



# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Lifeway College

Date of report: 16 February 2010

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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.*

## Brief description of TEO

Location: 20 Goodall Rd, Snells Beach, Rodney

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: 70 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)

Sites: Snells Beach, Mt Eden and Mangere

Lifeway College (Lifeway) was founded in 1986 by Lifeway Trust. This organisation is a Christian tertiary provider and Christian principles underlie its philosophy and practice.

Lifeway currently offers the following NZQA-accredited programmes:

- Diploma in 3D Animation (Level 6)
- Diploma in Advanced 3D Animation (Level 7)
- Certificate in Evangelism (Level 3)
- Certificate in Christian Ministries (Level 4)
- Diploma in Counselling (Level 6)
- Diploma in Christian Ministry (Level 5).

The Certificate in Evangelism and the Certificate in Christian Ministries are offered together and entitled the First Wave Army.

There are currently around 70 students enrolled in programmes offered by Lifeway, the majority of whom are studying at the Snells Beach campus. Lifeway has accommodation on its main campus at Snells Beach and about 70 per cent of students choose to live on site.

Lifeway is undergoing a period of change as it is in process of merging with Life Leadership College, and moving under the wider umbrella of LIFE Trust. This has resulted in changes in the leadership structure, a rethinking of the vision, and a review of all the programmes currently offered. With the merger, Lifeway will be delivering programmes on three campuses.

# Executive Summary

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Lifeway College**.

Retention and achievement rates are high across the organisation. Rates for 2009 are currently 92 per cent for retention and 86 per cent for course completion. This compares very favourably with Ministry of Education data which shows that one-year retention rates for private training establishments in 2005 were 60 per cent<sup>1</sup>. Students spoken to valued the learning highly and there is evidence that their achievements are valued by industry and the community.

Graduates from the 3D animation programmes are sought after by industry and at the time of the visit several students already had job offers. The 3D animation programmes are well connected with a number of commercial studios and industry developments inform programme development and design. The high level of achievement was reflected in staff and student placements in national and international competitions. Students who graduate from the First Wave Army courses are highly satisfied with their personal achievements.

There are robust processes in place to identify barriers to learning, and designated support staff and regular reviews ensure students are supported to achieve. Across all its programmes Lifeway has good networks into the community and industry. Tutors are well trained and enthusiastic about their students and the curriculum, and they are effectively supported by management.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Lifeway **College**.

There are effective systems in place to ensure that Lifeway has a good understanding of its students and how its programmes are performing. Lecturers and courses are regularly reviewed by students, staff, and external stakeholders. There is good evidence that these reviews result in improvements to the delivery of the programmes. Lifeway is currently in a time of change and review, and the interesting new initiatives that have been implemented are yet to prove their worth.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education. (Feb, 2007). *Tertiary Student Retention*. Online resource from [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/student\\_participation/tertiary\\_education/1959](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/student_participation/tertiary_education/1959) See data tables.

## TEO response

Lifeway has accepted the findings of this report.

# Basis for External Evaluation and Review

*Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.*

*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 courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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 policies and criteria 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](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)).*

# Findings

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

*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/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>*

## Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of Lifeway College included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support (including internationals).

The following programme focus areas were included:

- Diploma in 3D Animation (Level 6).

## Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

*This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.*

### 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**.

#### **Context**

Lifeway currently has students studying on programmes that reflect the Christian focus of the college: the Certificate in Evangelism, the Certificate in Christian Ministries, the Ministry Internship Programme, and the Diploma in Counselling. The Christian principles inform the delivery but not the curriculum of the 3D animation programmes, which include the Diploma in 3D Animation and the Diploma in Advanced 3D Animation.

## Explanation

Retention is consistently high across the programmes offered at Lifeway, and at the time of the visit there had been no attrition from the First Wave Army programme. Given that at the time of this external valuation and review there were only a few weeks left in the programme, Lifeway expected that all the students would complete successfully.

The Progress Monitoring Report (PMR) data shows course completion rates for 2008 at 86.2 per cent and this compares with a subsector mean of 77.2 per cent<sup>2</sup>. Single Data Return (SDR) Rates for 2009 were 92 per cent for retention and 86 per cent for course completion. This compares very favourably with Ministry of Education data which shows that one-year retention rates for programmes at private training establishments in 2005 were around 60 per cent.<sup>3</sup> According to the PMR, two-year qualification achievement rates for the 2007 cohort are at 77.2 per cent and this compares with a subsector completion rate of 29 per cent. Evidence supplied by the college shows an equally high rate of achievement for international students. These high achievement rates are not matched by the Diploma of Counselling, although this rate still sits at around 61 per cent.

Lifeway routinely monitors information on student retention and achievement and uses it to inform planning. One-to-one meetings are held with every student within the first two weeks of the programme. At that meeting individual goals are set, including academic and personal targets. Students reported positively on achieving these individual goals. Feedback the organisation has received from First Wave Army students highlights that the students felt a huge sense of achievement on completing the programme.

## 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**.

### Context

Lifeway aims for “industry ready graduates for 3D, creating leaders to influence every area of society through Christian Ministry”, and “to provide competent counsellors to be released into practice”. The college networks widely with graduates from its programmes, through email and personal networks.

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<sup>2</sup> Tertiary Education Commission. (August 2009). Progress Monitoring Report for: Institute of Applied Learning Limited.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education. (February, 2007). *Tertiary Student Retention*. Online resource from [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/student\\_participation/tertiary\\_education/1959](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/student_participation/tertiary_education/1959). See data tables.



## **Explanation**

The organisation collects information from graduates from the First Wave Army programmes which demonstrate that graduates are highly satisfied with the outcomes. Those participating in the First Wave Army positively contribute to community outcomes. Examples include supporting organisations with community events and supporting communities and families in times of need. Evidence demonstrated that graduates from First Wave Army were enthusiastic about the transformative experience of the certificate programmes. Current students spoken to by the evaluation team confirmed this as an outcome.

There is a high employment rate resulting from the level 7 3D animation programme. A survey of graduates conducted by Lifeway showed that six of the ten respondents were currently employed in the industry. Two more respondents were still actively studying in related fields. Respondents spoke of their satisfaction with their experience at Lifeway, citing Lifeway's "strong industry connections" as a key benefit.

Lifeway maintains contact with animation studios around New Zealand, and different studios have already offered employment to those currently completing the advanced diploma. An industry representative who has employed Lifeway graduates in the past said, "they're turning out students who are better and better; this year we feel like we will be losing a lot [to another high profile animation studio]". Students believed their skills could equip them for employment overseas.

Networks for engaging with graduates from Lifeway are strong, although management has recently identified a need to formalise an engagement process with graduates to collect information about the value of outcomes to the graduates themselves and the wider community.

### **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**.

#### **Context**

Lifeway shares its campus with an animation studio which gives it ready access to industry feedback. The 3D animation department also has established links with other studios, regularly inviting them to the college.

Lifeway is a department of Lifeway Trust which supports a number of other enterprises, including Lifeway Youth and Lifeway Church. Recently Lifeway Trust began a merger with LIFE Trust which supports a number of churches through the Auckland region. These links give the organisation a network of community workers who can inform the Christian ministry programmes.

## **Explanation**

The 3D animation programmes are well linked into industry, having established relationships with a number of animation companies. The technology and software taught to learners means that they graduate work-ready. The industry is changing rapidly and constantly so it is essential that Lifeway stays up-to-date with trends in the industry. Email evidence demonstrated that industry is being consulted about animation techniques and software. The evaluation team heard from industry that Lifeway was continually developing its programme to meet industry needs. For example, animation students increasingly need to specialise, in modelling, rigging, lighting, animating, or rendering, in order to compete for jobs. An industry representative told the evaluation team of working with Lifeway to help them change their delivery towards steering students towards their strengths or preferences. Another example is the way in which Lifeway has changed the order of content to reflect the “production pipeline” which exists in industry.

The Diploma in Counselling has a generous allowance for guest lecturers, who also provide feedback on the programme. Students are readied for work through internships, which are closely monitored by the college. Current discussions among the counselling community are signalling changes in the requirements for registration. These are being closely monitored and may have an impact on how the programme is structured and delivered. The programme is currently being rewritten and the evaluation team saw evidence that external stakeholder input has been sought to inform that process.

Lifeway has effective processes for monitoring learner needs, and students are given regular opportunities to provide feedback on the learning and teaching. A recent initiative meant the academic dean checked all the students’ files at the start of term in order to identify any personal or learning issues that may be barriers to learning. These issues were flagged with tutors.

In the first two weeks of each semester students complete a learning goals sheet, which gives them an opportunity to outline personal and academic goals. One-to-one meetings with tutors are subsequently held where these goals can be further discussed. The goals are revisited during the term to discuss progress.

First Wave Army students spoken to during the evaluation reported favourably about the course being tailored to the achievement of their personal goals.

The evaluation team saw lots of evidence of regular feedback being gathered about each module and each visiting lecturer. There were examples given of how this feedback has influenced the curriculum and delivery of courses. Regular informative engagement with external stakeholders was occurring, although there was no evidence that it was occurring systematically. A recent initiative has been to build up a database of industries relevant to 3D animation, to showcase graduate show-reels, and to begin a dialogue about industry needs. The success of this initiative is yet to be determined.

## 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**.

### **Context**

Lifeway staff are a small, close-knit team and many are graduates from Lifeway programmes. There is generous allowance for visiting lecturers to supplement the teaching on the various programmes.

### **Explanation**

Tutors are enthusiastic and caring about their students and about the curriculum. The high level of support from tutors was a factor highlighted by students spoken to on the site visit. It was reported that tutors would often work after hours to support students to pass assessments. Management encourages staff to take time in lieu for this activity.

Lecturers maintain currency in their subject with good networks into appropriate organisations and forums.

There are processes for module and teaching evaluation and there is evidence that this information is being used to improve quality. Module evaluations showed that students rated their tutors and the learning highly.

Lecturers work from daily plans which are supported by teaching resources. An innovative use of technology is made in the animation programmes whereby teaching sessions are recorded and stored in a computer drive accessible to students. This ensures that all lessons can be reviewed. Students reported that these taped sessions were very useful in helping them revisit and review the technical aspects of 3D animation.

Internal moderation processes are being followed, although the documenting of these processes is inadequate. Different processes are followed by the different departments and while these variations may be appropriate, they should be documented. This was acknowledged by the academic dean. There are examples of external input being sought to ensure assessments reflect consistency across the sector.

There have been instances of 3D animation students waiting up to two months for assessments to be returned which has resulted in students not being able to transfer their learning to the subsequent assessment. A turnover of staff and issues with a visiting lecturer were given as reasons for this slow response.

Tutors are supported by the academic dean regarding any problems or issues arising from the teaching and learning. Examples were provided of yearly reviews which were discussed with the academic dean resulting in new daily plans and resources being created. A new initiative means the academic dean will be observing tutors in their classrooms as part of professional development. Few of the tutors have formal training in adult teaching and learning which may compromise understanding of teaching and learning processes and how adults learn. Animation tutors cited the need to keep current with industry as taking precedence over training in adult teaching.

Performance management processes and professional development plans are in place for every staff member. Staff are being encouraged to continue with their professional development and education, to support their currency in their particular industry. Investment in professional development was highlighted as key for 2010.

## 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**.

### **Context**

Lifeway's main campus is situated on a large property in a beach community north of Auckland. There is accommodation, a library, sports facilities, an early childhood centre, and a café on site. Most students live and study on campus. At the time of the evaluation there were five international students studying in the First Wave Army and the 3D animation programmes. Lifeway is aiming to extend the number of international students studying on its campuses.

### **Explanation**

Learners are made welcome from their very first enquiry. An orientation is held to introduce new learners to the campus and organisation and the processes and practices of Lifeway College. Students are supplied with a comprehensive student guidebook as well as a guidebook on support services. These guidebooks are laminated and appear in the classrooms also.

International learners, for whom English is not their first language, must have a minimum International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 5.0 to enrol in the First Wave Army courses, and an IELTS 6.0 is required for the 3D animation and Diploma in Christian Counselling programmes. All learners who apply have to write an essay outlining their reasons for applying, and potential 3D animation students also have to present a portfolio of work. These are used to ensure students are enrolling at the appropriate level and to identify possible barriers to success. Animation staff noted that the attrition rate from the Diploma in 3D Animation was usually around 25 per cent. Staff agreed that this attrition rate could be reduced if a more rigorous selection process was employed and an analysis was made of those students who left the programme and the events that contributed to their departure.

In relation to student welfare, Lifeway has a student referral form which can be completed by a concerned tutor or, alternatively, the student can complete a self-referral form. These forms can highlight an issue, either personal or academic, and prompt a response by the appropriate member of staff. For example, a student who is struggling with a personal issue will be referred to the counselling course supervisor, who will either counsel the student or refer the student to the appropriate outside agency.

Evaluation forms and students spoken to at the time of the visit said their lecturers are approachable and available and will go the extra mile to support them to succeed.

There is an active student council, and minutes show that relevant and important issues are discussed at student council meetings and addressed appropriately by management. Students interviewed during the evaluation commented on their enthusiasm for this forum and on its effectiveness. Many of the issues raised by the council arise out of students living on campus.

A staff member has been delegated responsibility for international students and for conducting a separate orientation with these students to ensure they have the necessary information to study and live successfully in their new environment. International students spoken to said that Lifeway had met their expectations and they knew how to access support if necessary. Separate data is collected for international students and shows rates of achievement equal to those of domestic students.

High retention is a feature of this organisation, although there didn't appear to be any analysis of those few students who had left.

## 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 **Good**.

### **Context**

Lifeway is an organisation in change. It is in the process of merging with Life Leadership College and moving under the umbrella organisation LIFE Trust. With the merger, Lifeway now has a new governing board and two new campuses, and a review of all programmes is underway. Lifeway currently employs its third principal within a year. However, the Board believe that the Trust provided continuity and management support as the sole shareholder. They note that the General Manager of the Trust was actively involved day to day through each transition to ensure continuity. Management welcomed the external evaluation to help inform the changes that are occurring.

### **Explanation**

The institutional changes have been unsettling for staff. New processes and procedures are being implemented which have not yet had time to show any benefits. One focus of the new management team is identifying ways the organisation can track the destinations of its graduates in a systematic way. A new database of potential external stakeholders in the 3D animation industry has been compiled and it is hoped that in time this will be an effective way of engaging with graduates.

The new leadership appears to be effective, with good communication and staff being kept up to date with new developments. Staff reported that with the new principal coming on board there had been a "giant clean-up", with processes becoming more formalised and professional.

The organisation continues to achieve good results for its students and these results are analysed and shared at all levels of the organisation. Successes within the organisation are

celebrated at regular college-wide assemblies. The evaluation team saw evidence of ongoing review of the curriculum and the delivery of the programmes. Effective processes are in place to identify barriers to learning and to support students to achieve.

The organisation supports its staff by giving staff extra leave on full pay when appropriate and supporting the costs of study. There are formal performance review processes in place and the professional development of staff has been identified as a focus for the new year.

## Part 2: Performance in 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 **Good**.

Learners achieve well and retention is high. There is evidence that Lifeway is a reflective organisation which seeks to know itself and its learners. There are a number of processes in place that usefully inform teaching and learning and the curriculum.

The merger of Lifeway College with LIFE Trust is significant, and with many aspects of the organisation under review, change is inevitable. New processes and procedures have been introduced which have the potential to benefit the organisation and the learners who choose to study there.

### 2.2 Focus area: Student support (including internationals)

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

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

A number of processes and practices support the learners. Some staff members share the responsibility for student welfare, including international students. There was evidence that students had regular opportunities to review and reflect on their learning and experiences at Lifeway, and a lively and effective student council is operating.

High retention is a feature of the organisation and at the time of the visit there had been no attrition from the First Wave Army programme. One-to-one interviews at the beginning of the year are useful in identifying personal goals and potential barriers to learning. These interviews are recorded and revisited at intervals during the year.

### 2.3 Focus area: Diploma in 3D Animation

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

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

This programme has a high achievement and retention rate and is focused on meeting the needs of students to ready them for work in the industry. Approximately 80 per cent of all students who begin level 6 graduate to the level 7 Advanced Diploma in 3D Animation.

The students valued their education at Lifeway and believed it to be a leading provider in New Zealand. Central to this belief was the high quality of the show-reels they saw from Lifeway graduates as compared with graduates from other providers. Their views were

supported by the number of graduates from the advanced diploma being offered positions before qualifying. Two Diploma in Animation students recently achieved second place in an international animation competition.

The animation industry is changing very quickly and tutors and management have ensured that the software and curriculum are kept current. There are good networks with industry; these are facilitated by a commercial animation studio located on campus.

Conversations with that studio and others occur regularly and guests are regularly invited to the campus to view students' work and share industry knowledge. There was evidence of regular discussions being held and revisions being made to the curriculum and the sequence of delivery in response to feedback.

Management supports the success of this programme by ensuring that the technology and software and curriculum are kept relevant for the industry.



# Statements of Confidence

*The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.*

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Lifeway College.

Retention and achievement rates are high across the organisation and there are robust processes in place to identify barriers to learning. Graduates from the 3D animation programmes are sought after by industry. Designated support staff and regular reviews ensure students are supported to achieve. Lifeway has good networks into the community and industry and advice is sought to inform programme planning and design. Tutors are enthusiastic and caring about their students and curriculum and they are supported effectively by management.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Lifeway College.

There are effective systems in place to ensure that Lifeway has a good understanding of its students and how its programmes are performing. Lecturers and courses are regularly reviewed by students, staff, and external stakeholders. There is good evidence that these reviews result in improvements to the delivery of the programmes. Lifeway is currently in a time of change and review, and the interesting new initiatives that have been implemented are yet to prove their worth.

# Actions Required and Recommendations

## Future actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

## Recommendations

There are no recommendation arising from the external evaluation and review.

NZQA

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