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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Wood Wise

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 9 June 2016

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Final report

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, learners, prospective learners, 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:	Wood Wise
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	3 December 1997
Location:	Scion Campus, Sala Street, Rotorua
Delivery sites:	Scion Campus (Competenz Complex) plus various client sites throughout New Zealand
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductory Sawmilling (level 2)• New Zealand Certificate in Wood Manufacturing (Levels 2, 3 and 5)
Code of Practice signatory:	Wood Wise is not a signatory and does not enrol international learners.
Number of learners:	Domestic: 65 part-time learners attending block courses of half a day to one week at variable intervals. This number equates to approximately five equivalent full-time students (EFTS). <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Māori 35 per cent• Pasifika 15 per cent
Number of staff:	Four part-time teaching staff and one part-time administration officer
Scope of active accreditation:	Domains and unit standards in wood manufacturing and related fields, up to and including level 5

Distinctive characteristics: Wood Wise is a small PTE with four part-time staff delivering training to New Zealand sawmilling and wood manufacturing industry employees.

Most of the training is delivered on the clients' sites. The courses range in length from half a day to one week, and sometimes run for two days every two months and other similar combinations depending on client needs.

Training is generally designed around the assessment and award of unit standards. The delivery and content of courses are customised to each client's needs.

Most trainees are funded by the industry training organisation, Competenz, as part of workplace training agreements. The remainder are privately funded by the companies or individuals concerned.

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 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 often take place at the same venue.

Previous quality assurance history: The previous external evaluation and review (EER) of Wood Wise, held in June 2012, resulted in summative judgements of Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the EER consisted of the mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management and strategy.

In addition, the following focus area was selected:

- Training delivery – this focus area covers all of the teaching and programme delivery activities of Wood Wise.

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.

Prior to the EER, the lead evaluator visited the Wood Wise site and discussed the visit with the organisation's managing director and administration compliance officer. The evaluation team of two evaluators spent one and half days at the Wood Wise office in Rotorua, where they reviewed an extensive range of documentation and met with the managing director, tutors and administration officer. The evaluation team also visited two wood manufacturing workplaces in Rotorua and interviewed five current learners plus the human resources advisor at one workplace. Two Competenz account managers were interviewed by telephone.

The evaluation team is confident that a sufficient range of evidence was used to reach evaluative judgements.

During the site visit, Wood Wise provided the evaluation team with a range of operational documentation, including planning materials, quality management policies, enrolment information and policies, learner achievement records, learner evaluations, collated analysis of learner satisfaction levels, and course delivery and assessment materials. This documentation complemented the self-assessment information that had been pre-submitted by the organisation. The evaluators reviewed all materials tabled.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

Key reasons for this judgement include:

- Learner achievement on Wood Wise courses is excellent. In the past year, 95 per cent of learners on the Wood Wise block courses have achieved all of their required unit standards. Wood Wise has sound assessment tools and a robust moderation process used to confirm that assessment outcomes are valid.
- Feedback from clients indicates that courses have an appropriate mix of theory and practice and are delivered in a manner that enables learners to understand and acquire useful skills and knowledge. As the learners are all employed, the skills and knowledge gained are immediately applicable to the workplace and are valued by both the employee and employer.
- Wood Wise has learner support structures that are appropriate to the needs of the learners and nature of the training.
- Discussion with stakeholders indicates that Wood Wise employs trainers who have sound skills and experience; it engages well with its clients and industry and is valued for the positive contribution it makes.

In summary, NZQA is highly confident in the educational performance of Wood Wise as it has found clear and comprehensive evidence that Wood Wise is providing quality education and training that leads to positive outcomes for the majority of its learners. The organisation is well managed and has a clear philosophy and purpose that is well operationalised. The training is appropriately resourced and Wood Wise uses its resources effectively. The Wood Wise staff are a professional and cohesive team who display a clear understanding of their role and their respective responsibilities to both the wood manufacturing industry and to their learners.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

Key reasons for this judgement include:

- Wood Wise has established and maintained a robust and stable organisation with a culture that encourages staff and stakeholders to put forward ideas for improvement.
- There is evidence that the organisation uses self-assessment processes effectively in most of its programmes and activities. All staff members are involved in reviewing the purpose and direction of the training and how well it is meeting stakeholders' needs. The quality and validity of the self-assessment could be strengthened and processes formalised to enable more robust reflection and analysis of the documented information from stakeholders. This would strengthen the organisation's self-assessment practices.
- Staff members have plenty of opportunities for reflection on their role, which benefits learners through improved teaching techniques and ultimately improved outcomes.
- Wood Wise has comprehensive systems to gather and collate feedback from learners and client organisations and works closely with its client organisations to help identify the learning needs of the organisations and learners, and then addresses these needs well through responsive customer service, good teaching and appropriate learner support.

The focus of Wood Wise's self-assessment has centred on identifying and responding to customer needs, which has resulted in a sound reputation with its customers. Wood Wise's current high level of educational performance will be sustained at current levels of achievement by continued systematic, whole-of-organisation analysis and ensuing action from self-assessment activities.

In summary, Wood Wise's processes are effective in ensuring that industry and learner needs are understood and met, and high standards are maintained.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Both the organisation and its staff have a strong focus on learner achievement. The courses that Wood Wise delivers are structured with the presumption that every learner will pass, and client organisations expect no less. Learner achievement on recent Wood Wise courses is excellent. The organisation's own records indicate that in the past year, 95 per cent of learners on Wood Wise block courses have achieved all of their unit standards. This high level of achievement was corroborated by Competenz staff and reports.

Trainees are selected and referred to courses by their employers. The ethnic diversity of the industry workforce is reflected in the makeup of the trainees, with at least a third identifying as Māori and 15 per cent as Pasifika. Achievement levels for Māori and Pasifika learners at all levels are on a par with the cohort as a whole. In fact, in 2015 over half of the trainees completing a qualification with Wood Wise identified as Māori or Pasifika.

Staff at Wood Wise demonstrated a good understanding of the factors that lead to learner achievement and regularly analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. The organisation has and encourages regular staff communication and meetings where ideas for improving course delivery and learner achievement are discussed and agreed.

Wood Wise has sound assessment tools and a robust moderation process used to confirm that assessment outcomes are valid. The representatives from the standard-setting body, Competenz, spoke positively about Wood Wise's response to moderation. Wood Wise assessments have met the national standards on all three unit standards moderated in July 2014 and November 2015. Feedback from Competenz was that this is a consistent outcome for Wood Wise.

Learners reported that they received timely, accurate and supportive feedback on their progress from Wood Wise staff. The organisation has developed good systems to monitor learner progress and acts immediately if a learner is not progressing as expected.

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**.

Evidence from stakeholders, including learners, indicates that Wood Wise engages exceptionally well with its industry clients and is highly valued for the contribution that it makes. The core of Wood Wise's business revolves around a small number of clients, most of whom have had a relationship with the PTE over a number of years, in some cases up to 20 years. These clients operate in an environment that is very conscious of costs and benefits. The continuing purchase of services from Wood Wise is strong evidence of the perceived value of the training.

The two client organisations interviewed reported very high levels of satisfaction with Wood Wise's services, and Wood Wise believes that its reputation is centred on the long-term benefits of the training for the client company and the individual learners. These benefits include: improvements in safe working practices; greater efficiency; improved recovery; better grading accuracy and consistency; reduced production costs; and better-quality products.

All of the learners attending Wood Wise courses are in employment. The courses are directly related to that employment. Through the courses, learners acquire useful skills and knowledge which they can apply in their workplace. The clients spoken to during the EER were very satisfied with the value they received from the training provided by Wood Wise, although the determination of that value tended to be intuitive and anecdotal rather than measured. They also commented positively about Wood Wise's regular communication with them about learner progress.

Wood Wise regularly surveys clients and graduates and informally uses the feedback to inform improvements to courses. At this point in time, Wood Wise has not attempted to formally measure or quantify the long-term benefits of its training. All Wood Wise staff also work in the associate company Grade Right, which audits the grading of timber in many of the same organisations where they provide training. The training activities and inspection/auditing work complement each other, and staff informally use their Grade Right experience to inform their course delivery. The synergy between the two activities could be better capitalised on by, for instance, monitoring the effect of training of grading staff on reduced findings in timber grading audits.

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**.

Wood Wise's regular and ongoing interaction with its stakeholders is a stand-out feature of the organisation. Mechanisms employed include ongoing contact with clients and learners, learner satisfaction surveys, client surveys, and participation in industry forums. Staff at Wood Wise have engaged with the NZQA Targeted Review of Qualifications and actively participate in industry advisory groups and fora.

Wood Wise's client focus is typified in the way the PTE schedules the courses around the needs of clients and delivers training where and when it is needed. Outside of Rotorua, teaching premises are hired on a casual basis or provided by the corporate client. Wood Wise has systems and processes to ensure that premises are fit for purpose and that the learning environments it creates are suited to the needs of learners. Trainers also work with client organisations to develop teaching scenarios that are contextualised to the workplace. For instance, when they contract to a new client or a new site or if an existing client installs new plant, a Wood Wise tutor will visit the site to familiarise themselves with the plant and work style so that teaching can be contextualised to it.

Wood Wise's involvement with outside organisations such as the Wood Products Manufacturers Association informs Wood Wise practice to maintain a high standard of training. Such organisations provide valuable feedback on the wood processing industry.

Learner evaluations are conducted to a regular schedule and gather learners' feedback on their experiences of different aspects of their programmes, including programme content and delivery, facilities and staff effectiveness. The information is then used informally to bring about useful improvements to teaching and programme design.

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**.

Teachers and learners generally relate very well to each other. The trainees interviewed spoke highly of Wood Wise's teaching staff, and written learner evaluations confirmed this. They liked the open, friendly style and found the range of learning activities engaging, challenging and highly relevant. Studying in a small class ensures learners have constant access to the teaching staff and can make

suggestions about improvements. Learners noted, and learner feedback forms validated, that staff were responsive to concerns or issues raised.

Although Wood Wise teaching staff have extensive industry and professional experience, and an obvious natural passion and ability to engage learners, the evaluation team believes that ongoing professional development for teaching staff will assist them to keep their teaching strategies current and ultimately lead to improved outcomes for learners. Most of the teaching staff hold an adult teaching qualification, but completed it at least a decade ago. Staff are not regularly participating in other formal professional development relating to teaching. Professional development for staff is encouraged but is ad hoc and centred around industry development rather than teaching and learning.

Learners reported receiving clear information about assessment tasks and receiving good, timely feedback about their learning progress. All assessments are internally moderated. The capstone summative assessment in the level 2 wood grading course is an excellent example of assessment being used as a learning opportunity as well as assessment tool. For this assessment, learners are required to individually undertake a substantial practical timber grading exercise in a real-world and timed environment for assessment purposes. The whole class then collectively undertakes the grading test as a learning exercise. The learners interviewed cited this as the highlight of their course and a tremendous learning activity.

Wood Wise has comprehensive systems to gather feedback from learners and client organisations. Course evaluations completed by the learners contain positive feedback. A more systematic approach following the gathering of feedback, which could include reporting back to learners on the action taken, would be preferable as this may improve educational outcomes for learners.

Although the environment at Wood Wise is very collegial, with staff regularly discussing their teaching and the learners, there is no formal appraisal of teaching or a peer review process. Having staff sit in on each other's classes occasionally and critiquing their teaching using a structured process would be of benefit to both the teacher and observer.

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 **Good**.

Wood Wise does not face the same learner support requirements as providers of longer courses, but the support services provided are appropriate to the courses delivered. Learning support is focused on enabling learners to achieve immediate success. Learners with reading and writing difficulties are able to complete the assessment verbally. Learners are required to complete the Tertiary Education Commission's Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool through
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Competenz, but the results are not used by Wood Wise because they are often not available until after the training has been completed. Staff commented that they get a more immediate understanding of their learners' literacy and numeracy abilities through classroom interaction.

The support systems at Wood Wise are learner-centred and well intentioned, and appear to be producing results. The good retention and completion rates referred to previously indicate that the support and guidance provided has been generally effective in engaging learners. Management and staff have a good, intuitive understanding of learner support needs and regularly discuss ideas for supporting individual learners. Often this support will involve a joint approach between the employer and Wood Wise.

Learners are preselected by employers, and Wood Wise staff work closely with employers to identify any learners who have specific support needs that could prevent them achieving the qualification. This may include Wood Wise advising employers against referring specific employees to higher-level courses when Wood Wise staff think that they are at the limit of their learning ability.

Learners have access to Wood Wise staff outside of class hours and staff visit learners in their workplace to provide additional coaching and support. This aspect has been directly linked to the success of learners as it helps them to apply their learning and motivates them to achieve.

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 **Good**.

Wood Wise has a very good understanding of its core business. Its purpose and direction are clear and articulated throughout the organisation. The organisation is aware that the success and sustainability of its business is dependent upon meeting the needs of clients. The long-standing relationships with key clients are testimony to the PTE's success. The organisation has very detailed processes to guide staff.

Effective resourcing is planned and provided for all courses. The quality of course material is good and the training environments support learning. The location of the head office on the Scion Campus of the New Zealand Forest Research Institute is ideal as it enables Wood Wise staff to regularly engage with industry.

The organisation has, over time, employed, developed and retained a competent, well-qualified, and dedicated group of staff whom it supports effectively to improve educational achievement.

Monitoring of performance within the organisation is transparent and open, although not always consistently applied. Possibly as a result of the longevity of the operation, performance management has become largely intuitive and informal. A fresh look in a more systematic way may identify areas for improvement.

To date, the focus of Wood Wises' self-assessment has been on identifying and responding to customer needs – which has resulted in an outstanding reputation with its customers. The next challenge for Wood Wise is to develop a better understanding of how its activities add value to the training. The PTE should also focus on improving learner outcomes through more systematic, whole-of-organisation self-assessment and ensuing action.

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 **Good**.

2.2 Focus area: Training delivery

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Wood Wise:

- Investigate and effect ongoing opportunities for staff to further develop their teaching qualifications and practice.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive, whole-of-organisation self-assessment regime that leads to knowledge and actions around continued improving learner outcomes, and the value of these outcomes.
- Develop systems for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching, e.g. teaching observations and performance appraisal.
- Employ a more systematic approach following the gathering of feedback from learners including, if possible, reporting back to learners on the action taken.

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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