

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Wood Wise

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 29 August 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

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|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name of TEO: | Wood Wise |
| Type: | Private training establishment (PTE) |
| Location: | Rotorua |
| Delivery sites: | Rotorua and the premises of Wood Wise's clients |
| First registered: | 3 December 1997 |
| Courses currently delivered | National Certificate in Wood Manufacturing (Levels 2, 3, and 4) |
| Code of Practice signatory? | No international students and not a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students |
| Number of students: | Domestic: four equivalent full-time students |
| Number of staff: | Two full-time equivalents |
| Scope of active accreditation: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication Skills (to level 3)• Mathematics (to level 4)• Occupational Health and Safety (to level 1)• Solid Wood Processing (to level 5)• Wood Manufacturing - Generic Skills (to level 5)• Wood Processing Technology (to level 5) |
| Distinctive characteristics: | Wood Wise is a small PTE with four part-time staff. Wood Wise delivers training for New Zealand sawmilling and wood manufacturing industry |

employees.

Most of the training is delivered on the clients' sites.

The courses range in length from one day to one week, and sometimes run for two days every two months.

Training is generally based on unit standards, but the delivery and content are customised to each client's needs while still meeting unit standard requirements.

Most trainees are funded by the Forest Industries Training and Education Council (FITEC) as part of workplace training agreements.

The trainees range in age from 17 to 65 and are trained in small classes averaging five trainees.

Wood Wise staff members also work for the associate company Grade Right (NZ) Ltd (Grade Right) which carries out product quality inspections and audits for the timber industry.

Wood Wise and Grade Right have clients in common and the training activities and inspection/auditing work complement each other.

Recent significant changes: FITEC has begun to use non-NZQA accredited contractors.

Previous quality assurance history: At the previous quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in August 2008, Wood Wise met all the requirements of the standard in force at the time. The FITEC post-moderation report in February 2012 was positive: five out of six submissions were verified and one needed improvement.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

In accordance with NZQA policy, the mandatory focus area of governance, management, and strategy was included in the scope of this external evaluation and review. The other focus area selected was wood industry training programmes as Wood Wise runs approximately 60 such courses each year.

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 external evaluation and review was conducted over two days by two NZQA evaluators at the Wood Wise office in Rotorua. The evaluation involved interviews with:

- The managing director
- The two other tutors via phone
- A representative from FITEC
- A range of ex-students via phone
- A range of stakeholders via phone

The evaluation also involved a review of relevant documentation such as the annual plan, post-moderation reports, achievement data, student evaluation forms, meeting minutes, self-assessment reports, newsletters, and associated correspondence.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Wood Wise**.

Wood Wise is regarded as a high quality trainer. In the first five months of 2012, the trainees on Wood Wise's courses achieved 1,955 credits compared with 1,064 credits achieved in the same period the previous year. During the first five months of 2012, Wood Wise ran 26 courses, and on 18 of these courses all the trainees achieved all the credits that were available. Wood Wise does not attach much importance to the total credits achieved as it is conscious of the difficulties of ascertaining the impact of such factors as trainees not being released from their sites for the assessments, or being absent from the training sessions for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, the data is positive and the feedback from the stakeholders to the evaluation team about the high regard in which Wood Wise is held in the industry indicates that the level of educational performance is strong.

Wood Wise has a high sense of accountability to the timber industry. It recognises the importance of maintaining high standards in its courses and considers the implications of changes in the training environment on those standards. Wood Wise has a positive effect on the industry through the delivery of its courses and its efforts to ensure the training material is accessible to the learners. Its tutors are recognised as knowledgeable and experienced and their courses receive positive feedback from client companies and from the trainees.

Involvement with the industry is extensive and this is enhanced by Wood Wise's staff being employed to also undertake audits of timber companies in the guise of its associate company, Grade Right. Engagement with stakeholders is continuous, particularly as the majority of the courses are delivered on site and the audits also take place there.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Wood Wise**.

Wood Wise appreciates that its success depends on the effectiveness of its training. In many ways, self-assessment is embedded, as every short course is formally evaluated by the trainees and the timber companies. The evaluations are reviewed by Wood Wise along with feedback from the tutors which ensures that many different aspects are covered. The feedback is effectively supplemented by the informal feedback through the many conversations taking place between Wood Wise staff and timber companies. The process would be rendered more comprehensive by redesigning the evaluation forms to capture more useful data to provide information about patterns and trends developing in the reactions of trainees to the courses.

The current systems evaluate all the courses on an ongoing basis and Wood Wise uses the feedback to make changes. An example of this was the decision to distribute most course manuals through the site training coordinators for preliminary reading prior to many of the courses. Feedback about low levels of trainee commitment and preparation encouraged Wood Wise to make this change. The feedback therefore is used and evidence now needs to be accumulated to show its impact on the trainees' educational performance.

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 **Good**.

All the stakeholders to whom the evaluation team spoke regard Wood Wise as a high quality trainer. This judgement is based on the quality of the training delivered. The evaluation team spoke to some ex-students who have been promoted in the timber industry and are using Wood Wise as their preferred training provider because the tutors are regarded as highly knowledgeable with very good presentation skills.

In the first five months of 2012, the trainees on Wood Wise's courses achieved 1,955 credits. This compares with 1,064 credits achieved in the same period the previous year. Wood Wise attributes the rise in the number of credits to its decision to run smaller courses and to focus on completing more level 2 unit standards, particularly the core skill unit standards to which high numbers of credits are attached.

During the first five months of 2012, Wood Wise ran 26 courses, and on 18 of these courses all the trainees achieved all the credits that were available. The first five months of 2011 saw Wood Wise running 19 courses, and on 15 of them all the trainees achieved all the credits that were available.

This positive data and the high regard in which Wood Wise is held by the industry indicate that the level of educational performance is strong. The achievement data could be even more positive perhaps, but it was difficult for the evaluation team to ascertain the impact of such factors as trainees not being released from their sites for the assessments, or being absent from the training sessions for a variety of reasons.

Wood Wise does not consider the number of credits being achieved by the students to be as important an indicator of its success, as a trainer, as the amount of repeat business its training courses generate. Out of its 29 main clients, 25 have been using Wood Wise as a trainer for five or more years and 17 of these have been using Wood Wise for ten or more years. These figures again indicate a high level of performance. Wood Wise also makes effective use of the information it acquires when it is conducting audits under the auspices of Grade Right. In this role it is checking the quality of the timber products produced by employees trained by Wood Wise. This is effective self-assessment.

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 **Good**.

Wood Wise's programmes provide many valuable outcomes for the learners, the timber companies employing the learners, and the timber industry as a whole. The learners acquire knowledge and skills that are highly relevant to their jobs. Some of the learners find the FITEC material difficult to understand and appreciate the way in which Wood Wise explains it to them. There is widespread recognition of the expertise of the tutors and the value of the experience they bring to the courses and the instruction they provide.

The timber companies endorsed this view to the evaluation team. Many of them have used Wood Wise as a trainer for many years and are clearly convinced of the value of its programmes. The first five months of 2012 saw an increase in the number of trainees attending Wood Wise courses, to 168 compared with 67 in the same period last year. This reflects the high level of confidence that the industry continues to have in the ability of Wood Wise to provide high quality training. The companies interviewed stressed that they would continue to use Wood Wise and appreciated how the tutors were always willing to give advice and support. Two companies appreciate the value of Wood Wise so much that they use Wood Wise as a trainer even though they receive no subsidy from FITEC, since the courses in which they want to enrol their employees do not follow the FITEC-approved approach.

All the companies contacted by the evaluation team praised the contribution that Wood Wise makes to the timber industry as a whole. The programmes were delivered on site and their effectiveness was supplemented by the audits from Grade Right. Wood Wise clearly has a highly visible role in the industry. Its involvement in many facets of the industry and the background of its tutors result in extensive and continuous engagement with stakeholders, thereby enhancing the value of the outcomes produced.

Wood Wise's engagement with stakeholders on many levels and in many guises is used effectively by Wood Wise to gauge its success in achieving the desired outcomes. Most of this engagement is verbal and is supplemented by the written feedback sent back to Wood Wise in the form of training feedback forms. Unfortunately, only around 25 per cent of the companies avail themselves of this opportunity. Nevertheless, Wood Wise uses the feedback to make worthwhile improvements. For example, the organisation realised from feedback that companies were becoming more reluctant to release staff. Consequently, it encouraged experienced industry trainees to complete as many of the workbooks for the level 2 core skills units as possible prior to the start of the training for these units. This reduced the training time for these three units but still allowed sufficient time to complete unit standard 22977 *Demonstrate knowledge of workplace risks in a wood manufacturing operation*, which is regarded as the most important. Wood

Wise also gauges its effectiveness by checking that it is gaining repeat business from its clients. This check is more informal than formal.

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**.

Wood Wise is very responsive to the needs of timber companies. It ensures its programmes match those needs by effectively analysing them and tailoring the learning so that the appropriate level of specialist knowledge is provided.

Wood Wise is also careful to tailor the teaching to the learners' abilities and experience. It caters for both inexperienced and experienced learners by making the appropriate adaptations to the FITEC resources. The managing director takes the lead in this by providing the necessary instructional leadership in course design.

Wood Wise staff members are careful to structure their courses around unit standards. In this way, Wood Wise staircases courses so that learners can use them as building blocks to higher qualifications. Wood Wise further ensures that its programmes match learners' needs by providing additional help when trainees experience literacy and numeracy problems. Wood Wise has adopted the practice of informing employers of difficulties and suggesting the kinds of further assistance that trainees may require, for which a longer-term programme is required, beyond what Wood Wise is able to provide in its short courses. Nevertheless, Wood Wise does allow verbal assessments and will help record the verbal answers provided by the learners when written work is required.

Wood Wise reflects on the progress of learners on its courses so that it is aware when changes to FITEC material are required. It monitors the appropriateness of FITEC manuals in order to check that they match the needs of the learners. The analysis of specific learning needs is not made until the course starts, and Wood Wise might consider whether it is worthwhile to gain an understanding of these at an earlier stage. It already effectively obtains feedback from the timber companies about the types and levels of courses they want and uses this as an effective way of checking that the courses are meeting timber companies' needs.

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 **Good**.

Wood Wise's tutors have extensive experience in the industry. The evaluation team contacted a number of timber companies at random from a long list that Wood Wise supplied. The team heard considerable praise for the effectiveness of the teaching. The companies considered the training to be both focussed and targeted appropriately. One trainee commented that one of the tutors was 'the best he had ever experienced'. Trainees emphasised to the evaluation team that the teaching is highly relevant to the needs of the timber industry. The trainers combine explicit instruction with one-to-one tuition when circumstances warrant this intensity of instruction and support.

Wood Wise recognises explicitly the importance of moderation, and it places particular emphasis on technical moderation. All assessments at level 3 are internally moderated, while 25 per cent of the level 1 and 2 assessments are internally moderated. FITEC, the standard-setting body, carries out external moderation. The feedback from this moderation has been positive. The most recent report, completed in February 2012, revealed that out of six sets of material submitted, only one required follow-up action and that was where a document was used in error.

Wood Wise management plans for the future and takes care to ensure that the tutors will continue to effectively teach the programmes. The minutes of a staff meeting in February 2012, for example, reveal that a combination of face-to-face and correspondence courses is being considered, but Wood Wise wants to maintain the efficacy of its courses in the face of other provision that offers little instruction. Wood Wise takes heed of what its learners say about the value of its teaching. One kiln operator, for example, said, 'I'm learning more with Wood Wise sitting in a classroom', where 'I have a chance to ask questions rather than taking a book home to read and not really understanding it'.

Wood Wise is using feedback from its learners to assess the effectiveness of its teaching. Such feedback is usually gained from the training feedback form that the trainees complete. Wood Wise also effectively uses the feedback from timber companies to adjust its training to the needs of the learners. Examples of changes from feedback are an increase in training time for a level 3 timber grading unit from three days for training and assessment to three full days of training, with assessment taking place later. Moves also take place in the other direction if the trainees are experienced, such as for a new level 2 timber grading unit where training and assessment can be completed in one day even though it covers five credits. These changes have taken place, but more time is required to gauge the full benefit of them in the form of improved outcomes.

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**.

Wood Wise supplies the kind and level of support that trainees need, although the context in which it is operating sometimes constrains the provider. Wood Wise offers only short courses and so has to rely on the timber companies themselves to provide the long-term support that trainees might need in situ. Mention has already been made in section 1.3 of the additional assistance that Wood Wise provides to learners facing literacy or numeracy challenges. Wood Wise spends extra time with these learners and emphasises the importance of tutors continuously checking that material has been understood, and rephrasing questions or prompting the learners when required.

Wood Wise uses site training coordinators to distribute course manuals to learners for preliminary reading prior to many courses commencing. This is an effective way not only to involve the coordinators in the training, but also to ensure that the trainees have some level of familiarity with the material beforehand. Wood Wise also ensures that its courses provide the staircasing necessary for qualifications to be completed.

Trainees appreciate receiving such support. Wood Wise assesses its effectiveness, usually informally through tutors' reports, tutors' observations of the trainees, and discussions with the trainees and their training coordinators. Feedback about trainees' low levels of commitment and preparation encouraged Wood Wise to introduce the early distribution of most course manuals. However, while Wood Wise uses the feedback to make worthwhile changes, it needs to accumulate evidence systematically over time to show and measure the impact on the trainees' educational performance.

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 managing director takes sole responsibility for exercising the governance and management functions of the company. This arrangement works well because he also delivers courses and has a visible presence in the industry, enabling him to monitor performance first-hand in the classroom and on site in the workplace. The tutors possess extensive experience and are fully involved in any course programme changes through frequent communications with one another. They complete self-appraisal forms and effectively use them as a basis for a performance appraisal meeting with the managing director.

Wood Wise is managing the changes to its environment so that it can continue to deliver courses that the industry values highly. Wood Wise realises the implications of the new rules from FITEC surrounding training subsidies, paid only to those companies which sign up to a qualification. Wood Wise has responded by delivering training around the unit content of the new qualifications in order for the companies to gain the FITEC subsidy, rather than its previous system of delivering bundles of unit standards considered useful by the industry. This has meant the introduction of practical and technical material at an earlier stage. An example is the introduction of some of a level 3 kiln operation unit standard during the first block of training on the level 2 timber drying and treatment programme. Wood Wise also acknowledged in its staff meeting in February this year that one company had already elected to have its training unsubsidised.

Wood Wise is committed to offering effective training to the timber industry. In this capacity it has frequent interactions with FITEC. Most of these are positive, such as the changes that Wood Wise suggested to assessment questions and model answers. The evaluation team saw examples of email exchanges from February and April 2012, which resulted in improvements to the FITEC training materials. At other times, Wood Wise has raised concerns about aspects of current training, as summarised by comments in its mid-2012 newsletter. Wood Wise further shows its commitment to the timber industry by its membership of the Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ) steering group and the timber grading, drying and treatment advisory panel for TRoQ. The expertise of Wood Wise is respected in the industry, and it plays a leading part in the review of the relevant specialist qualifications.

Wood Wise receives some feedback from timber companies and FITEC about its effectiveness in supporting the educational achievement of its trainees. The organisation reflects on this feedback and makes the adjustments described above when necessary. There is some evidence of improved outcomes, but Wood Wise is yet to allocate the necessary resources to provide a measure of the scale or the importance of these.

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: Training programmes

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

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

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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