

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Horizon Education Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 5 December 2012

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Horizon Education Limited (Horizon Education)
Type:	Private Training establishment (PTE)
Location:	83-87 Rangitikei Street, Palmerston North
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	21 October 1992
Courses currently delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foundation Focused Training Opportunities; includes unit standards leading to the achievement of the National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 3) and also the National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3)• Youth Guarantee; includes unit standards leading to the achievement of the NCEA levels 1 and 2
Code of Practice signatory?	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 41, (2011 Māori participation approximately 30 per cent overall, and Pasifika, 3 per cent overall) Male/female split overall is 32 per cent and 68 per cent respectively
Number of staff:	Five full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	Horizon Education has applied for NZQA programme approval to meet the new

requirements of the Education Act. These applications have not yet been processed or approved. Horizon Education has a wide range of New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) accreditation appropriate for the programmes currently being delivered.

- Distinctive characteristics: From the date of registration, Horizon Education has been delivering education and training to clients of Work and Income and young school leavers with low or no qualifications through programmes funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and which are free to eligible students.
- Recent significant changes: Horizon Education has made significant changes to adapt its programmes to meet the new requirements for tertiary education funding, and to meet recent government welfare reforms.
- Previous quality assurance history: At the most recent NZQA quality assurance visit in 2008, Horizon Education met all requirements. Horizon Education has met the requirements for national external moderation by the standard-setting bodies NZQA and Community Support Services Industry Training Organisation (Careerforce). Issues with assessment materials and assessment decisions have been appropriately addressed when they have been identified

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This external evaluation and review included the two programmes currently offered by Horizon Education, and the mandatory focus area of governance, management, and strategy. In effect, this evaluation reviewed the whole of the organisation's activities because of the small size of the organisation.

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.

Two evaluators visited the one delivery site for one and a half-days. Past graduates and current students from both courses were interviewed, as were all staff and a group of external stakeholders from the early childhood education and rest home sectors. The evaluation team also reviewed a range of the organisation's records and documents prior to the site visit and while on site.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Horizon Education Limited**.

Students achieve very well, with close to 100 per cent of students who complete the course gaining either the national certificate they enrolled in or unit standards towards a national certificate, where the programme length limits the achievement of a full national certificate. A significant number of students, usually around 70 per cent, move from the programme into employment related to their training or to further or higher education or training. The evaluators heard anecdotes and spoke to graduates, including some who had moved on to programmes at UCOL or Massey University.

Horizon Education has consistently delivered programmes that meet or exceed the TEC's contracted targets over a number of years. The organisation is proactive in making programme changes and adjustments to meet new government requirements and initiatives such as welfare reforms and recent changes to programme funding requirements.

Programmes are developed, delivered, and reviewed in close consultation with related industry sectors, ensuring the content and assessments continue to meet current practices in the industry and good assessment practice.

Horizon Education has been able to attract well-qualified and experienced staff, and has effective processes that ensure staff stay up to date with current good practice through professional development and contact with employers in their industry.

The evaluation team considers that Horizon Education has enabled students to achieve very well and significant numbers have been able to use the knowledge and skills gained to secure employment or move on to further or higher education and training. One student, who moved into an industry training agreement, summed up with this comment: 'This course has set my life up'.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Horizon Education Limited**.

Horizon Education engaged in discussions to explore evaluative quality assurance in 2008, during the developmental phase when NZQA was seeking input from registered training establishments, and has been actively developing its self-assessment processes since that time. The organisation is relatively small, with six staff and two programmes, and its approach to reviewing its performance is a

mixture of informal and more formal processes that are largely appropriate for its current size and complexity.

All the staff are included in discussions and analysis of education and training and student support issues as they arise. The evaluation team observed a high level of engagement and positive rapport between staff and the owner, who is also the managing director.

Horizon Education staff and management are active on a daily basis, identifying areas that are working well and not working well, and making changes to improve all aspects of the organisation. Evidence was heard and sighted confirming, for example, that the organisation has sought input from employers and education specialists to change programme content, assessment processes, or aspects of work experience to make a range of improvements.

The gap in the organisation's capability in self-assessment is in the mix of its informal and formal self-assessment processes. While the evaluation team saw no evidence of significant issues arising, the organisation may be leaving itself vulnerable with its current level of formal documentation of changes and improvements, and the reasons behind these. The potential risk is around the organisation's ability to review past changes objectively if some of this vital information is not recorded. The organisation is currently in the process of purchasing a new student management system which is likely to improve its capability to analyse quantitative data more completely and effectively.

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 **Good**.

Students are achieving the knowledge, skills, and personal capabilities that have enabled them to move ahead with their lives, gaining nationally recognised qualifications, employment related to these qualifications, or moving on to further or higher education and training. The level of achievement at Horizon Education is especially significant given the students' background of little or no previous educational or employment success.

In 2009, 2010, and 2011, qualification achievement rates were close to 100 per cent for those who stayed to the end of the course. The achievement rate overall, taking into account all enrolled students, ranges between 64 per cent and 78 per cent, which are significant achievement rates as noted above.

Recent funding changes resulting in shorter courses for FFTO (Foundation Focussed Training Opportunities) have impacted on students' ability to complete the required course content for the National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care. However, Horizon Education has enabled students to gain the core skills required to enter the industry, or move on to complete the national certificate level 3 as fee-paying students at the local polytechnic. The current student cohort is on target to achieve at similar levels to past years. In 2009, 2010, and 2011, all students on the Youth Guarantee programme achieved the National Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1) and current Youth Guarantee students are progressing toward achieving NCEA level 1 or level 2.

Horizon Education has been registered as a private training establishment for 20 years, and has consistently met or exceeded its education performance targets with the TEC. Usually, around 70 per cent of students move on to employment or further training. Even with the reduced FFTO programme length this year, most students on the care of the older person programme have been offered work prior to the end of the programme.

The organisation's self-assessment processes have identified that students are achieving very well in areas outside of the TEC achievement targets. The evaluation team saw and heard of students making significant growth in their personal skills and attributes, such as self-belief, confidence, and learning to learn skills. This was confirmed throughout the evaluation through the organisation's

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

documents, staff and students interviewed, and through comments from stakeholder interviews.

The organisation's approach to self-assessment is comprehensive and well planned, with significant tracking of student achievements and analysis of the data collected. However, a common theme across the organisation is that because of its small size, with six staff and two programmes, some of the matters that the staff discuss and the decisions made toward improvements are not documented. It was clearly evident that Horizon Education is responsive to issues from students or its wider community and has a well-established culture of reflection and continual improvement, but could be leaving itself vulnerable with its current level of documentation.

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**.

Students' and employers' needs are very well met. Students graduating from Horizon Education have the required foundation or entry-level skills that employers are seeking in the early childcare and rest home sectors. This was confirmed through the organisation's own self-assessment processes through its week-by-week engagement with employers, as well as through student satisfaction surveys and analysis of the number of students moving on to related further education and training or into employment (averaging around 70 per cent in recent years). Students, employers, and the wider community gain considerable value from the training offered and the outcomes gained from Horizon Education.

The organisation supports and tracks students for up to 91 days from graduation, to help establish the outcomes students are achieving. The high value of the outcomes for students is seen both in the percentage moving on to education or employment, the relevance of the industry skills gained, and in the personal growth students make in gaining improved employability skills such as self-belief and the confidence to gain jobs and to take on further and higher education. The evaluation team heard many comments from students to the effect that they would not have been able to conceive of enrolling at a polytechnic or university prior to studying with Horizon Education. In the past, a number of graduates have enrolled with UCOL, Massey University College of Education, or Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZ Childcare Association.

The organisation's processes for reviewing the value of the outcomes gained is through weekly contact with employers when students are on work placement, following up graduates in employment, and tracking the numbers of students moving on to further education. There is a high level of knowledge and awareness of the value of the training across the organisation, but this is less than fully

captured in its documentation, and as already noted this is a common theme across the organisation.

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 **Good**.

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

All programmes offered by Horizon Education are based on meeting the requirements of NZQF unit standards, and all lead to the achievement of a nationally recognised qualification on the NZQF (levels 1-3). These factors are well matched to employers' need for entry-level staff with foundation skills and knowledge, and are also well matched to the students' needs as many have not succeeded previously in a tertiary education environment, or at secondary level. This was confirmed through the organisation's own self-assessment processes which draw input and feedback from employers and periodically from business, education, and literacy specialists.

Students' literacy and numeracy needs are well matched through the use of the TEC online literacy and numeracy assessment tool, and progressions. As with many training providers, Horizon Education is finding its way to gain the optimum benefit from this online tool. Some results for students show significant literacy gains while other results indicate lower scores. The staff attribute the latter to the timing of the exit test, which assesses the students' gains in literacy and is carried out at a time when students have gained employment or a place on further training, and the motivation to perform well in the test is possibly reduced. Students' performance in achieving national qualifications, and employers' feedback on how well the students are prepared for employment, indicate that the students are in fact making significant progress with their literacy.

Horizon Education carries out student surveys periodically, and analysis of the results indicates students' needs are well met. Staff members are in regular weekly contact with employers and visit students on work placement, and this is a key process for Horizon Education to evaluate how well employers' needs are being matched. Formal employer surveys are also periodically conducted, often when specific programme changes are planned, and this process has contributed significantly to better matching of the programme with employers' needs. Further strengthening the documentation may contribute to the robustness of this process.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

The teachers at Horizon Education connect professionally and effectively with students, link theory with practice, hold appropriate qualifications, and have appropriate experience for the positions they hold. The evaluators observed a high level of collegiality across the organisation, with tutors showing good support and engagement with each other as well as with the managing director. Students' high qualification achievement rates are one further indicator of the effectiveness of the teaching.

Teaching effectiveness is monitored at Horizon Education through annual performance reviews, which indicate a well-established culture of reflection and sharing of good practice. There was good evidence that all staff have established a history of professional development and have plans for further professional development. Employers interviewed at this evaluation confirmed the organisation's own self-assessment that its programmes deliver up-to-date and current industry knowledge and skills. Horizon Education's work experience agreement provides an adequate background covering such matters as health and safety, and is signed off by all parties.

Horizon Education has a sound and regular moderation process which checks to confirm that assessment material is fit for purpose and appropriate for its learners, and that assessors' decisions are valid, reliable, and consistent. Horizon Education engages with NZQA and the standard-setting body for the rest home care industry, Careerforce, for the external moderation of assessment. Minor modifications to assessment material have been required by NZQA and these have been made prior to assessment material being re-used.

The organisation has strong self-assessment processes to monitor the effectiveness of teaching. The combination of informal day-by-day interactions and annual performance reviews contribute to a strong collegial atmosphere and mutual support among the staff. The well-developed culture of reflection was evident in discussions with staff at this evaluation.

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**.

Students at Horizon Education receive a very high level of support and guidance from all staff. Appropriate and full information is provided to students at the time of enrolment including, for example, attendance expectations, rules, and support available through external agencies. The organisation sets firm and clear limits and expectations on the students during the time of their enrolment, with students being

offered extensive support. However, if, for example, they fail to attend appropriately and show the commitment required, they may be required to withdraw from the programme.

The evaluation team observed a high level of mutual respect and engagement between management, staff, and students. Students interviewed at this evaluation expressed high admiration for staff commitment and the support they received, with many stating that the staff go beyond normal expectations, 'providing extra help during lunchtimes and at the end of the day'. One student commented, 'they make us think but not struggle'.

The organisation's self-assessment processes in this area are largely based on day-to-day contact with the students and addressing issues as they arise. The student surveys also contribute to assessing student satisfaction with the support provided, and these show a high level of satisfaction from students. The evaluation team noted that neither the organisation nor NZQA had received any student complaints, indicating that appropriate levels of support and guidance are provided.

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**.

Horizon Education is owned and managed by the sole director, and there is no governing body. However, there was a good level of evidence that the director draws on a wide range of specialists for external input to the organisation for specific matters, such as for advice on business development and planning processes, assessment, literacy support and advice, and accountancy matters.

These processes have provided the necessary oversight and guidance for Horizon Education to maintain ongoing contracts with the TEC over many years. The annual investment plan agreed with the TEC is the primary vehicle for business and strategic planning.

The organisation has a very clear purpose and direction: 'To make a difference to people's lives'. Horizon Education has a set of values that also reflects this purpose and direction. Evidence sighted by the evaluation team at this evaluation indicated that the organisation's management has a very clear focus on student achievement, and that students are in fact achieving well.

The managing director and staff engage well with their local community and are actively involved with the local private training provider network and, as already noted, are in regular weekly contact with employers within the early childcare and rest home industries.

The organisation is proactive in managing and adjusting its programmes and staff skills to meet changes in the environment, including the current tight employment

market, welfare reforms, changes in tertiary education funding rules, as well as meeting the requirements of recent changes to the Education Act.

The organisation provides appropriate physical and learning resources for the programmes that it offers and has managed to recruit well-qualified and experienced teaching and administrative staff.

The gap in performance in this area is related to the strength or robustness of self-assessment practices, a key management function. The managing director and supporting staff have a well-established reflective self-assessment culture, which regularly, if informally, reviews and discusses what is working well and what is working not so well, and there was clear evidence that this process is leading to improvements such as with academic assessments, linkages with employers, and supporting students both personally and educationally. The organisation has a reasonable level of documentation, and records are sufficient for monitoring and reporting and meeting its contractual requirements.

While the informality of some review processes is largely fit for purpose for the current small size of the organisation, the organisation may be leaving itself vulnerable with its current level of formal documentation. For example, its ability to objectively review past changes towards making improvements, and the reasons for making these changes, may be jeopardised. The organisation currently is in the process of purchasing a new student management system which is likely to improve its capability to analyse quantitative data more completely and effectively.

Overall, the evaluation team considers that Horizon Education is performing at a high level and is enabling its students to grow considerably both on a personal level and academically. The high qualification achievement rates, strong outcomes, positive student and employer survey comments, as well as their positive comments during interviews at this evaluation attest to the above.

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**.

2.2 Focus area: Foundation Focused Training Opportunities and Youth Guarantee programmes

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

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

Recommendations

In addition to the recommendations expressed or implied within the report, NZQA recommends that Horizon Education:

- Develop processes to collect, record, and collate input from external stakeholders to determine how well the training is matching the needs of employers and other external stakeholders, to help improve objectivity.
- Review the processes for organisational reflection, and enhance or develop a workable or achievable process to determine how well planned changes are resulting in meaningful improvements.
- Continue to seek external input to the organisation to augment what is currently used, to add an external perspective and specialist skills or knowledge, and to mitigate against the potential isolation related to the small size of the organisation.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1) (d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the EER process approved by the NZQA Board.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>

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