employment opportunities, i.e. barista, bartending, sports coaching. They also develop life skills from the resilience programme and other soft skills from the leadership, teamwork and communication programmes. Learners consider the programmes good exposure that assist in their readiness for post-school life. The programmes are also a good addition to the learners' resumes.</p> <p>The LCQ training scheme effectively prepares the learners for the assessment to obtain their Bar Manager's Certificate.</p> <p>TLP has robust systems for monitoring and analysing achievement data. This includes data on resubmissions, ethnicity, gender, etc. The analysis of data is shared with the trainers on a regular basis which gives the latter a good understanding of achievement and a good base for their reflection on their own performance as trainers.</p>
Conclusion:	Overall achievement has been consistently strong and TLP robustly monitors and analyses data to understand achievement.

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

³ See Appendix 1.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The skills gained by secondary school learners from the programmes lead to part-time employment and opportunities for further study. For 2017-2018, 52 per cent of TLP secondary school students worked in part-time employment related to their TLP programmes, while 42 per cent progressed to further studies. The programmes improve learners' confidence and wellbeing. Leadership and events coordination skills, for example, are applied at school as soon as learners are given the chance.</p> <p>The LCQ training scheme effectively prepares learners to apply for the Bar Managers' Certificate, which allows them to work in premises selling and supplying alcohol. Becoming a bar duty manager is a pathway for LCQ learners – 63.4 per cent (2016), 59.4 per cent (2017), and 56.7 per cent (2018) of LCQ completers at TLP went on to get the Bar Manager's Certificate. Moreover, a valued outcome of the LCQ is the skill to manage difficult situations and difficult people, i.e. reducing tensions in bars among patrons who are under the influence of alcohol.</p> <p>TLP's self-reflection has led the organisation to seek ways to improve data gathering. TLP formed a group called Friends of The Learning Place – these are learners who commit to providing long-term feedback. Through surveys and face-to-face focus group discussions, the Friends of TLP allowed the organisation to gather long-term data on graduate destinations and valued outcomes.</p> <p>Aside from student surveys, TLP also gets feedback from employers and STAR/Gateway coordinators, which informs the PTE of the relevance of the programmes and the effectiveness of programme design and delivery.</p>
Conclusion:	TLP programmes are relevant and provide valued outcomes to learners and the wider community. TLP has robust self-assessment practices that inform them of the effectiveness and relevance of the programmes.

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>TLP provides programmes that are relevant and in high demand in the industry (LCQ, barista, bartending), and programmes of wider benefit to the learners (leadership, teamwork, resilience, communication). TLP has regular contact with the members of Career Advice and Transition Education and meets with the group annually to discuss and understand the training needs of secondary school students. It also has an ongoing relationship with the Dunedin City Council's licensing inspection unit and the police's alcohol harm prevention unit. These relationships provide expertise and advice, for example with regards to trends in the industry and special training needs for specific premises.</p> <p>Programme delivery is flexible to meet individual school needs. For instance, some programmes are delivered at the TLP delivery site while others are delivered at schools; some are delivered during school terms and some during school holidays. This flexibility clearly reflects the TLP kaupapa of access to education. The LCQ, which has traditionally been offered face-to-face, is now delivered online. This addresses the industry need for flexibility in the programme, given that the learners are mostly hospitality workers with irregular working hours.</p> <p>Internal moderation is robust which gives confidence in the achievement of learners. TLP has a rolling or ongoing moderation process – 100 per cent of assessment materials are pre-moderated, while 10 per cent are post-moderated.</p> <p>TLP has a record of consistently achieving successful external moderation for the past three years. However, there are two mathematics assessment standards that are not yet consistent with requirements. These are among the standards delivered and assessed under the joint venture Flipped, and targeted at secondary school students working towards NCEA, i.e. not the STAR/Gateway programmes. TLP had tightened its practices to address the concern around moderation, which included a strict requirement of employing only registered teachers, marking of assessments being completed by two teachers at all times, and</p>

	<p>post-moderation of all assessments. Immediately following the EER, TLP has terminated the joint venture contract.</p> <p>TLP constantly reflects on how it can improve its practices concerning authenticity of assessments. Currently, especially for the online LCQ, TLP has a robust check to ensure that the learners go through each of the modules, and that the learners actually sit the assessment. A requirement to take a photo of themselves along with an identity document pops up randomly many times while the learner is sitting the assessment. The online LCQ is also manually marked which makes it easier to see patterns. These, along with random verbal verification checks, provide robust assurance to TLP that the assessments are authentic.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>TLP's close connection with the industry and its good self-assessment practices ensure that the programmes offered are relevant and meet training needs. Moderation is mostly satisfactory except for external moderation results for two assessment standards delivered and assessed under the joint venture Flipped, which was terminated by TLP immediately after the EER onsite visit.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TLP is a short programme provider but still manages to provide very good support to its learners. TLP monitors the number of days the learners are working on their online LCQ modules, and contacts them close to the end of the programme. TLP ensures that learners are well-informed by sending timely emails that give clear instructions about the online portal, the content of the programme, the requirements, and any steps the learners need to do. TLP staff are always available by phone or email should there be any questions or clarifications required by the learners. Students interviewed confirmed that TLP promptly attends to their queries, and that staff are approachable and easy to deal with.</p> <p>As for the secondary school programmes, before any programme starts, TLP's standard procedure is to identify any individual learning needs through the school coordinators. TLP</p>

	<p>has systems in place to address any learning needs, such as dyslexia, and promotes an inclusive learning environment in all the programmes delivered.</p> <p>Feedback from learners, school coordinators and employers, as well as the trainers' post-programme reflections, confirms that the learners are well-supported in their learning.</p>
Conclusion:	TLP has systems in place to ensure learners are well-supported in their learning, albeit they learn with TLP for only a short amount of time.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TLP has a structure and clear goals for educational delivery, and has a well-planned approach to monitoring and understanding educational performance.</p> <p>Self-assessment is multi-layered and embedded in the organisation's daily activities. All staff have a weekly operations meeting to discuss tasks and reflect on the previous week. The trainers complete a reflection after every programme, which is shared among all trainers. Management prepares a bi-monthly trainers' report which provides feedback on their performance as well as the enrolment and achievement data for their programmes. With this report, trainers get familiar with the demographics of their learners (ethnicity, gender) and understand their achievement. The annual individual trainer's report summarises the trainer's performance, provides an opportunity for the trainer to reflect and respond, and discusses any professional development needs. The internal academic review is a bi-monthly meeting of the governing members of the organisation to discuss emerging concerns, strategies and future plans. All these processes contribute to robust self-assessment.</p> <p>Trainers are well-qualified, with some currently working on their adult education qualification. Performance appraisal is regular, well-planned and structured, and includes observation, discussion with management, and trainers' reflections. Professional development of staff is an important part of the</p>

	<p>organisation and is well-supported by management.</p> <p>Shortly prior to the EER visit, the academic manager and online development and academic support staff resigned. A clear plan was in place to ensure a smooth transition: the new academic manager had sufficient time with the former staff to be familiar with the requirements of the role; an academic coordinator was hired and strengthens the governing team to four members; and a new role, academic support, was created to provide administrative and technical support.</p> <p>Management has a good oversight of TLP's subcontracting arrangements with four organisations delivering unit standards on their behalf. Responsibilities between parties are clear and the subcontractors confirmed that they are satisfied with their relationship with TLP. On the other hand, there were obvious gaps in TLP's oversight of the activities of its former joint venture partner, LearnCoach. The lack of regular monitoring brought a number of issues for TLP, which resulted in their non-compliance in some areas as a registered PTE (see 1.6).</p>
Conclusion:	<p>The organisation has clear educational goals, and self-assessment is embedded in the organisation's daily practices. However, one area of its business slipped in its monitoring – the joint venture Flipped.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TLP has mostly managed its compliance accountabilities well, but there is an identified non-compliance concerning its former joint venture with LearnCoach.</p> <p>Required annual documents to NZQA are submitted in a timely manner, and TLP is proactive in keeping up to date with changes in NZQA rules. It also has good processes in place for checking the suitability of training sites, which provides assurance that the delivery sites are safe and suitable for education purposes.</p> <p>Subcontracting arrangements are managed well. There are clear responsibilities between parties; TLP understands that as</p>

	<p>the registered PTE it has the ultimate responsibility for compliance with NZQA rules; and the subcontractors confirmed that they are satisfied with how TLP transacts with them.</p> <p>TLP's former joint venture with LearnCoach, however, was a major concern to NZQA. There is clear evidence that TLP did not have an oversight of LearnCoach's activities. The most recent incident was LearnCoach making available on its online platform achievement standards that TLP has no consent to assess against. Students were allowed to complete practice assessments and were led to believe that credits would be gained when TLP gained approval from NZQA on its consent to assess application. With no knowledge of any of this, TLP clearly has no supervision of LearnCoach's activities. There is also an absence of a written document that clearly states TLP's responsibilities as the registered PTE. This incident is a non-compliance with Section 292A(1)(i) and (2) of the Education Act 1989.</p> <p>TLP has separate quality management systems (QMS) for the PTE operations, for subcontracting, and for the joint venture. The effectiveness of implementing the QMS for the joint venture is questionable in light of the recent event above.</p> <p>TLP has good practices for identifying compliance responsibilities for most of its moderation. However, two achievement standards have been recently identified as not meeting moderation requirements. These standards were delivered and assessed under the joint venture Flipped.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Compliance is mostly managed effectively except for the activities under the former joint venture Flipped. The delivery and assessment of assessment standards which TLP has no consent to assess against is a non-compliance and was not identified by TLP until the incident happened. TLP recently put measures in place to address this matter, but this was reactive and not a product of its self-assessment. TLP terminated the joint venture immediately after the EER onsite visit.</p>

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Online LCQ Training Scheme

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.2 Focus area: Secondary school STAR/Gateway programmes

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

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 Place Limited:

- Explore the option of establishing an independent governance advisory group to provide independent governance and strategic advice to the organisation. As the TLP governing team is small and has new key members, and the organisation delivers and assesses against a wide range of assessment standards, it may benefit getting viewpoints of other, independent stakeholders.

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.

Given the development following the external evaluation and review, wherein The Learning Place has terminated its joint venture agreement with LearnCoach, there are no requirements arising from the review.

Appendix 1

The Learning Place achievement data

Online LCQ	2016		2017		2018	
	Total students	Competent	Total students	Competent	Total students	Competent
All students	1806	74%	2445	97%	3354	92%
Māori	108	66%	171	96%	240	93%
Pasifika	36	64%	34	95%	56	89%
School STAR/ Gateway Programmes	2016		2017		2018	
	Total students	Competent	Total students	Competent	Total students	Competent
All students	3091	96%	3197	96%	3812	97%
Māori	535	94%	602	95%	792	94%
Pasifika	172	98%	225	96%	235	98%

Source: The Learning Place TEO details

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 fraud⁴*
- *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.*

⁴ 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 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

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 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, 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 2016. 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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