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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Horizon Education Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 8 September 2016

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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
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	21 October 1992
Location:	83-87 Rangitikei Street, Palmerston North
Delivery sites:	As above
Courses currently delivered:	Youth Guarantee (incorporating National Certificate in Employment Skills, National Certificate in Educational Achievement levels 1 and 2)
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 84 students
Number of staff:	Four full-time; two part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	See: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=882450001
Distinctive characteristics:	Horizon Education Ltd (Horizon) is a small provider which provides training to assist youth to gain sustainable employment through the delivery of Youth Guarantee programmes. Horizon also provides programmes that give entry to employment in the local age and disability care sectors through its Training for Work programmes, as well as opportunities for entry into higher-level qualifications at other tertiary institutions.

Horizon has a long association with many local old age care facilities. A recent innovation has been the facilitation of bespoke courses based on the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3) for a prominent local age care provider.

Palmerston North is a destination centre for refugees from other countries. Horizon also enrolls students from this sector and currently has a handful of students who come from Bhutan.

Recent significant changes: Horizon is active in updating and repositioning its programmes depending on their viability. It has made strategic changes to its programmes in accordance with funding changes. It has updated its student management system database. Several new teaching staff positions have been established to facilitate the changing delivery style required by the evolution of the programmes.

Previous quality assurance history: NZQA assessment and moderation results for the period 2012 to 2015 show that, with only one exception, Horizon meets moderation requirements.

The previous NZQA external evaluation and review (EER) held in October 2012 determined that NZQA was Highly Confident in Horizon's educational performance and Confident in the PTE's capability in self-assessment.

Horizon meets the requirements for Careerforce moderation in 2015.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included the following focus areas:

- Governance, management and strategy – this is a mandatory focus area.
- Youth Guarantee (incorporating the National Certificate in Employment Skills (NCES), and National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) levels 1 and 2)
- Training for Work (incorporating the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Age Support (Foundation Skills) (Level 2)

With the exception of the bespoke corporate courses, these two programmes are

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all that Horizon currently delivers. There are no international students at Horizon.

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 NZQA evaluators visited the Horizon Education Ltd office in Palmerston North over two days. Prior to the EER, the NZQA lead evaluator and the director/owner of Horizon discussed the possible focus areas and EER procedures. Horizon supplied the lead evaluator with compliance and other information about the organisation, and sent a summary of its self-assessment activities, including any changes that had occurred since the previous EER. This information assisted the lead evaluator in developing the scope of this EER, in collaboration with the director of Horizon.

During the on-site visit, the evaluation team interviewed the director/owner, the programme managers, the teaching staff and students on the courses, and some of the stakeholders (employers, Work and Income New Zealand, past students, and representative of tertiary institutes that take the students after they complete their programmes at Horizon). Horizon also has links with local secondary schools, and the evaluators also held discussions with contacts from this area. A range of documents was examined to clarify information that arose from the discussions.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

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

The evaluation team found that Horizon has a very good level of educational performance. For the most part, Horizon's programmes are funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) or through the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Horizon keeps comprehensive data on student achievement to meet the reporting requirements of its funding agencies. Horizon also analyses demographic-related statistics to gain better understanding of its achievement rates and how to improve them. It compares its achievement rates to those of other, similar institutions using the TEC statistics, and plots its position against the median figures for all funded providers who deliver similar funded programmes. These figures show that Horizon performs consistently above these medians.

The value of the programmes for those learners who successfully complete them is significant, and feedback gained from employers and other external stakeholders endorses this value. Horizon has centred some of its programmes around the age care facilities in the Manawatu, with which it has deep and extensive links. The age care sector is an area in which employment is usually available for those with some training, especially for the Training for Work students at Horizon, and allows the provider to develop resources, networks and staff competence in this area.

Successful students in the two programmes gain relevant foundation qualifications and, most importantly, they gain confidence, motivation and self-actualisation skills. The Youth Guarantee programme focuses on preparing students for work or higher-level education, giving them the skills to compile a useful curriculum vitae, conduct themselves in an interview situation, maintain appropriate personal presentation, and to communicate effectively.

The evaluators verified that the successful students have developed and transformed and are able to competently seek employment. As a number of the students have come from an inconsistent academic background, and some have encountered social problems in their lives, the learning gained meets their needs and the needs of the employers and government agencies very well. Work placements are a valuable part of the Training for Work programme, allowing students to become familiar with workplace practices and the personal disciplines required – Horizon has an acute awareness of the support needs of its students.

The careful recruitment and development of highly skilled and experienced teaching
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staff who have great empathy with the sector for which the students are being prepared is a helpful strategy. The relatively small number of students at Horizon allows for personalised support from the teaching staff. This support shows positive results, and student and stakeholder feedback shows an overall satisfaction with the outcomes.

There is a good governance and management oversight of the educational output of the school. This oversight is appropriate for a school of this size with a small number of students and a single delivery site. The school strategy is determined by the owner/director in consultation with the senior teaching leaders, who also have a large stake in the direction of the school. The school makes very good use of the experience and background of these key people.

Horizon engages in good self-assessment that mainly stems from the data it gathers for the reporting undertaken for funding agencies. It uses this data to understand the different target demographic groups that it works with. The evaluators found it was creditable that Horizon trials different types of self-assessment to find out which method is the most effective for its purposes. This was seen in the method by which student feedback is currently given, which is still under trial at Horizon. There are a few areas that could be tightened to enhance the effectiveness of the self-assessment and the knowledge to be gained from it. These details are expressed in the findings for the key evaluation questions outlined below.

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**.

The evaluators found that Horizon has very good rates of learner achievement. The programmes that it delivers are either Youth Guarantee or MSD-funded, so there is good data collection to provide the performance information required by these two stakeholders. The achievement targets set by the funding agencies are generally met or exceeded at Horizon. The achievement data gathered is analysed and the emerging trends are studied and responded to in a timely manner. The owner/director is very aware of the performance of the school, keeping her own information and assessments of trends and figures. These are discussed regularly with the other principal teachers. This communication informs the direction and development of content and delivery of the programmes to encourage more effective learning and enhance the outcomes.

At Horizon there are significant groups who identify as being Māori and Pasifika, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Ethnicities of Horizon students

Ethnic identification of students at Horizon in 2016*	Pakeha	Māori	Pasifika	Others
	82%	35%	11%	18%

*Some students identify with more than one group. These figures are sourced from the provider and used with permission.

Māori and Pasifika achievement rates are plotted separately and compared with the achievement rates of other groups to determine how well these groups perform comparatively. The achievement rates of these groups compare mostly favourably with the TEC performance medians for all participating providers, as shown in Table 2 below.

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

Table 2. Horizon achievement against TEC medians

2013 Youth Guarantee				2014 Youth Guarantee			
Course completion		Qualification completion		Course completion		Qualification completion	
Horizon %	Sector median %	Horizon %	Sector median %	Horizon %	Sector median %	Horizon %	Sector median %
52	61	63	48	72	61	67	58
TEC targets for 2014 are course completion 60%, qualification completion 40%							

TEC published figures. At the time of writing, the 2015 figures had not been released.

The TEC figures also show that rates for those students who go on to higher studies and for those who are retained in study, are also favourable when compared to the median sector rates. In the Training for Work programmes the rates are also good, with the provider meeting the target for both 2014 and 2015 of having 70 per cent of those who find work still being employed sustainably after six months. Sustained employment is the main funding body criterion and the indicator for the success of the Training for Work programme, as the programme is structured so that students can gain a qualification.

Horizon is aware of the achievement rates of other, similar providers, and it is aware of its position compared with other Youth Guarantee-funded providers, but it does not formally benchmark its performance as it is consistently meeting and exceeding its targets. The management at Horizon believes that similar local providers provide the best benchmark for the PTE's performance.

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**.

There is considerable evidence of the value of the learning for the students and the other stakeholders, particularly employers. The school provides programmes aimed at directing at-risk youth and second-chance learners back into the workforce or to further studies. It uses its well-established links with local age care institutions to provide employment opportunities. The Training for Work programme concentrates on providing a level 2 programme to allow people an introduction to this industry.

The Youth Guarantee programme caters to younger people and gives them the opportunity to gain or complete NCEA levels 1 and 2 and the National Certificate in Employment Skills. In gaining the national certificate, the students complete unit

standards which contribute to their record of achievement with NZQA.

Apart from achieving their competency and unit standards, the students also gain confidence, motivation, self-belief and a variety of other interpersonal skills. Literacy and numeracy learning is integrated throughout the programmes, and employment skills are a prominent feature. Students learn how to develop and maintain a curriculum vitae and how to present themselves in an interview situation. Punctuality and timeliness, important skills in the workplace, are also strongly emphasised in the programmes. The students and graduates who were interviewed as part of the EER process gave good examples of where the value of the training lies. They said they became better communicators, and there is evidence of self-reflective practice and critical thinking. There is a strong link with Universal College of Learning (UCOL) as about 20 per cent of the students from Horizon go on to UCOL to study various qualifications.

Horizon graduates often keep in touch with the provider for some years after they move on from the school. There is much anecdotal evidence of the value of the programme through these contacts and through the strong relationships with employers. The provider makes concerted efforts to maintain communication with its graduates and has contact details of graduates going back to 2012. It would be advantageous for Horizon to formalise its feedback from graduates and employers so that more systematic and reliable studies can be made to ensure that there is long-term value in the learning and that needs are being met.

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**.

The important needs of the stakeholders and students are being met at Horizon. The students' needs are determined by consultation during the enrolment and induction period. Students have the opportunity to build on their secondary school record by completing NCEA programmes, and to gain a qualification to add to their NZQA record of achievement. The Youth Guarantee programme has a four-week trial period during which the students and the programme staff can see whether the students are well suited to the programme.

The teachers are great role models, one with a wealth of experience in the age care sector, and feedback from the students endorses the support that the teachers give to help students meet their objectives. The needs of the students are met in the way that Training for Work students are introduced to the culture of the workplace through work placement as part of the programme. The preferred qualification for the age care sector is the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Age Support (Level 3), which is not currently offered by the provider. The evaluators found, in

discussions with the students, that they wanted this programme to also be available to them through Horizon, as the teaching style and environment at the school was conducive to effective learning, in their view. Horizon is vigilant in ascertaining the changing needs of the age care industry and adjusting programme content to suit these trends. Recently, management added first aid training to the Training for Work programme in response to industry feedback. Horizon also learns how well their graduates perform at UCOL, and this feedback is useful to ascertain how well prepared the students are for higher learning.

Horizon has adopted a system of separating the faster and slower students into different streams in the Youth Guarantee programme. This enables the learners to learn with those of similar speed and ability and enhances learning progress and the temperament of the groups. This is a positive adjustment based on the outcome of student feedback.

The evaluators scrutinised the student feedback process that Horizon is currently trying out. The questions being asked of the students are very general and do not ask for comment on teaching, resources and the learning environment. This means that Horizon cannot learn about its own performance and, if required, make informed improvements in these areas.

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 **Adequate**.

The evaluators found that the delivery of learning at Horizon is to a good standard and is facilitated by competent and dedicated teachers. The teachers are well qualified as educators and experienced in their field. Most have the National Certificate in Adult Education and Training and all have unit standard 4098 *Use standards to assess candidate performance*. The staff members have valuable contacts in the age care sector, and this contact allows them to keep conscious of changes and developments in the sector. Teachers are managed by way of a regular performance review.

The industry training organisation for age care sector training is Careerforce, and Horizon uses the workbooks and assessments that are required by Careerforce. Assessment materials are sourced either from Careerforce or from a professional resource provider, and these are pre-moderated by Horizon staff before use. Horizon also uses assessment standards administered by NZQA, and the moderation of these has shown that Horizon met the expected standard consistently in the period 2012 to 2015.

The provider hires an experienced consultant to assist with staffing and educational reviews. This consultant conducts some informal observation of teaching and offers feedback. This process is valuable in maintaining the quality of delivery, and

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it would be of benefit to Horizon to formalise this process and embed it into the system. The consultant also helps with the engaging of new staff, using her skills and experience to contribute to the recruitment process.

Horizon is well endowed with the appropriate resources for the programmes. The type of programmes offered do not require a lot of physical resources, and the technical equipment required is available to the school at nearby institutions. The evaluators found that the premises provided an appropriate, spacious learning environment. As an assistance to the teachers, Horizon has provided each with an iPad to assist with the teaching presentation. Horizon awards a 'student of the year' honour to foster the achievement of excellence.

The post-moderation of assessments is carried out on the basis that each assessment standard is moderated once in a three-year cycle. This methodology is appropriate for industry training organisations and NZQA which check PTE processes, but the provider is required to ensure that the outcomes of its assessments are valid, fair, consistent and reliable, as much as is possible. In the three-year cycle, problem areas will only come to light after a period of time (perhaps as much as three years), and will not be rectified until after the unit standard has been used a number of times. It is advisable for Horizon to adopt moderation methodology that ensures a timely outcome.

As stated earlier in this report, the restructuring of the student feedback questions to include comments on teaching delivery, resources and environment would help to get meaningful feedback that would help the development of these factors.

Teachers meet weekly to discuss student progress and any emerging issues. There are monthly formal programme review meetings which again look at student progress and whether any additional content or refinement of delivery methodology is required. Professional development is scheduled for the staff and covers such areas as literacy and numeracy integration, moderation workshops, teaching techniques and how to enhance Māori student performance.

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**.

Horizon provides good support to assist the students with their learning. Apart from providing the teachers with iPads, Horizon has also installed large Smart TV screens in each classroom to assist in the presentation of lesson material in a modern medium. Teaching support is prominent at Horizon. The teaching staff show great integrity in providing one-to-one support to the students whenever it is needed, and will allow time outside of normal classes to assist those who have study issues or need extra time. English language support is provided, if required, to speakers of other languages, and Horizon is able to enlist the assistance of a local English

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language school to assist in this area. Work placements in industry can be daunting for students, so these are carefully monitored and the teacher visits periodically. Self-paced learning is catered for, and classroom pressures are relieved in part with the streaming of faster and slower learners.

The nature of the student body indicates that some extracurricular support is also needed. Horizon goes beyond educational support by assisting with a variety of pastoral support as well. Examples of these support mechanisms are: counsellor access for students, referral to appropriate mental health agencies if required, assistance to stop smoking, guidance sessions with community police, and liaison with the local Māori cultural council, among other things.

The programmes themselves include a number of supportive aspects designed to increase the confidence, motivation and employability of the students. One of the primary objectives of the Training for Work programme is to get the graduates into employment, and so there is a distinct focus on the gaining of those personal skills required to get and maintain a job.

The evaluators saw that different learning styles are catered for in the self-paced learning environment. The individual student's learning style is determined early in the Youth Guarantee programme, and the students' aims and aspirations are determined through the entry interview and application process. Student progress is carefully monitored through the use of independent learning plans designed to plot the progress of each student in accordance with their aims and capabilities. The independent learning plan incorporates the progress in literacy and numeracy that is required in the Youth Guarantee programme, but literacy and numeracy is also embedded in the Training for Work programme, where it is not a requirement. In this way, the progress of the students is monitored in these areas in all the programmes. The achievement of unit standards is recorded in the independent learning plan, and feedback is given on a regular basis to keep the learning on track.

An enlightened strategy that has been adopted by Horizon is the concept of restorative justice for any behaviour issues at the school. The student's whānau and support people are present in meetings where the issues are discussed, and a remedial process is agreed and put in place.

It was noted by the evaluators that the student handbook could be revised to include all the academic rules for student reference.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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

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

The evaluators concluded that there is a highly effective standard of governance and management at Horizon. The owner/director of Horizon maintains a small school of a manageable size and has a large input into the running of the school, assisted by the senior teaching staff. The owner/director uses the assistance of external management people with specialist skills to help with governance. The strong links with industry and local tertiary education institutes are a strong foundation for the school. The staff members have been carefully selected to suit their roles and for the skills and expertise they bring to the job. The school is kept small and manageable. Currently there are 31 students, and in 2015, 84 students passed through the school. This strategy to keep the school at a manageable size and to nurture staff development seems to work well. The evaluators heard from a number of stakeholders (most notably from local academic institutions and from funding agencies) that Horizon is one of the better local providers engaged in training for employment and preparing young people for further study in terms of completions and placements. Management has proved to be effective at operating in the current funding model and is able to adapt quickly to funding changes. Horizon stopped its secondary school programmes as it was no longer economically viable to run them.

In 2013, Horizon implemented a new student management system to track student achievement and for the reporting of results. Management and staff are very aware of the outcomes required by the TEC and MSD, and the school is focused on achieving these. To assist in this, it would be useful if the school had an active local advisory committee which could meet periodically to give an external perspective when developments and improvements are required to the programmes. This type of input would allow Horizon to maintain relevance and currency in its programme content and teaching methodology.

There are some areas of data-gathering and self-assessment that Horizon could develop further. Some of the feedback from students and stakeholders is of an informal nature and it would be useful if this was formalised so that a more accurate picture of trends and developments in the needs of industry can emerge. The evaluators found that some of the documentation, such as agreements with employers for work placement, could be revised to include specified responsibility for educational outcomes. Another useful development would be a regular forum of teaching staff to allow the exchange of good ideas as there are small inconsistencies in practice between the programmes, and the teams could benefit from sharing 'best practice' ideas. The internal moderation process could be strengthened.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: Youth Guarantee (NCES, NCEA levels 1 and 2)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Level 2)

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Horizon Education Limited:

1. Revise its moderation procedures to ensure that, as much as possible, the outcomes of assessments are fair, valid, reliable and consistent.
2. Formalise its processes of collection and analysis of feedback from students and stakeholders to gain a more universal picture of their needs.
3. Consider forming a local advisory committee.
4. Review some of the documentation like the student handbook and the understandings around work placement with employers to ensure that important areas of responsibility are specified.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQA Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

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

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

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

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

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website ([http://www.nzqa.govt.nz](#)).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at [http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/](#), while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz

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