

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Personalised Education Ltd
trading as Solomon Group

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 29 May 2013

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results	7
Findings	10
Recommendations	20
Appendix	21

MoE Number: 8489
NZQA Reference: C10790
Dates of EER visit: 25 and 26 March 2013

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:	Personalised Education Ltd trading as Solomon Group
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Head office, Great South Road, Auckland
Delivery sites:	24 Clifton Court, Panmure 354 Great North Road, Henderson 236 Great South Road, Papakura
First registered:	20 February 1998
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pathways Awarua – Foundation Focussed Training Opportunities (FFTO) (levels 1, 2 and 3)• Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) Certificate in Foundation Education for Tertiary Pathways (Level 3)• ANZ Money Minded New Zealand Financial Literacy Programme• Bridges to Employment – funded by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD)• Work Direct (MSD-funded)• Adult Literacy Assistance (MSD-funded)• Whanau Ara Mua• Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (Level 0-1)

- Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (Level 1 – 3)

Services Provided include:

- Youth Services (MSD)
- School Attendance Services (MOE)

Code of Practice signatory?:

Although Solomon Group was a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, the code was not included in the two previous quality assurance visits by NZQA, in 2005 and 2008. Solomon Group does not have international students.

Number of students:

Domestic: 90 (32 per cent Māori; 33 per cent Pasifika; 16 per cent Asian; 9 per cent European; 10 per cent Other)

Number of staff:

30 full-time equivalents; 18 part-time

Scope of active accreditation:

MIT Certificate in Foundation Education for Tertiary Pathways (Level 3)

A range of levels 1, 2 and 3 unit standards across various domains including (but not limited to):

- Core generic personal and financial skills
- Interpersonal communication
- Humanities and writing
- Gardening skills
- Positive attitude in the workplace including customer contact
- Operational Languages

Distinctive characteristics:

Solomon Group is a Māori PTE based in Auckland. Solomon Group's main aim is to educate, train and prepare people to enter the workforce and/or further training.

Recent significant changes:

In 2013, Solomon Group ceased delivering Youth Training or SAC-funded courses as uptake of both levels of these funding streams was low (five places and 11 places). Instead, Solomon Group has been contracted as one of the new level 1 and 2 equivalent full-time student (EFTS) providers with 150 places.

Previous quality assurance history:	The TEO met all requirements at the previous quality assurance visit, which was an audit in 2008.
Other:	Solomon Group was established in 1998 to deliver foundation skills education for second-chance learners. Literacy, numeracy and self-development have been Solomon Group's core business since that time.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected for this EER are:

- Governance, management and strategy

This is a mandatory focus area.

- Pathways Awarua – Foundation Focussed Training Opportunities (levels 1, 2 and 3)

At the time of the external evaluation and review, Solomon Group was going through some significant changes, with a number of programmes finishing and new ones being introduced. The Pathways programme is one of two that is current, established and continuing in 2013 (i.e. has a delivery history).

- Manukau Institute of Technology Certificate in Foundation Education for Tertiary Pathways (Level 3) (MIT Foundations)

As per the programme above, this programme is also current, established and continuing in 2013. Combined, the two programmes provided a clear indication of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

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. The evaluation involved face-to-face interviews with:

- Four director/owners and the Solomon Group management team

- Programme staff (two programmes)
- Two groups of current students (both programmes) and a group of course and programme graduates
- A range of key stakeholders, including local employers and education providers.

The evaluation also involved a review of relevant documentation such as the strategic plan, evaluation reports, student evaluation data, assessment material, minutes of meetings, self-assessment report, stakeholder attestations and associated correspondence.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Personalised Education Ltd trading as Solomon Group**.

Solomon Group has a clear purpose and direction. Offering training and education that is employment-focussed, Solomon Group is family owned and operated by a father, mother and two daughters who comprise the board of directors. The vision of Solomon Group is to empower individuals to recognise and develop their potential. This vision is achieved through the provision of individual learner-focussed programmes delivered in a professional, open, inclusive, mutually respectful and innovative learning environment.

Solomon Group's two founding directors each have 40 years of experience across all levels of education. Their experience includes two secondary school principalships and the establishment of learning centres catering to the individual needs of students at schools in which they have taught. The four directors combined have a broad range of knowledge and skills gained nationally and internationally; and all hold a minimum degree-level qualification as well as the National Certificate in Adult Education and Training. All teaching staff at Solomon Group have either completed, or are completing, the Certificate in Adult and Tertiary Education (Level 5).

The Solomon Group team of directors and staff are committed to their own and to the learning needs of their student cohort. Over the years 2009 to July 2012 Solomon Group has helped to transition 4,055 young people into positive learning pathways. Of these young people, 3,297 went on to further or tertiary training and 758 went back to secondary school. These outcomes are commendable because keeping youth engaged in education and training is critical to their future success and their productive and meaningful engagement and participation in society and life.

The directors of Solomon Group are well known and respected in political, educational and social sectors and maintain strong and effective relationships with key stakeholders including: the learners and their communities, MSD, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), ANZ Bank, the Ministry of Education and MIT. In 2013, Solomon Group was the most successful provider in the Tamaki application process for the new MSD Youth Services, successfully gaining contracts for 629 places for the Youth and Young Parent Payment services, and 2,000 for the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) services. In addition, Solomon Group also won a Ministry of Education Integrated Attendance Service contract which covers 140 primary and secondary schools in South Auckland, and was contracted by the TEC as one of the new level 1 and 2 providers, with 150 EFTS.

Delivered in partnership with ANZ Bank, in 2013 Solomon Group will also begin teaching the ANZ Financial Literacy programme. This programme was piloted by

Solomon Group in 2012 with 60 South East Auckland participants. It was subsequently modified to meet the literacy levels of the predominantly Māori and Pasifika South and East Auckland communities, and will be provided free of charge. The programme compliments Solomon Group's other courses, contributing to learners' 'kete' of fundamental money management and work and life skills and increasing student capacity for financial independence.

The majority of learners at Solomon Group are second-chance learners with diverse needs. These learners are encouraged and supported to achieve tino rangatiratanga and to 'stand in their own mana'. That is, to become self-determining, directing and disciplined learners who understand the concept of action and consequences and who can take responsibility for their own lives, actions and life direction. For example, after failing to gain entry into her chosen field of study at MIT, a graduate of the MIT Foundation programme reflected on her situation and successfully developed, executed and achieved an alternative career pathway plan. The student stated that her achievement was a direct result of the learning she gained during her time at Solomon Group on this programme.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Personalised Education Ltd trading as Solomon Group**.

The self-assessment methods being used at Solomon Group are effective and have resulted in ongoing improvement to the TEO. Over the past six years, in response to Solomon Group's continued growth, the organisation has gone through a review of governance and has restructured to improve its systems and performance and to begin the process of separating governance and management. This includes the implementation of a succession plan. To improve the organisation's responsiveness to stakeholders, including learners, managers for key organisational areas have been appointed. Staff feel valued and appreciate the added support provided by these managers. For example, the new curriculum manager was appointed in 2012 and leads weekly forums at which tutorial staff share their teaching and learning experiences, provide feedback to each other and offer and receive collegial support. The forum encourages and supports reflective practice leading to improved teaching and learning systems and methods.

Although these changes have not directly influenced the governance structure, which remains relatively flat (because all of the directors are also managers), beginning the process of separation of governance and management reduces the potential for subjectivity and mutuality to influence decision-making which should, ideally, remain objective. Solomon Group is aware of this need and continues to work toward a clearer separation of governance and management, especially since the organisation's exponential growth over 2012/2013.

Solomon Group is constantly reviewing its systems and has numerous tools in place to achieve this. Enrolling students undergo a range of diagnostic tests to ascertain their learning styles and needs, and individual learning plans are

developed, implemented and monitored accordingly. Programmes of learning are also monitored by way of six-monthly programme evaluations, and tutors report to the curriculum manager. Staff meet on a regular basis and records are available of these meetings, their outcomes and actions taken based on these outcomes. Such actions include the development of an ideal teacher profile for Solomon Group students and a subsequent review and replacement of some staff members to better fit this profile. This has ensured students are taught by staff who understand the diverse backgrounds and needs of Solomon Group learners and can design teaching and learning methods, tools and sessions that work for the learners.

Solomon Group is encouraged to consider and develop an outcomes monitoring system that is more easily accessed and read, and can sit alongside the current TEC-based recording process. Such a tool would better enable the analysis and synthesis of outcomes data and provide an additional self-assessment tool to inform development and growth.

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**.

Graduates of Solomon Group go on to further tertiary studies and employment, taking up work in a broad range of secondary industries including building and construction, meat processing and warehousing. Of the Pathways Awarua 2012 graduates, 49 students out of 128 went on to employment while 79 went on to further training. Likewise, with the MIT Foundations programme, 60 per cent of graduates transitioned into MIT and others to Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and Unitech, taking up further study and enrolling, for example, in social work and teaching degree programmes. One of these graduates has since gained employment in the AUT library.

Solomon Group also employs some of its graduates; for example, an MIT Foundations graduate is now a tutor at Solomon Group, while a Pathways Awarua graduate is employed as the Solomon Group caretaker. A wall of photos (in the Solomon Group building) dedicated to the many graduates who have gained employment post-Solomon Group studies was considered motivational by current students.

Students at Solomon Group are primarily second-chance learners from diverse backgrounds and with many differing needs, and they learn to know, believe in and present themselves. They are empowered to take responsibility for their own lives and become self-motivated and whānau-oriented. Through their programmes of study and with support from all Solomon Group staff, the students become financially and emotionally literate; they gain self-confidence and self-esteem and learn how to be assertive and take responsibility for their own learning and actions. Students learn how to plan for their futures and take responsibility for these plans, including implementing a plan 'B' when plan 'A' does not work out.

Solomon Group has strong community networks and creates positive links for its students. For example, after introduction to 'ELEVATOR' (a specialised recruitment consultancy, offering a wide choice of supported employment options for people with disabilities living in the greater Auckland region), a Solomon Group Pathways Awarua student (a single mother with a young family of five) has been

¹ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

instilled with the positive belief that she can overcome her disability and find a job. She has gained confidence and intends to pursue a social sciences qualification.

Solomon Group has systematic self-assessment processes for monitoring student achievement. Upon entry, all students undertake diagnostic tests including literacy and numeracy assessment and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which is a widely used self-esteem measure with 10 simple questions on a four-point scale. Results from the tests are used to develop individualised, needs-based learning plans which are revisited regularly. To support student self-directed learning and independence, student plans include independent afternoon learning sessions with one-to-one assistance available on request. Students learn to independently identify and access the tools and resources necessary to continue on their path post-Solomon Group studies. As well, teaching of literacy and numeracy is designed to suit the learners and is contextualised according to the students' cultures, language and backgrounds.

Solomon Group's focus on the individual needs of learners contributes to the good student retention rate (80 per cent in 2011) and to student achievement. In 2009 five Solomon Group students won awards at the MIT graduation. As a result, Foundation students enrolling at MIT (who require additional support) are now referred to Solomon Group by MIT. As confirmed by MIT, the Solomon Group pathway improves these students' chances of achieving the qualification. Solomon Group graduates are good role-models for their peers. A Solomon Group graduate was selected by MIT to be the guest speaker at the institute's graduation ceremony and is an ambassador for MIT recruitment. This student's achievements have raised her family's sense of worth and pride.

Independent internal evaluation of teaching, learning and student progress occurs twice-yearly. Student feedback is gathered by personnel other than tutors and collated by administration staff. Results are reported to the curriculum manager who meets with tutors to discuss the evaluation findings and outcomes and to develop action plans. The introduction of the Rosenberg tool responded to the need to identify, measure, record and build on the 'soft' skills that Solomon Group students learn, that is, their increased self-esteem and confidence. The tool is working for Solomon Group and its students. The degree to which self-esteem and confidence has changed can be identified and, where necessary, appropriate steps towards improvement can be developed and introduced in the context of Solomon Group's learning activities.

The directors of Solomon Group meet and greet all students and maintain contact with them throughout their term of study. All directors manage the business and, by way of the evaluation and assessment recording and reporting systems, have direct, hands-on knowledge of how well the learners achieve. This ensures that learning at Solomon Group remains relevant and is informed by learner needs.

Student assessment supports learning and provides learners and tutors with useful feedback on student progress which feeds into their individual plans. Internal moderation of assessments is conducted by Solomon Group, but external

moderation for the MIT Foundations programme is currently in abeyance due to circumstances beyond Solomon Group's control, as the programme has recently undergone MIT-initiated changes from achievement to competency-based assessment. Solomon Group staff were unsure of the reason for the change to assessment methods.

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**.

A preferred provider of educational programmes and services for the Ministry of Education, WINZ, Youth Transition Services and MSD, Solomon Group offers programmes for people from disadvantaged backgrounds and who have diverse needs, including people with learning disabilities. Solomon Group teaches these students how to overcome barriers and to persist in the face of adversity. They gain interpersonal communication skills and learn how to handle conflict and manage their lives and their money. The role of Solomon Group is to increase work-readiness rather than train people for specific jobs. As such, through the Pathways Awarua programme, Solomon Group can help people into work that requires low levels of knowledge and skill. However, if students aspire towards particular careers, Solomon Group can channel them through the MIT Foundations programme to higher learning and training opportunities and career pathways. In 2011, 26 per cent (41 out of 160) learners gained employment and 32 per cent (50 out of 160) went on to further training. These outcomes meet the requirements of Solomon Group's funding bodies.

Having won the confidence of MIT to successfully deliver the MIT Foundations programme, Solomon Group now enrolls students on behalf of MIT and undertakes all assessments as well. Students, staff and other key stakeholders view Solomon Group as a quality organisation and 'genuine partner'. In interviews with the evaluators, stakeholders described Solomon Group's directors as knowledgeable, experienced and skilled, and the organisation as a whole as a 'Rolls-Royce' of providers. They complimented Solomon Group on its holistic, caring, strengths-based and innovative model of service delivery. Solomon Group is considered as a backbone of the communities it serves and is always looking for new and different ways to connect with these communities. In recent times, Solomon Group has engaged with Auckland Greypower Association to engage with youth on its programmes. The hope is that youth will benefit from the wealth of life experience and wisdom of the elderly. Conversely, through their meaningful engagement with youth, the elderly are enabled to remain connected with society and can continue to contribute to it. By connecting these two groups, Solomon Group is creating opportunities for youth to learn about valuing self and others and for the elders to retain, maintain and pass on these values.

Because of their valued outcomes, which were confirmed by students and stakeholders, Solomon Group is seen as the organisation to benchmark against by other Māori providers.

Solomon Group's student outcomes include raised self and whānau awareness and pride. Students gain self-confidence, can articulate their thinking and become financially literate. As such, graduates are enabled to budget, pay their bills on time and to set and achieve personal, financial and study and employment goals and aspirations. Students and graduates also develop positive social, personal and professional relationships and networks, which gives them greater access to secondary and tertiary study and paid employment opportunities. One student, who was supported to seek counselling while a Pathways Awarua student at Solomon Group, spoke of overcoming depression. The student's goal was to transition into the MIT Foundations programme and become a social worker.

Solomon Group creates 'smaller steps' to a higher qualification (i.e the successful delivery of MIT's Foundation programme). The organisation's contributions are valued by MIT as Solomon Group's graduates who transition into MIT are well prepared academically and are among the top students in the programme. The added value of Solomon Group outcomes is also evidenced through the students that MIT sends to Solomon Group (for preparatory studies, prior to enrolment at MIT).

While Solomon Group can demonstrate an understanding of how short-term outcomes improve longer-term outcomes for students, the degree to which Solomon Group analyses and uses student outcomes data to inform its growth and development could be improved.

Solomon Group systematically records student outcomes as per the requirements of its respective funding bodies and their contracts. However, more in-depth analysis, synthesis and reading and understanding of student outcomes data could lead to further worthwhile developments that are underpinned by Solomon Group's own student information, as opposed to developments that respond, in the main, to the requirements of funding bodies and their contractual requirements.

That said, self-assessment of student support and guidance is systematic, comprehensive and effective. Students undergo comprehensive diagnostic testing upon entry and individualised learning plans and goals are developed in collaboration with them. Plans are monitored regularly with good outcomes.

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**.

Solomon Group is very much in touch with the political, social and educational sectors both locally and nationally. All courses, programmes and services delivered by Solomon Group are based on the needs of the Manurewa and Panmure communities. These needs are identified by the stakeholders (for example, ANZ Bank, WINZ, the Ministry of Education, MSD and MIT) who actively seek out Solomon Group to be the preferred provider of a range education and training programmes. Solomon Group develops programmes in consultation with key stakeholders. The organisation has a wide influence in the community; it is responsive, can act quickly and has close relationships with business. According to stakeholders, Solomon Group 'reverberates' throughout communities and is held in high regard because the courses are relevant to the communities they serve; they are always willing to help in the community and put action behind their words. In this regard, the administrative, writing and editing skills of Solomon Group directors and staff were described by stakeholders as 'outstanding'.

Alignment with the MIT Foundation programme matches MIT's need to capture higher-risk learners who are at a lower level. Solomon Group then develops their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities so they can progress to level 4 qualifications. The programme is a staircasing opportunity for the lower-level learners. This is evident by the feedback from MIT indicating that Solomon Group students are well prepared on entry and have the right literacy and numeracy skills. The programme is matching the needs of MIT.

Self-assessment for Solomon Group programmes is systematic and ongoing and the organisation is constantly seeking advice from stakeholders. Tutors meet weekly to check in with each other, and programme reviews are conducted twice a year. New programmes are piloted, reviewed and modified accordingly. This process of review, assessment and redevelopment is constant and ongoing. Changes that have been made as a result of the process include the replacement of some staff who were unsuited to Solomon Group's learners. The staff that were replaced, while highly qualified, lacked sufficient understanding of the students' backgrounds, cultures and learning needs and, therefore, had difficulty relating to them. New tutors who understood the students and had more empathy than were recruited. Students reported that tutors (and directors) treated them with respect and integrity and that they felt valued by them.

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 **Excellent**.

Solomon Group provides students with a sense of whānau through the kaupapa Māori principles and practices that are the backbone of the organisation. For example, all classes begin with karakia and whakatauki (spirituality and proverbial sayings) which help to build philosophical frameworks upon which students can review and re-shape the values and beliefs that underpin their lives. In turn, this leads to students and graduates leading more meaningful, productive and enjoyable lives. Through goal-setting, which is taught throughout the course, students plan their lives and know where they want to go and what they want to do when the courses finish. For example, a graduate of the MIT Foundations programme went on to university and achieved a degree; she was followed into university by her two sons who also gained degrees. This example illustrates how Solomon Group graduate success can permeate and positively influence the lives and futures of their whānau.

Programme content is relevant to what the students need as determined by diagnostic tests on student entry. Literacy and numeracy are embedded in the curriculum and integrate life experiences into the learning. For example, students learn about saving money by buying in bulk at a supermarket as opposed to buying single items at a local dairy. For some students, calculating the dairy-supermarket price difference over a year was a revelation. These types of activities help to engage learners because they are relevant to their lives and have direct and beneficial impacts.

Teaching methods at Solomon Group are tailored to student learning styles which are determined through the Dunn and Dunn) diagnostic tool. The methods incorporate student and teacher-centred processes including upfront teaching, case studies, class discussion, games, activities and role-plays. A range of equipment to support teaching is available, for example DVDs, data projectors and computers. Night classes to support English for speakers of other languages are also provided while hours of study are tailored to meet student needs including childcare. In regard to the effectiveness of Solomon Group teaching, students spoke of their changed attitudes towards learning. They were surprised and excited by their own learning abilities and newly discovered life prospects, with several declaring a love of mathematics since studying at Solomon Group. The subject is taught in a way that is easy for them to understand and extra support is available when necessary.

Staff at Solomon Group have strong collegial relationships and share examples of good practice; new ideas are then integrated into the teaching. Staff strengths are also identified and shared across different classes. Tutors teach on each other's programmes, crossing over to different classes based on their strengths. This

means that subjects are taught in the best possible way and that students receive quality teaching.

The quality of teaching and learning is monitored by several means. Individual tutor observation are conducted by the curriculum manager and tutors receive direct feedback on practice. Changes to practice based on feedback are a result of the establishment of weekly tutor meetings to share teaching and learning experiences. Student evaluation data forms the basis of action and teaching and learning improvement plans. Examples of changes to practice based on student feedback include the introduction of reflective student journals. Students are encouraged to use these journals to, for example, record the whakatauki (proverbial sayings) used at the beginning of each day. The journals then act as a place for philosophical reflection on life and learning, leading to reflective practice. Tutors cited cases of Solomon Group students carrying their journals with them wherever they go.

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**.

Solomon Group provides holistic support and guidance for students past and present. Entry into Solomon Group is by way of an interview process. Upon entry, individual learning needs are identified and personalised learning plans are developed. Students set realistic goals (for example, 'now job' and 'dream job') and are supported through their plans to achieve these goals. Afternoons at Solomon Group are dedicated to student-directed self-learning based on their individual plans, with support from the tutors who are available for one-to-one sessions. The organisation has an open-door policy and past students have access to ongoing support from Solomon Group, for example access to computer suites and printing facilities. Past learners often visit to 'touch base' and for support, such as seeking comfort and support upon the passing of a parent.

Students at Solomon Group are keen learners. Many arrive early to school to have breakfast together. Where necessary, students can apply for small loans from Solomon Group to pay for bus fares to and from their place of study. Students described Solomon Group as a positive, friendly, helpful, comfortable, welcoming ('everybody says hello') and professional place of learning. They build strong, trusting relationships with each other and with Solomon Group staff, including the directors, who are actively involved in the students' learning.

The organisation is seen as beacon of light and hope by the people and communities it serves and, by employing the 'right people with the right heart' Solomon Group has gained a reputation as a dynamic, purposeful, principles-based service and education provider that uplifts students. Solomon Group's philosophy is that people are the greatest resource and so require the greatest investment.

This philosophy and its principles of partnership, participation and protection are embedded in and form the mainstay of the organisation.

Student support and guidance is not the express responsibility of Solomon Group. The organisation encourages students to support each other, and a tuakana-teina (mentor-learner) system of support exists among them. As well, as a result of their positive, life-changing Solomon Group experience, some graduates have returned to offer tutorial assistance and support to current students. These graduates said that Solomon Group had given them so much that they wanted to reciprocate the gift and to help students reach their goals (as they themselves had).

Students on the MIT Foundations programme maintained that there are no failures at Solomon Group: 'Everybody learns something and can take it and apply it in their lives'.

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**.

Solomon Group is always looking for ways to improve outcomes for learners and stakeholders. The directors are adept at forging new pathways and the organisation is at the cusp of responding to Government initiatives based on needs as identified within Government papers. Solomon Group operates on the premise that one company cannot do everything. As such, strong working links with other organisations and providers are forged, thus creating alternative pathways and increasing prospects for students who are provided with information and supported and empowered to engage. An example is engagement with ELEVATOR (a specialised recruitment consultancy offering a wide choice of supported employment options for people with disabilities living in the greater Auckland region) and higher learning through the MIT Foundations programme.

Governance and management recruit appropriately skilled people and provide relevant, up-to-date and appropriate resources for Solomon Group staff and learners. The organisation keeps abreast of Government policy, for example with changes to youth services for at-risk 16 and 17-year-olds. Solomon Group has employed youth coaches to help look after these students and encourage them to re-engage with education. To this end, Solomon Group has helped to transition 758 at-risk youngsters back into school.

Staff at Solomon Group feel valued and supported by the directors. Appraisals occur twice-yearly and staff performance is reviewed and their needs assessed. Staff are encouraged and supported to engage in relevant ongoing professional development. One Solomon Group tutor is due to graduate with a Bachelor of Applied Theology. The tutor viewed this course of study as an appropriate tool for

supporting Solomon Group students, particularly those with criminal backgrounds. This example demonstrates the degree of commitment staff have towards the students.

Whole-of-organisation hui are held quarterly and ensure that staff at all levels of Solomon Group are provided with the opportunity to reflect together on the organisation's goals, vision and values. Staff are fully aware of current events in the context of the sectors it serves and are kept informed at needs-based staff training sessions (and 'state of the nation' discussions) which are held quarterly. In part, these sessions are informed by the information gathered during staff appraisals and at staff meetings, which occur weekly.

Having experienced exponential growth in recent times, in 2006 Solomon Group's directors began taking steps to create separation between governance (directorship) and management. To ensure organisational succession, the directors co-opted two more family members as company directors. Three of the company directors also took on managing roles.

Following on from these developments, in 2007 Solomon Group was in a position to afford managers for a specific project and by 2011 had developed a management team to oversee key areas of the organisation including: curriculum, projects, operations, employment contacts and youth services. Solomon Group continues to work towards the full separation of governance and management. Regular director meetings take place and information passes both ways between directors, management, staff and students.

Solomon Group's strategic and business planning and forecasting is driven primarily by Government direction. As such, Solomon Group does not confine itself to particular goals but positions itself to be flexible and open to respond quickly to frequent and ongoing changes and developments in the political, social and education sectors. The organisation does not have a formal advisory group. However, research skills and strong community and sector links and connections enable it to keep well abreast of current and forthcoming trends and developments. Solomon Group's accountant provides independent, business-focussed advice when necessary. This is good practice because, as a publicly funded PTE with governors, directors and managers who are all members of the same family, an independent voice can help to ensure that decision-making remains objective and business and personal financial planning remain separate.

Focus Areas

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

1.1 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**.

1.2 Focus area: Pathways Awarua – Foundation Focussed Training Opportunities (levels 1, 2 and 3)

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

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

1.3 Focus area: Manukau Institute of Technology Certificate in Foundation Education for Tertiary Pathways (Level 3)

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

Solomon Group is encouraged to consider the formal establishment of an independent position on the governance board or the establishment of an independent advisory group that can add objectivity to decision-making and practical experience of the marketplace.

Solomon Group is also encouraged to consider and develop an outcomes monitoring system that is more easily accessed and read, and can sit alongside the current TEC-based recording process. Such a tool would better enable the analysis and synthesis of outcomes data and provide an additional self-assessment tool to inform ongoing development and growth.

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/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz