

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Workforce Development Ltd

Date of report: 15 December 2009

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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: Head Office, Napier

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: 152 equivalent full-time students; 57 teaching staff, supported by 22 administration staff

Sites: Current delivery of courses in Napier, Lower Hutt, Wanganui, Levin and Wairoa.

Workforce Development was first registered with NZQA in 1994 as a private training establishment and currently offers the following eight NZQA-approved courses:

- Certificate in Early Childhood Education (Level 4)
- National Certificate in Hospitality (Cookery) (Level 3)
- Certificate in Cookery (Level 4)
- National Certificate in Hospitality (Food and Beverage) Food Service Strand (Level 3)
- National Certificate in Hospitality (Specialist Food and Beverage Service) with a strand in Advanced Wine Service (Level 4)
- National Certificate in Youth Work (Level 3)
- National Certificate in Youth Work (Level 4)
- Professional Bar Course (Level 3).

Workforce Development also has approval to offer the International Computer Driving Licence (Level 2) New Zealand Computer Society Inc, and the National Certificate in First Line Management (Level 4), although these are not currently offered.

A number of courses are provided to fee-paying students, primarily in the hospitality industry, and the organisation has several contracts to deliver training on behalf of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, Work and Income New Zealand, and the Hotel Association of New Zealand. Workforce Development has arranged its programmes into ‘industry niches’.

The previous two NZQA quality audits were conducted in 2004 and 2006 and on each occasion the organisation met all of the relevant requirements.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **confident** in the educational performance of Workforce Development.

Student achievement on the courses reviewed was good overall, with the majority of students gaining the qualification and moving on to employment in a related field. Across all areas reviewed students were achieving reasonable success within programmes and subsequently in further training or employment.

Workforce Development has recently implemented new processes for weekly and monthly tutor reporting on course performance and students' progress. This means that students' progress and achievements are now monitored more frequently and from early in their programme, resulting in faster response times when students are struggling or making slower than expected progress.

Across the programmes reviewed the actual qualification achievement rates ranged from 71 per cent for early childhood education to 50 per cent for cookery level 4, two out of the four cookery students gaining the qualification.

Focus groups have recently been introduced across the organisation to review and discuss issues such as effective teaching and learning, and this is starting to have a positive effect in the classroom. The organisation is actively involved with other education and training providers, such as a coalition of education, industry, and community groups within the Wanganui area in an attempt to get better outcomes for students across the district. It is too early in this process to assess the success of this venture.

All staff are actively engaged in professional development towards achieving a qualification in adult teaching. These processes are effective in raising awareness among staff of how well students are progressing, and of the quality of their learning.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Workforce Development.

Workforce Development collects performance information widely across the organisation. A new information procedure has been introduced and is still under development. While the procedure is not yet fully tested there was sufficient evidence to show that it is having a significantly positive impact. The introduction of more frequent reporting has added valuable insights which management has already used to make improvements. One example of this is in the identification of struggling students sufficiently early in their course to address learning issues at the time they emerge.

There have also been improvements to the way in which information is collected and shared across the organisation, resulting in better communication and improved staff collaboration across programmes in matters such as sharing successful teaching strategies.

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).

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 Workforce Development included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy

The following programme focus areas were included:

- Early Childhood Education (Levels 3 and 4)
- Cookery (Level 3)
- Youth Work.

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 **Adequate**.

Context

Programmes are offered at levels 3 and 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and have been designed to prepare students for further study or to enter employment, or for improving skills and knowledge for those already in employment. Students are achieving well in each of these scenarios. Workforce Development has structured its programmes into niches to reflect the industry sectors for which it offers training. Learners' achievements are tracked by niche coordinators and programme tutors.

Explanation

Over the past year Workforce Development has introduced a process of reporting weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually on student progress and programme success. This is working well and has resulted in staff becoming more aware of individual students who are struggling or making slower than expected progress. This has in turn provided specific data for tutors and niche coordinators to use to address these specific learning issues as they emerge. This process has not yet been in place for sufficient time to determine if it is resulting in significantly improved student achievements. Previously, struggling students were not identified until some time later on the course.

Overall, Workforce Development is meeting, and in many cases exceeding, the targets set by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) for student achievements. The organisation's self-assessment shows that students are achieving well in terms of gaining credits on the NQF, completing their courses, and achieving the qualification for which they are enrolled. Students interviewed during the review were very satisfied with their rate of progress. This level of satisfaction was also reflected in the course evaluations completed by students. Workforce Development has been proactively involved in establishing the Wanganui Tertiary Education Collaborative Venture (WTECV) to explore ways to share performance data with other education providers in the region. Workforce Development currently uses data from TEC to measure its performance against other education providers. Workforce Development is achieving slightly higher outcomes than the rest of the sub-sector.

The organisation produces a wide range of programme reports on multiple success factors. While these have value, they are not yet providing staff with sufficient clarity to make the best improvements. Recent changes to course reporting, staff communication processes, and further changes to data management (yet to be introduced), are designed to improve the organisation's self-assessment ability. The success of these changes is yet to be determined.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

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

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

Context

The value of training offered in terms of the knowledge and skills that students gain, has been monitored by Workforce Development through its close involvement with local industry. This involvement has been achieved through a range of processes such as professional association membership, tutors' ongoing part-time work in their industry area, engagement with industry standard-setting bodies, and arranging students' work experience with local employers.

Explanation

Students are surveyed early and towards the end of their courses, and the surveys show consistently high satisfaction with the training offered and the learning gained. Employer feedback on the value of outcomes is gathered via the industry advisory groups, and this is consistently very positive.

Students interviewed during the review confirmed the results of the organisation's self-assessment information, i.e. that their purpose in enrolling with Workforce Development was to

gain knowledge and skills for their specific industry in order to study at a higher level or to gain related employment. Students' comments confirmed those sighted on student evaluations, in that they held the training they received in very high regard. Students acknowledged that they were gaining much benefit from the courses in terms of useful knowledge and skills, and also in their personal growth, "expectations and confidence", and with their literacy, language, and numeracy skills, through specialist tutor support.

Workforce Development has well-established processes for collecting and using input from its industry groups, including the local chambers of commerce, to determine that its graduates leave with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are valued by employers. Students are tracked after leaving Workforce Development to establish whether they are in employment or further training. This process has confirmed that students and employers place high value on the outcomes of the training. Through tutors' memberships on professional bodies and other collectives, Workforce Development has also gathered informal feedback from employers to confirm that course outcomes are valued, in that students leave with the attitude, skills, and knowledge that employers are looking for in their employees.

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

All programmes are developed to prepare students to achieve qualifications that have been developed by industry standard-setting bodies. Workforce Development engages with Te Kaiawhina Ahumahi Social Services Industry Training Organisation (TKA) for its Youth Work programme, the Hospitality Standards Institute for its hospitality programme, and with NZQA as the standard-setting body for the early childhood education programme. This ensures that Workforce Development is offering training towards qualifications that have been designed to meet current employer needs. Students are surveyed early and late in their courses. The results of these evaluations are reviewed by tutors and management for emerging issues or concerns.

Explanation

Workforce Development programmes are well designed to match the requirements of the national certificates offered, or the unit standard components of the provider certificates. The quality and standard of assessments is verified by submitting material to the standard-setting bodies for checking, and in the majority of cases assessment material is well designed and is meeting the national standard, and the assessor's judgements are well founded and consistent. Where the national standard has not been met, Workforce Development has submitted an action plan which has addressed the standard-setting bodies' concerns, and which has been approved by NZQA.

Staff interviewed during the review confirmed the organisation's self-assessment conclusions, that maintaining contact with industry through their memberships with the New Zealand Chefs Association, the Early Childhood Education Council, Youthmark Collective, and local chambers of commerce, and in some cases their part-time employment in their industry sector, has enabled them to remain up to date with current industry trends and employer needs.

Industry advisory groups' minutes show that employers have expressed high satisfaction with the training offered, and confirmed that their needs have been well met in terms of gaining access to well-trained, competent employees.

Students on work experience undergo observations and receive reports from the employers on their performance, which confirm that students' and employers' needs are being met. The work experience reports are reviewed by tutors and management, and these confirm that students have been well prepared for their work experience and that employers' requirements are well met.

The organisation's review of student evaluations shows that students are satisfied and their needs are well met. Students' learning needs are assessed on entry and those in need of extra support are provided with appropriate literacy and numeracy support within the foundation learning niche. Workforce Development is meeting the learning needs of Māori students well, with Māori showing higher than average rates of achievement.

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

Workforce Development has well-established procedures for appointing teaching staff who display a passion for teaching and for their subject, and within the programmes reviewed students were very supportive of the quality of teaching they had experienced. Staff take part in regular focus groups on quality teaching, and the organisation is actively working with other education providers to establish a collaborative venture for benchmarking.

Explanation

Teaching staff have their performance reviewed in several ways. Workforce Development has put in place professional development for teachers in 'reflective practice' as one strategy in a move to continual improvement. Reflective practice training has been a developmental process to encourage and support teachers to review and share their ideas about their effectiveness as teachers. This has been combined with regular internal focus groups and a collaborative venture with education providers in the Wanganui area exploring quality teaching, resulting in a booklet of the initial ideas on quality teaching. The process has stimulated teachers to reflect on their practice and the impact they are having on the learners.

Parallel to this, Workforce Development has also introduced more frequent reporting and tracking of student progress. The early indications are that these processes have had a positive impact on student learning. Information provided by Workforce Development on the education outcomes achieved show that the organisation is meeting or exceeding contracted targets for student achievements, including higher than average achievement for Māori learners compared with other providers offering similar courses.

Staff are building their knowledge of adult teaching theory by working towards the National Diploma in Adult Education and Training (Level 5), with a focus on initially achieving the unit standards for assessment and moderation of competency-based learning. Teachers and students interviewed said they felt that their assessments were fair and valid and deep learning was

occurring. Staff maintain contact with their industries through professional body memberships and spend 60-80 hours a year in the workplace. Teachers and management reported that this practice enables staff to stay up to date with trends and technology in their industry.

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

Workforce Development has ensured that staff and students have frequent and open meetings where issues are discussed and resolved. Students on programmes within the focus areas of this review said they were well supported by teachers and management, receiving help with problems when it was needed. Students' progress is closely monitored and teachers report progress weekly to the programme niche coordinators. This has improved the organisation's ability to respond quickly and with more focus on the individuals concerned.

Explanation

Student evaluations confirm the view of staff and students interviewed that the support processes work well and issues are addressed as and when they occur. Classes are sufficiently small to allow for frequent one-to-one teaching.

Workforce Development teachers described their programmes as being designed to offer students a realistic workplace environment, in terms of space and resources, in order to prepare them for moving into employment. Students confirmed that this was the case and that their work experience was well supported by teaching and workplace staff.

Workforce Development has established a 'foundation learning niche' to support students needing literacy, language, and numeracy skill development. This has been a successful development, with staff and students confirming that targeted help in this area is well managed and has resulted in improved confidence and skill levels.

Students have an individual development agreement (IDA) which records initial learning needs, strengths and weaknesses, goals, and areas of interest. Students and teachers said the IDAs have helped students set clear goals and personalise the learning, and have led to students' individual needs being met more fully.

A high level of collegiality and staff support was observed among staff, who said there was "good support between management and other staff....[we] work closely together"; "it's easy to solve problems". There are early indications that this improvement in collegiality has improved teachers' ability to support students. Student evaluations are currently reviewed for emerging issues, and appropriate action is taken to address these. However, there is no overall analysis of long-term trends or patterns at this stage.

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

Workforce Development is establishing a culture where staff have the time and skills to discuss and reflect on their teaching and the organisation's processes and to review effectiveness in achieving educational and other organisational outcomes. A system of reporting on student and programme progress on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis has also been introduced to closely monitor the rate of progress and to contribute to quality measures.

Explanation

Workforce Development has spent some time and effort in the recent past developing an information technology system for reporting on the progress of programmes and in opening access to this data across the organisation. The purpose of this is to foster better data sharing and awareness of programme performance across all staff. An improved Central File Database has been developed which is allowing all staff to have access to this information. This process is relatively new and there is not yet sufficient data to determine the overall success of the approach. However, early indications, from staff comments and student feedback, is that this is resulting in closer attention to individual student progress and early intervention where this is needed, and students' progress is improving.

Staff preparation and resource space has been combined and opened up, allowing a noticeable improvement in staff communication and cross-programme sharing of ideas. This has been combined with the initiation of inter-provider collaboratives, such as the Wanganui Tertiary Education Collaborative Venture, in an attempt to gather benchmarking data to compare organisational performance and establish best practice models. As already noted, the full impact of this approach is yet to be fully realised, but staff and students interviewed confirmed that the organisation's self-assessment process was having a positive impact on the learning environment.

Part 2: Performance in focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Early Childhood Education Level 3 and 4

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

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

Context

Workforce Development is offering an entry-level course in early childhood education that is relevant and valued by industry. This is verified in part because the certificate is based on unit standards on the NQF that have been written to meet current industry needs. Assessments materials and judgements are moderated by NZQA. Students are achieving the qualification at or above the rate contracted by TEC. Teachers have a good working knowledge of the industry and students are placed in early childhood centres for work experience. This ensures that the training is well grounded in current practice at early childhood care centres. Students are taught in small classes and receive close attention from teaching staff.

Explanation

Students are selected with some care and concern for choosing those who display a passion and sensitivity for working with children. Teachers come from working in the sector and have a depth of knowledge of the early childhood education sector. These processes have ensured that the programme has both students and teachers who are committed to and are achieving quality outcomes. Teachers discussed using assessment material that closely matched the course learning outcomes. Industry advisory group comments and students' comments confirm that industry and student needs are being well met. Teachers' and students' safety with regard to ethical issues is managed well through the adoption of a national code of ethics. Teachers meet regularly to review this.

Students interviewed said they were very well supported by their teachers, and in some cases this support went well beyond that expected, such as some teachers sending students text messages giving advice or reminders. Students' academic progress is tracked weekly while on the course and they are followed up for some time after leaving the course, to establish their longer-term outcomes. A high number of students achieve the level 3 qualification and go on to study for the level 4 qualification, or to work in the sector. The reporting of student progress and achievements, as noted earlier, has undergone recent changes and has improved processes, but still needs some simplification to be efficient and effective in tracking and in leading to improvements in this programme area.

2.2 Focus area: Cookery Level 3

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

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

Context

Workforce Development offers courses leading to the achievement of the National Certificate in Hospitality (Food and Beverage) Food Service Strand (Level 3). This qualification is designed by the industry standard-setting body, the Hospitality Standards Institute (HSI). This ensures that the students gaining this qualification have skills and knowledge that are relevant to and accepted by employers in the hospitality industry. A training restaurant, *Preparado*, has been established on site, and is open two days a week for lunches. This provides a realistic commercial training environment for students.

Explanation

The level 3 national certificate is an entry-level qualification and approximately 30 per cent of graduates move up to study for the level 4 national certificate within Workforce Development. The training restaurant *Preparado* is used by several courses, such as cookery, and also by the professional bar students. This has the effect of further enhancing the students' experience of a real commercial work environment. At times this has led to a conflict of interests, and students expressed some concern about the space available. This will need to be monitored and managed by Workforce Development management to ensure the good relationships developed between staff and students are not eroded. However, the students interviewed expressed unanimous satisfaction and support for the hospitality course and their tutors, and said they were gaining real workplace experience, and were confident they would be able to gain employment in the industry.

Chef tutors are actively involved with the local Chefs Association and in judging competitions, which enables them to keep their students in touch with the leading edge of changes in the industry, and to help student gain work experience at local catering events. Industry advisory group minutes confirmed that local employers saw the relevance and currency of the training offered by Workforce Development

2.3 Focus area: Youth Work

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

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

Context

Workforce Development offers youth work programmes at levels 3 and 4 on the NQF. These are Youth Training courses, are fully funded through the TEC, and can lead to the achievement of the National Certificate in Youth Work (Level 4). The qualification has been designed by the industry standard-setting body TKA, which provides reassurance of its relevance to the employers of youth workers. Tutors are active members of local youth work collectives, and this has proved valuable for building networks for student placements and employment.

Explanation

Students and staff interviewed expressed considerable passion for working with youth. This was often described as stemming from life experiences and a desire to help others. Workforce

Development has built a valuable programme which is well connected with employers of youth workers, and students spoke of the transformative effect the course had on their lives. A high proportion of students have literacy issues and they have been provided with support through the foundation learning niche tutors. Teachers noted that this has resulted in measurable improvements in literacy and numeracy for those students. The courses are built on modules of learning and this approach has led to students making good progress in achieving the unit standard components of the certificates. The rate of achievement exceeds the TEC targets.

Mandatory focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The overall rating for performance in governance, management and strategy is **Good**.

The overall rating for capability in self-assessment in governance, management and strategy is **Good**.

Context

Workforce Development is governed by a board of directors. The General Manager reports to the board. A senior management team reports to the General Manager and is supported by a middle management team, and ‘niche’ co-ordinators in each industry based niche, and regional administrators in each of the regions. In the past year Workforce Development has been implementing a more open management approach in an attempt to encourage all staff to become more involved and have access to more information than in the past. This has been welcomed by staff, who have commented that they now have better access to both senior management and to performance data which has helped them make better decisions in their work.

Explanation

Workforce Development is well managed and has a wide range of funding and contracting arrangements. The organisation has maintained contracts with TEC for the provision of education and training in a wide range of programmes under the Training Opportunities, Youth Training, and Student Achievement Component funds, as detailed earlier in this report.

Workforce Development also offers short courses to fee-paying clients, and has expanded the range of corporate contracts with a variety of organisations, such as the Corrections Department and Work and Income New Zealand. The combination of this business offers students some scope to progress their education and training within the organisation. Students and staff commented that this was a positive aspect of the organisation’s strategic focus, and to at least some degree reduced barriers for some students to continue training towards gaining employment in their chosen field.

Management has changed the manner in which it operates its industry advisory boards, to offer a conference-style ‘topic paper’ or visiting speaker to encourage advisory board members to attend. This was a conscious attempt to provide a tangible benefit to attend and it has been successful. Similarly, management has encouraged staff to maintain membership with their respective professional associations, to supplement the connection with industry and course input provided by the advisory boards. The combination of the two strategies has benefited staff and students by providing consistent and active connection to industry, which has ensured that the programmes remain up to date with industry changes and that a network of employers for student placements for work experience and employment is maintained.

Other improvements introduced by management have been more regular reporting by staff on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis, while improving the organisation's Central File Database has resulted in staff having more information and easier access to programme data. Staff interviewed commented that these improvements have been of great benefit, improving the ease of access to information and the ability to monitor student progress and address issues quickly as they arise.

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 **confident** in the educational performance of Workforce Development.

Workforce Development is tracking students' progress early and frequently. Weekly, monthly, and quarterly reporting and the emphasis on reflective practice have improved the breadth and depth of tracking students' progress.

Staff focus groups and collaborative ventures with other education providers are showing signs of improved knowledge and skills of quality teaching across the teaching staff and between education providers.

Workforce Development's focus on staff professional development to gain the diploma in adult education and training is a positive step, and early indications are that staff are gaining a raised awareness of teaching strategies in an adult education environment.

Programme reports show achievement rates are meeting contract requirements and in some cases exceeding them.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Workforce Development.

The recently introduced Central File Database improvements and more regular programme reporting appear to be working well but are not yet fully tested. There are good processes in place to collect information across the organisation, although management acknowledges that these are not yet operating as well as they could. However, some significant improvements have been made in providing staff with full information across the organisation. Changes in staff accommodation have resulted in improved communications across niche groups. There have been improvements noted on student retention attendance and course completions which may be associated with these self-assessment improvements, although this is not yet established.

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

The evaluation team commends management’s intention to simplify some of the reporting formats, and recommends that it continues to examine the benefits of the recently introduced reporting processes in order to determine the benefits that are resulting from them. The evaluation team recommends simplifying the new reporting processes, with the benefit being an increased focus on outcomes as opposed to reporting.

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