

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Life Care Consultants Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 23 May 2014

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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:	Life Care Consultants Limited (Life Care)
Location:	568 Anglesea Street, Hamilton
Type:	Private training organisation (PTE)
First registered:	1997
Number of students:	Domestic: 231 equivalent full-time students International: nil
Number of staff:	40 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Based First Aid• First Aid Refresher• Health and Safety
Sites:	Head office and delivery site in Hamilton as above, and: 644 Great South Road Penrose, Auckland; Level 4, Wellington Electricity Building, 75 The Esplanade, Petone, Wellington; 235 A Stanmore Road, Christchurch
Distinctive characteristics:	Life Care delivers first aid training, including refresher courses and health and safety short courses. Life Care also offers a range of pre-employment health checks and employment health and wellness checks, such as hearing and vision tests, Body Mass Index (BMI), and cholesterol testing, among others.
Recent significant changes:	Life Care recently began delivering health and

safety courses to Gateway students in schools.

Previous quality assurance history:

The previous external evaluation and review was in 2012 and resulted in NZQA being Highly Confident in Life Care's educational performance and Confident in its capability in self-assessment.

In February 2013 NZQA carried out a focused review of Life Care's compliance with the first aid training requirements. Life Care was found to be only partly meeting the requirement for minimum training hours and not meeting the requirement that all instructors be appropriately qualified. Subsequently NZQA has confirmed that Life Care's instructor qualifications professional development opportunities, and hours spent on course delivery, now meet these requirements.

In addition, Life Care submitted a plan to strengthen their processes for validating that all students have completed pre-course reading prior to the first day of training. In May 2014, NZQA reviewed these new processes on site, and found them to be consistently applied across the organisation.

Life Care's first aid assessments were most recently externally moderated by NZQA in 2013. The assessment materials were fit for purpose and assessment decisions were found to be at the national standard. Health and safety assessment is externally moderated by Primary ITO (industry training organisation) which notes that there have been 'no problems at all'.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This evaluation included the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy, and two other focus areas. First aid training was chosen because it is the main activity with most students, and health and safety training was included as a new area of training delivery. These focus areas provided sufficient spread across the organisation's training to reach valid judgements.

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 Life Care's main site in Hamilton over two days. The team met with the sole owner and director, the management team, a group of health consultants¹ (instructors), a randomly selected group of students (by phone), and a selection of external stakeholders (also by phone). A range of Life Care's electronic documentation and records was also reviewed as part this evaluation.

¹ Life Care staff are health consultants as well as course tutors.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Life Care**.

- The organisation has consistently high achievement rates – between 98 and 99 per cent.
- Student course evaluations show consistently high ratings.
- There is long-term repeat business with a large number of client organisations (some for over 20 years).
- Evidence from client-company phone surveys and face-to-face meetings indicates a high level of satisfaction and value gained from staff completing Life Care training.
- There is considerable evidence showing that instructors provide appropriate emotional, learning and physical support during training to support students who are genuinely challenged by aspects of the training.
- Instructors have appropriate experience and qualifications and undertake ongoing professional development that has met all requirements for delivering and assessing first aid and health and safety courses.
- Tutorial staff have a well-designed and supported, staged induction process to prepare them well for facilitating courses.
- Assessment of learning is closely monitored and moderated internally, with appropriate records of issues arising and improvements made to assessment practice, for example complete and accurate documentation of competence.
- External moderation by standard-setting bodies indicates assessment is fit for purpose and decisions are at the national standard.
- Life Care contributes to a number of local community events, supporting and promoting aspects of health, wellness, workplace safety and first aid.
- Appropriate records and databases are maintained and used to collate results, and these are extensively used to monitor performance and adjust processes to improve business and educational performance, for example developing 'enhanced reality', real-life mock incidents for training purposes.
- There was sufficient evidence of ongoing high performance and improvements for NZQA to have high confidence in the organisation's educational performance.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Life Care**.

- Life Care collects, collates and uses a wide range of performance data, resulting in ongoing improvements.
- All staff have access to this data via online databases and 'dashboard style' indicators on the company intranet. This access is highly valued by staff.
- Staff commented that this information was of high value, enabling them to monitor their own performance and achievements against their targets (key performance indicators) as well as against other regions and staff.
- Regular reports, discussions and meetings are held face to face or via teleconferences, weekly, quarterly and annually (with all staff), providing close monitoring of performance and resulting in staff gaining a common understanding of changes and improvements to processes and outcomes.
- Staff interviewed at this evaluation said they appreciated management's open-door policy and the ready support they received. They noted that they felt supported to achieve rather than directed. An example of this is peer observations, where staff observe each other's sessions for professional development.
- Staff regularly share their knowledge and experience at meetings and on the company intranet, and deliver more formal or structured presentations at all-staff meetings (usually annual). This is a valued aspect of professional development.
- Student course surveys are shared with staff and analysed by management for patterns and trends, and this information is shared across all staff, resulting in raised awareness and, where necessary, a change in focus to address any emerging issues.
- Management has a range of processes to build and maintain relationships with client companies, ensuring the organisation continues to meet the clients' needs, and continually adjusts courses to match industry requirements.
- All stakeholders contacted during this evaluation were positive about their experience with Life Care. One noted that they had used the organisation for staff training and updates for many years because of the service provided and the value they saw for their business and their staff.
- There was sufficiently strong evidence showing that Life Care is closely monitoring how well it is meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders, and continually making changes across the organisation, resulting in improved processes and results. Therefore, the evaluators

consider that NZQA can be highly confident in Life Care's capability in self-assessment.

Findings²

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**.

Student achievement on first aid courses has been consistently high, at between 98 and 99 per cent. This was evidenced through the organisation's database and during interviews with stakeholders, students and staff. Life Care has recently begun delivering health and safety courses through secondary schools to Gateway students. To date, these have resulted in all but three out of 60 students achieving. While this level of achievement is not unusual on short (eight to 12 hour) client-focused courses, Life Care's self-assessment is detailed and well analysed, and has identified very high levels of repeat business, and employer and student satisfaction rates over time. The organisation gathers many anecdotes about the value of the training and the confidence gained by students. Of particular note was the fact that staff were able to discuss individual cases where students had not been able to achieve. These cases were well known and indicated that staff went to considerable effort to facilitate students' success. Those that do not achieve completely still achieve partially, for example achieving one or two of the three unit standards, as well as gaining valuable skills and knowledge.

The achievements are validated through strong internal processes to check the standard of assessment materials and assessor decisions, as well as through standard-setting bodies' moderation of assessment, showing that assessment is at the national standard. Taken together, these factors confirm that achievement is excellent. Several of these areas are further explored under the relevant sections below.

All records and information within Life Care is online and available to all staff. This is valued by staff and seen as a significant factor in monitoring, maintaining and lifting achievement rates. Weekly regional reports are sent to head office, and daily communication tracks any emerging issues. Self-assessment information and processes are strong and used to improve results across the organisation.

² 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**.

Life Care establishes the value and results of the training through student course surveys, phone surveys of client companies, and face-to-face meetings with clients. These self-assessment processes are consistently applied and results are tracked regularly, and indicate that all parties are seeing and experiencing considerable value in the training. Staff, students and client companies noted many examples of applying the skills learned in the workplace and at home, such as dealing with a cardiac arrest, bitumen burns, blood poisoning on a fishing boat, teenage alcoholic poisoning, and choking.

The value noted above, as identified through the organisation's surveys and analysis of results, was confirmed to the evaluators during phone interviews with past students and client-company representatives. All interviewees were very positive about the value of the training and highly recommended it, with one saying they have used Life Care for several years. One employer noted a reduced rate of incidents following training.

Life Care is actively involved in contributing to community events, for example by promoting workplace health and wellness, and conducting blood pressure checks at local events. The organisation has also been involved on a voluntary basis, working with a school and parent to understand how best to manage a student with a significant health issue. These events demonstrate that Life Care and its staff are actively adding value to local communities.

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**.

Course content is dictated by the nature of the unit standards for first aid and health and safety. However, there was also strong evidence presented showing that Life Care adapts courses to provide tailored training for each group of students or the client company. This was confirmed during phone interviews with past students and company personnel, with all commenting that the instructors have made the training relevant to their needs.

Life Care has a large number of clients, some of whom have sent staff for successive training and updates for up to 20 years – an indication that their needs are being matched and met well over a long period of time. There were no

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comments or indications that clients choose Life Care on price alone, with all interviewees discussing a range of reasons for choosing and staying with Life Care. These comments included, for example, the organisation's willingness to adapt course times and run training on the weekend, engaging instructors, sufficient time for applying the practical skills, and the industry relevance of the training.

Life Care has developed employer-specific 'enhanced reality' courses with mock incidents in response to client requests. Self-assessment information shows that these types of courses are valued and match client needs well.

As noted, the self-assessment processes are used effectively to monitor how well the training meets client-company and student needs. There was clear evidence showing that the organisation is meeting student and other stakeholder needs well.

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 **Excellent**.

Life Care demonstrates that it meets requirements for having trained and certificated instructors to deliver the first aid courses. Staff are actively involved in ongoing professional development, including some training for the National Certificate in Adult Education and Training (Level 5), and attendance at conferences and seminars. All new staff gain unit standard 4098 *Use standards to assess candidate performance*. Staff are also actively engaged in sharing their experiences and new knowledge at staff meetings and annual meetings of all staff.

Teaching is highly effective, as evidenced through the organisation's self-assessment, student course evaluations, feedback from clients, repeat business and the many anecdotes collected from ex-students who have used the knowledge and skills they have learnt (as noted above). Within phone interviews, former students and clients noted that the instructors were 'exceptional', 'engaged us with enthusiasm', 'brought quiet students into discussions', '[examples were] relevant to my business' and 'assessment was managed really well'.

Life Care has a range of processes to check and monitor the validity of assessment tools and processes. These include observations (of full-day sessions) and weekly reporting of assessment results, which are tracked and reviewed at the head office. Where instructors find issues arising on a course they can call head office for extra support and/or advice, adding strength to the delivery and assessments. External moderation by standard-setting bodies has confirmed that Life Care is using assessment materials that are fit for purpose and that the assessment decisions are at the national standard.

Instructors' performance is monitored and reviewed through regional managers' observing instructors followed by a written report and discussions, leading to

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agreed professional development plans. These are regularly conducted and valued by staff. Improvements noted were, for example, related to maintaining the focus on all students during assessments to ensure the short course time is well used (students not left sitting idle), varying the teaching strategies used to address students' learning styles, and using humour to keep sessions light. Staff interviewed by the evaluators said they valued the opportunity to observe their peers to pick up new ideas from more experienced instructors.

The organisation has effective systems to monitor the effectiveness of its instructors and these are well used. There was clear evidence that this is contributing to ongoing improvements.

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**.

Given the nature of the short courses, students are very well supported and guided. Staff noted that the content is often challenging, dealing as it does with emergency response, death and injuries, first aid, and health and safety. Many anecdotes were recounted of situations where students had a significant reaction to an aspect of the content. This was, at times, due to personal experiences, and staff noted that they dealt with this in sensitive ways to include the students and keep them in the course wherever possible. This was confirmed and valued by students and client companies.

Students receive pre-course reading for some courses, which contributes to the required hours of study, and Life Care to strengthen processes at the beginning of the course to ensure that students have read and gained some understanding from the readings. The students' course evaluations and feedback sought from clients form the basis of Life Care's self-assessment of how students are supported and guided before and during the short courses. This indicates a high level of satisfaction.

Staff noted that they often adapt a course to accommodate students' specific learning or physical needs, for example to have a signer for a hearing-impaired student. For formal assessments, the specific first aid requirements are always adhered to.

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**.

Life Care is a well-managed organisation, and has a clear set of values and a core purpose of 'empowering New Zealanders to save lives and improve their health'. The PTE has effective systems and processes to monitor how well it is performing as an education institution.

There was clear evidence that the management team members are highly effective in their roles. The organisation has no governance body, but the sole owner and director seeks external input to the organisation for business and educational advice, in order to gain independent professional support and advice. The core management team carries out the duties of governance and management. The online documentation reviewed at this evaluation, including regional management reports and the CRM database (with analysis of student surveys and feedback from clients), provided evidence of a soundly governed and managed tertiary education organisation.

Staff are invited to give input to the organisation's direction and are included in any change decisions. This was noted by the instructors as something they valued. They felt they could approach management at any time, and said they 'felt heard and valued' by management.

Life Care has employed appropriately qualified and experienced staff, and has well-structured and detailed processes for the induction of instructors and to support them in their roles. Ongoing reviews of the quality of instruction are effective and lead to improvements or exiting of staff where poor performance is identified. Life Care ensures staff have experience and are appropriately qualified and where the staff do not meet the requirements of 'First Aid as a Life Skill' the organisation has processes to ensure up skilling occurs promptly.

The large number of clients and the long-term repeat business (over 20 years) with some clients is a good indicator that Life Care is meeting its clients' needs and adapting over time to stay current with industry changes.

Management's level of analysis of performance data is comprehensive and meaningful and is communicated across the organisation via the company intranet. This was valued by staff, who are able to see what the organisation is doing and how their own performance compares with targets and with other staff.

The organisation is actively exploring areas for business development and innovation, including revising the organisational structure and developing alternative programmes to improve the match of programmes to market needs and specific stakeholder needs. Organisational structure options are well

communicated with staff, and planning for new programmes is detailed and well considered.

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: First aid training

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

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

There is considerable evidence that Life Care's students, as well as other stakeholders, are gaining significant value from the first aid training. However, the rating for performance in this focus area is good rather than excellent because at the time of this evaluation Life Care was still implementing improved processes to ensure that all students have completed and gained learning from the required pre-course readings.

2.3 Focus area: Health and safety training

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.

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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