

Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand Fire Service, Training

Confident in educational performance

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 14 October 2015

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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:	New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS), Training
Type:	Government training establishment (GTE)
First registered:	3 August 1998
Location:	Head Office, Level 12, Axa Centre, 80 The Terrace, Wellington
Delivery sites:	National Training Centre, 67 Te Huaki Crescent, Rotorua. Other training is delivered at fire stations throughout New Zealand.
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career Recruit Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 2)• Career Qualified Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 3)• Career Senior Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 4)• Volunteer Qualified Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 2)• Volunteer Senior Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 3)
Code of Practice signatory:	NA
Number of students:	Domestic: 3,500 (Māori approximately 4 per cent, Pasifika approximately 2 per cent) NZFS is required to continually train its 10,500 employees, but of this number only approximately

3,500 at any one time are being trained and assessed against unit standards or are on programmes that lead to current New Zealand Qualifications Framework qualifications. The GTE's training relates to only part of the NZFS training and operations.

International: NA

Number of staff: 210 full-time equivalents including 25 education staff, 18 full-time trainers and approximately 200 casual trainers who are full-time operational staff.

Scope of active accreditation: For details, see: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=906402001>

While NZFS has consents to assess First Aid (to level 2) and Pre-Hospital Emergency Care (to level 4), it contracts a large first aid and emergency care provider to deliver training for these two domains on its behalf.

Distinctive characteristics: NZFS is required to respond to fire and other emergencies.

The Training and Progression System (TAPS) programmes train personnel in the requisite capabilities to perform the duties required of the relevant ranks and to develop staff for promotion to more senior ranks and roles within NZFS.

These programmes go beyond the requirements of an NZQF qualification: trainees obtain the qualification on the way to a rank but must meet additional expectations, such as passing an examination and completing training logs with components relating to additional proficiency to the minimum competence described in unit standards.

TAPS also includes separate standalone specialist courses such as Pump Operator, Crew Boss, Fire Investigation and First Line Management.

The GTE is implementing a new training strategy 2014-2018 to support a more effective and safe workforce. Its focus is on developing key operational skills such as incident command, providing the required trainer capacity and

capability, improving training for volunteers, and ensuring that all core operational skills are maintained.

The GTE has begun developing smarter use of technology and online learning to complement workplace-based learning. In doing so, it has incorporated the lessons from the Christchurch earthquakes and other operational incidents, and the training implications for NZFS's Vision 2020: 'Leading integrated fire and emergency services for a safer New Zealand'.

Recent significant changes: As a result of a restructure of training in 2013, a new role of director of training was created. Subsequent staff changes included the appointment of a training programmes and National Training Centre manager to oversee managers of firefighter and officer development. A new Education Services team redesigned functions to teams responsible for assessment and evaluation, learning and development, and education support. Another new team, Education Technology, was created to focus on the learning management system, records management, and the development of online capability for training.

Until December 2014, career and volunteer firefighters on qualification programmes were included in training agreements with the Fire and Rescue Services Industry Training Organisation (EMQUAL) which had the related quality assurance responsibilities. In January 2015, NZQA approved the training programmes for levels 2, 3 and 4 qualifications for career and volunteer firefighters as part of their employment progression through the TAPS. This included approving responsibility for assessment, assessors and moderators, and credit reporting previously quality assured by EMQUAL to the NZFS GTE.

Previous quality assurance history:

In its previous external evaluation and review (EER) in 2012, NZQA was Confident in the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of New Zealand Fire Service, Training.

Limited examples of industry training organisation

external moderation by EMQUAL and Skills Active in 2014 show NZFS was assessing at the national standard or, where this was not the case, recommendations were addressed promptly.

Other:

In 2013-2014, NZFS developed and introduced Vision 2020: 'Leading integrated fire and emergency services for a safer New Zealand'. The vision sets a range of goals to be achieved by 2020. The 2014-2018 Statement of Intent laid out the work programme and the six identified priority areas linked to Vision 2020: people, safety, incident management, integration, medical response, and risk reduction and prevention. NZFS sees the GTE as vital to contributing to the work programme and to NZFS achieving its goals.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The following focus areas were agreed by NZQA and NZFS:

- Career Recruit Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 2). This focus area was chosen because career firefighters were not available at the previous EER, which focused on volunteer firefighter programmes. This is a mandatory training programme for recruit career firefighters. At the end of 12 weeks at the National Training Centre, firefighters are expected to be ready to work under supervision
- Career Qualified Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 3). This is the second mandatory training programme for career firefighters who are expected to complete it, along with the level 2 programme, to become qualified firefighters.

Firefighters are expected to complete both programmes within two years as agreed by the firefighters union and NZFS. Both programmes train personnel so they are able to carry out the responsibilities related to the rank that is attached to each level programme.

The level 4 Senior Firefighter programme was not chosen as a focus area because the GTE is not satisfied that the programme suits the purpose of those completing it – becoming Senior Firefighters. The level 4 programme is under review and the GTE intends replacing it as soon as practicable.

- Governance, management and strategy. The GTE requested this focus area because it provided the opportunity for specific and generic consideration of its internal evaluative quality assurance, which it considers to be the key to current and future success in effective training. The restructure of training has led the GTE to develop its own full governance

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functions through its Training Standards Committee, chaired by the director of training, and other such avenues. The expectation is that the GTE understands and operates a quality management system and scrutinises results, outcomes, achievement of qualifications and ranks, evaluative feedback from learners and trainers, complaints, appeals and implementation of strategic direction. NZFS has made it clear that the GTE has a key role if NZFS is to successfully develop and deliver its organisation-wide Vision 2020.

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 conducted the EER over three days, one day at the head office in Wellington and two days at the National Training Centre in Rotorua. The EER visit included the evaluators attending the most recent recruit career graduation and a skills display.

Prior to the EER visit, NZFS submitted self-assessment information. The lead evaluator visited the head office and met the director of training, manager of education services, team leaders and one moderator and discussed the scope and conduct of the EER, which were subsequently confirmed.

At the visit, the evaluators interviewed the same personnel as well as the training programmes and National Training Centre manager, manager officer development, area manager and assistant area managers, level 2 and level 3 trainers and trainees. The evaluators spoke by videoconference to trainers/assessors/mentors/moderators, fire station officers, and a New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) representative.

After the visit, the evaluators also spoke to the manager firefighter development.

Prior, during and after the visit, the GTE provided a wide range of documentation, and the evaluators also looked at recently developed online learning resources, and the NZFS external website and GTE information in particular.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **New Zealand Fire Service, Training**.

The key reasons for this are:

- Almost all trainees complete two career programmes within two years as required to become a fully qualified firefighter. High success rates reflect the close supervision and support provided to all recruits, particularly during the 12 weeks initial training. The engagement of trainees is enhanced by the thoughtful use of the excellent facilities at the National Training Centre and a pool of experience and committed trainers. The GTE has comprehensive assessment policies, processes and procedures. However, there is some evidence that greater consistency and support by station officers for on-job learning and assessment would enhance the robustness of the signoff process for qualified firefighters at the end of the two year period.
- In addition to gaining the technical knowledge and skills essential to their roles in providing firefighting and other emergency services, trainees enhance their ability to learn and to manage stress and build key attributes such as persistence and teamwork. It was unclear how explicitly this development of abilities, attitudes and attributes was monitored and assessed
- The training programmes are highly relevant and carefully structured, with theory embedded within practical learning and assessment, and incorporate the debriefing and self-reflective culture of firefighters and providers of emergency services. Key elements include ensuring personal safety and the safety of other firefighters and members of the community and the importance of fire prevention activities. The training is central to NZFS's role in contributing to the safety and well-being of all communities and New Zealanders.
- Effective fire and emergency services depend on a significant number of appropriately trained and motivated volunteers. Although attempts have been made to provide more robust, continuous training and assessment for volunteers, this remains an important ongoing challenge.
- The GTE's strategic and leadership response to the NZFS's Vision 2020 ('Leading integrated fire and emergency services for a safer New Zealand') and its implications for training are being carefully and thoughtfully worked through.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **New Zealand Fire Service, Training**.

The key reasons for this are:

- NZFS has extensive data on individual learner achievement and progression through training programmes and service ranks. However, the reporting and analysis of achievement information to identify trends (over time or across cohorts or programmes) is currently limited. The new trainee management system has the potential to support such practices.
- The GTE is not systematically following up with the operational fire service units to understand how well the initial and subsequent training is meeting the needs and expectations of trainees, graduates and NZFS, although some anecdotal information is gathered.
- Recent changes have been made to the timing and process for gathering feedback from trainers and trainees on the effectiveness of the training, and there was some evidence of the GTE addressing issues raised.
- The GTE's programme reviews are largely ad hoc. While good use is made of detailed investigations into operational incidents and audits to inform training activities and resources, it reflects a reactive rather than a systematic approach to ensuring the currency and relevance of training programmes.
- Information about NZFS's success in areas such as preventing and reducing the number of fires and personnel injuries and near misses is not systematically considered in terms of reasonable and realistic attribution to training.
- The GTE has a process rather than outcomes orientation to quality assurance. There was some evidence of effective consultation and reporting related to the redevelopment of the Career TAPS programme which has been recently undertaken. However, in general, NZQA found a lack of consistency in gathering and using information to improve educational performance. It is acknowledged that the very large size of NZFS¹ contributes to a perceived lack of connectedness between organisational elements and the time required to build self-assessment

¹ As at 30 June 2014, NZFS had approximately 1,700 career firefighters, 8,300 urban volunteers, 3,500 rural volunteers, 585 management and support staff, 79 career fire stations, 360 volunteer stations and 187 rural fire forces. From 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, NZFS attended 73,464 incidents and made 583,694 direct contacts to provide fire safety education and prevention advice – *NZFS Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2014*.

understanding and capability throughout the organisation. Notwithstanding this, the GTE is making progress through representative and inclusive committees which connect governance and management, strategy, operations and training more effectively.

Findings²

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**.

Career firefighters are employed by NZFS from the beginning of their training. From the start of 2013 to the end of April 2015, 98 per cent of the 242 career recruits completed their career recruit programme and 95 per cent of those graduates completed the qualified firefighter programme. Completion of the programmes included progressing through their training in cohorts of 24 (latterly 12), gaining their level 2 and 3 Certificates in Fire and Rescue Services and achieving the rank of Qualified Firefighter within the compulsory two years of their first appointment, a (NZPFU) contractual requirement. Those who did not complete included trainees who had not yet completed but were expected to do so, those who completed but left NZFS, and those who did not complete and left NZFS.

Evidence suggests the high achievement rates in the career recruit initial training programme were the result of sound recruitment processes, effective learning and teaching, and assessment and reassessment opportunities. As mentioned, the robustness of the processes of station officers' signoff of qualified firefighter programme trainees varied.

Effective internal and external moderation policies, processes and practices supported the evaluators' confidence in the validity of the achievement data, especially for those courses conducted at the National Training Centre. The evaluation team found evidence of pressure on trainers to ensure all recruits successfully complete the initial training. It was suggested that this might not always be in the best interests of the individual or the service because firefighters who were not competent may pose a safety risk to themselves and others. However, there was no clear evidence of career recruits passing when they should not have.

The GTE records individual achievement data and tracks and monitors individual trainee progress well. There is little or no analysis of data overall. The GTE explained that other than on an individual basis, its current data management system makes it difficult to extract basic achievement data let alone process it by cohort, unit standard, number of assessments, programme, trainer, trainee, age, ethnicity or over time. This limits the GTE's capacity to use such data effectively

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

and make changes and evaluate whether they are in fact improvements. The new trainee management system should help the GTE address these issues.

The GTE has a limited understanding of career recruit achievement other than individual learning and assessment focused on specific operational knowledge and skills. Apart from communication, persistence, teamwork and taking orders, other attributes like managing stress in pressure situations are not explicitly taught, learned or assessed. Their development is observed during training, but the evaluators did not see any evidence of any tracking of that development during the initial recruit training or subsequently. Fire station officers and NZFS managers interviewed by the evaluators valued such qualities. Limitations in such areas have an impact on the safety of other firefighters and may appear in the initial 12-week programme or during the subsequent station-based training.

The success of the training and assessment of career firefighters is inconsistent compared with regional and volunteer firefighters. The GTE explained that volunteers were less available for training locally or regionally let alone nationally – and when they did train, they did not always complete or pass their assessment. Attempts to develop and improve the completion of volunteer training and achievement rates has had mixed success. In one example, only three out of 11 volunteers passed an assessment. This is important given that 8,500 of the 10,500 firefighters in New Zealand are volunteers, compared with 2,500 career firefighters. The GTE is hopeful that future changes, such as online learning and workplace-based assessment, will help make volunteer training and assessment more accessible and successful.

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 **Good**.

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

Trainees complete programmes, courses and qualifications. In becoming fully qualified firefighters, trainees gain relevant, useful and necessary skills. Personal safety and the safety of other firefighters and members of the public are paramount and emphasised in all training. These factors are important to not only firefighting but also for providing other emergency services such as motor vehicle extractions arising from road accidents.

NZFS has specific outcomes and targets to achieve which include fire prevention, a reduction in the number of domestic fires and related injuries and deaths of firefighters and members of the public, and successful attendance at a range of emergencies other than fires. Success in achieving these valued outcomes benefits the citizens of New Zealand and their communities. The GTE has training outcomes and targets, some of which are directly related to the GTE's operation

and others more or less related to NZFS targets. In both cases, outcomes and targets are being met.

The GTE has shown its capability to use self-assessment information, albeit often anecdotal and informal as well as formal, to improve outcomes. This has led to recent improvements such as initial training including working with the ambulance services and spending increased time on triage. However, the GTE does not have a systematic approach to gathering information leading to such improvements, and so valuable information or knowledge is individually held and may not always be used. Sources of information include regional and area managers and station officers. They can provide the GTE and its training and development managers with information which the GTE does not currently always connect with the level of success or otherwise of the initial career recruit knowledge and basic skills and subsequent training.

NZFS reports accidents, injuries and near misses, and the GTE does not really consider and connect the frequency of these to the effectiveness of the training in basic operational skills as well as other related skills such as communication, persistence, teamwork and discipline. The GTE does, however, have the potential to use such incidents as case studies as it has already shown in its development of online resources. Successful training is also related to other outcomes which arise from the practical application of important behavioural skills and attributes, such as managing stress in pressure situations. These are not explicitly taught, learned or assessed during the training, but they are experienced and observed. As mentioned, the evaluators saw no evidence of how the development of such skills and attributes was tracked during initial or subsequent training.

The connections between what is learned and assessed by recruits in their initial training and when they are stationed, and how relevant and effective the learning is when applied in an operational context, are not strong. This is denying the GTE valuable self-assessment information and opportunities to improve the achievement of valued outcomes. Any connections are mainly anecdotal or observational and/or coincidental when they may be picked up at the two one-week qualified firefighter National Training Centre courses.

NZFS relies on a large number of volunteers. Valuing this and building community capability through volunteerism is an important outcome which provides a particular challenge for the GTE and NZFS to find ways volunteers can attend training and succeed when they are assessed. There is a tension in managing this valued outcome with maintaining minimum standards for safety and competency. More robust self-assessment like that undertaken for the TAPS is important in getting buy-in and solutions if TAPS and workplace-based training and assessment are to succeed and extend to career, experienced and volunteer firefighters of all ranks.

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**.

The carefully structured programmes provide a pathway for firefighters from employment at the point of recruitment to becoming a qualified firefighter. The effectiveness of this progression depends on the support provided by the trainers and station officers, and whether progress and achievement always meet the needs of the service.

The initial 12-week career recruit programme takes place at the National Training Centre which has excellent facilities and provides opportunities for realistic simulated training. The initial training itself is carefully structured. For example, it now has an initial emphasis on physical fitness which intentionally precedes an increasing focus on practical training including the use of breathing apparatus. This is most effective when the firefighter trainees are fit. Trainees are initially closely supported by their trainers working and following up in small groups. This includes high-risk training in the use of breathing apparatus in confined spaces and in total darkness.

The GTE's self-assessment and evaluator interviews of trainees and trainers show that the 12 weeks is very intensive and its dependence on discipline and acting on orders initially challenges some trainees' previous experience and attitudes. The career recruit programme effectively integrates trainees into the NZFS culture and prepares them so they are ready to work under supervision at a fire station and complete the qualified firefighter programme.

As mentioned, there is considerable pressure to succeed and pass the initial training, and the opportunity for reassessments helps ensure this. The GTE's self-assessment and the evaluators' interviews suggest that there are occasional instances where questions arise as to whether some trainees should have passed their initial training. This is based on their subsequent on-job performance, including ongoing lack of attention to their own safety and that of others, and poor responses when required to act on instructions. Rare individual cases of poor performance are dealt with as employment matters and do not necessarily inform training feedback where that may be relevant.

The subsequent qualified firefighter programme is based on the trainee's ongoing training and learning being on-job, which is a strength. The trainee is required to complete assignments, assessments and workbooks on a largely self-paced basis and attend two one-week National Training Centre training sessions, which include theory bookwork in the evenings. Trainees interviewed by the evaluators did not have any difficulty finding the time to complete their assignments and assessments on-site at their respective fire stations. The evaluators found that the level of support provided by trainers and mentors and the thoroughness of the signoff process by station officers in particular was variable. The GTE is aware of the

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importance of addressing this. The GTE has identified that the level 4 Senior Firefighter training is not fit-for-purpose, and its current review should help address this situation.

The TAPS development and other training initiatives underpin the success of the Vision 2020 developments. They are related to the ongoing practical and future workplace-based refresher training for all firefighters, supported by online e-learning and assessment to improve ongoing maintenance of knowledge and skills. Such developments also include addressing the needs of volunteers who have constraints on their time and availability for training and assessment.

The GTE's programme review has been somewhat ad hoc and unsystematic, but recent developments are providing improved coherence. The gathering, collating, analysing, considering and use of current self-assessment information and developmental consultation vary considerably. Nevertheless, the GTE has shown how responsive it can be by, for example, including the promotion of home and community safety awareness in its training and practice. The GTE's recent addition of triage to basic first aid training, and joint training with ambulance services to develop firefighters' responsiveness to emergencies, are also examples of the GTE's capability in using feedback and self-assessment to make improvements which help it better match the needs of trainees and other stakeholders, including the public.

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**.

Trainees confirmed the GTE's self-assessment that the initial 12-week career recruit training benefits from a range of factors: small trainee numbers in each cohort (12-24), team teaching, and the support of at least one dedicated trainer in smaller groups (about six) at regular debriefs where trainees and National Training Centre trainers check their understanding and progress. The trainers are experienced firefighters with basic instructional skills. Some trainers and the GTE have identified that some trainers do not have adult teaching professional development and qualifications and are open to opportunities to gain these. Evidence shows that NZFS trainers benefit from some peer observations and performance appraisal. The GTE faces challenges balancing the preferences of firefighters who wish to deliver training and become go-to trainers with their station officers' reluctance to release them because of the impact on operational capacity. The current appointment of a smaller number of trainers who are used more often at the National Training Centre than previously reflects a fire service awareness that the quality of the training is currently inconsistent, and the GTE expects this initiative will help alleviate this situation.

The integration of theory and practice in the initial training is a strength of the quality and effectiveness of the initial training. In addition, the use of recent and relevant case studies makes the training more real and relevant. The subsequent on-job training provides the opportunity for trainees to further apply and develop their knowledge and experience. The subsequent training is to some extent self-paced, and the completion of assignments and assessments are able to be undertaken when the qualified firefighter trainee is available and ready. As mentioned, the effectiveness of the subsequent qualified firefighter training varies and depends on the level and thoroughness of station officer monitoring, mentoring and signoff. The frequency and range of opportunities to meet experiential, learning and assessment requirements depends on where trainees are posted. Station officers who are the most supportive ensure that trainees have the opportunities they need, and help them arrange this.

Assessments are mostly fair and fit for purpose and reassessment opportunities are provided. As mentioned, trainers as well as trainees are under considerable pressure to ensure career recruits pass their initial training. This potentially places the robustness of reassessment practices at risk, but there was no evidence that this is the case. Trainees confirmed that they receive constructive and helpful feedback and comments on their assessments and progress. The GTE has recently agreed with the firefighters union that an examination will remain as a compulsory component of the programme, but it will be closely structured, aligned and integrated with the training and assessment. This is important because previously the examination and results have been inconsistent with other forms of assessment.

The GTE's external moderation feedback from industry training organisations and NZQA has been increasingly positive and shows that the GTE is mostly assessing at the national standard. The GTE is continuing to develop its on-site assessment and moderation practices and its use and documentation of internal assessment and moderation feedback.

The GTE has identified the different learning styles that trainees prefer. The GTE has identified the importance of support for those with barriers to learning, including literacy and numeracy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) in an environment that integrates the learning, teaching and assessment of theory and practice. Support extends to using naturally occurring evidence and oral questioning, as well as formal written assignments and tests and an exam. The GTE considers that its trainers need to be better equipped to address trainee needs around literacy and numeracy and ESOL barriers to learning and assessment success. It has identified the different ethnicities of trainees as well as their gender and age, and intends to gather more information about their relative levels of performance, including that of Māori and Pasifika, so that it can address any differences or anomalies.

There are limited opportunities for recognition of prior learning or recognition of current competencies, and the criteria for determining whether recruits with relevant

and recent previous training should need to compete all the training and/or assessments are unclear. The GTE is aware that some teaching and learning materials are out of date. The GTE is addressing this by updating resources as quickly as it can, developing online resources which can be updated more readily, as well as providing hard copies.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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**.

Useful information is provided to trainees from the start and throughout their training. For some trainees, their initial training at the National Training Centre means that they are away from home for a lengthier time than they may have previously experienced. While the information provided is helpful, it is limited in how it prepares trainees in what to expect and what will be expected of them in their 12 weeks at the National Training Centre.

The GTE's initial and subsequent training at the National Training Centre lends itself to effective centralised guidance and support for a wide range of learning needs. This includes access to wellness and employee assistance programmes within the employment relationship, which is the basis of the NZFS's relationship with its career recruits from the first day. Career progression is related to achievement and rank, and the development of trainees' contractual relationship with NZFS is made clear from the start of the training. The GTE has identified that centralised learner support based at head office – while regarded as effective by most interviewees – could be strengthened by distributing it more widely across the training at the National Training Centre and fire stations, and planning is under way in this regard.

The practical focus of much of the training at the National Training Centre encourages a positive ongoing relationship between trainers and trainees. This also includes mentoring. The relationship is enhanced by the emphasis on safety as a priority, the importance of everyone being a safe person, and safe practices which help prevent accidents and injuries. Māori and Pasifika mentors are available. The GTE is at an early stage of identifying the achievements and needs of Māori and Pasifika trainees and addressing them in response to government initiatives – given the high success rate of these groups and the lack of evidence of any differences in achievement, it is continuing to treat all trainees the same. The GTE has developed a five-year plan, 2015-2019, for Māori and Pasifika based on limited self-assessment in the first place but quite detailed in strategy. The GTE informed the evaluators that two NZFS staff members were currently in the USA studying different ways of supporting diversity, and their findings are expected to contribute to the five-year plan.

The situation with regard to the development of online e-learning is seen as an important part of enabling ongoing workplace training and assessment for all firefighters, including volunteers as well as career firefighters, at their local stations whenever the trainees are available. The ways in which progress and success will be evaluated along the way, including when development targets or measures may be met, are not yet clear.

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 **Adequate**.

The GTE has a clear sense of purpose and direction related to NZFS's Vision 2020 arising from learnings from the Christchurch earthquakes. Training has been identified as relevant to all future NZFS organisational improvements and personnel. Consequently, the status and profile of training within NZFS are expected to be enhanced. Training functions are being increasingly represented on widely representative governance, management and operational committees to help ensure training has traction across the whole organisation.

Currently, the GTE is strategising how to address challenges around training and the trainers who deliver it, with career recruits and TAPS trainees as a priority. The GTE has to factor in that its TAPS competency-based career pathway is rank and employment-related, and industrial relations provide opportunities and challenges that always need to be addressed. The GTE is clear that continuous, ongoing and refresher training is important for volunteer as well as career firefighters and those who may not have had any training for some time. E-learning is seen as providing a flexible opportunity which can enable learning to take place on the job at any time. This could continue to be supported by face-to-face trainers and mentors. Workplace-based assessment could continue to be conducted by assessors and moderators working together concurrently. The GTE is aware that support for trainees and station officers, and station officer signoff processes, need to be addressed to avoid a risk to the success of workplace-based training and assessment.

While the NZFS organisational and related training directions are clear, the proposed initiatives are at early stages of development and implementation. The GTE faces additional challenges to those already mentioned. These include determining trainer numbers, needs and professional development, and consistency in the quality of the delivery of training. They also include refreshment of training for all firefighters. If e-learning is to work, it will also require ensuring the technology and related hardware are available at all fire station sites.

The GTE is currently data-rich but information poor until it implements its trainee management system and uses it to analyse, consider and use data to make improvements. The GTE is still developing its self-assessment framework based on recent processes and practices which have not worked as effectively as it wanted. The development of the self-assessment framework has been characterised by tensions between audit and more evaluative approaches in the data gathered and used. NZFS information which is relevant to the GTE tends to be dispersed across multiple systems, units and people.

The GTE's current self-assessment is patchy. While the trainee management system has reporting functions, the GTE has explained that it is difficult to process achievement data even by cohort and to analyse it. The GTE expects that its new trainee management system will readily facilitate this and other processes which will enable it to analyse, consider and use information to make changes and confirm that these are actually improvements.

In the meantime, the TAPS consultative process is robust and the information has been gathered and documented and awaits analysis, consideration and implementation of changes clearly identified to date. Vision 2020 is an organisation-wide strategy and is at an earlier stage of development – initial self-assessment data only has been collated and recorded. The strategy is clearly articulated though, and is strategically important and significant for both NZFS and the GTE. Without better coherence, implementation of different but related initiatives will be at risk.

Notwithstanding, the leadership of the GTE overall is effective and the resources allocated to date have been sufficient. However, the future success of the GTE depends on the quality of its staff not only at head office but out in the field, whether trainers, mentors, assessors or moderators. While the recruitment and development of staff has been mainly sound to date, the evaluators consider that recruitment and development are important to success and it is important that all staff whatever their role feel valued.

The GTE is currently responding to important changes, and the key to its success is the quality of self-assessment. The evaluators consider that currently the GTE's self-assessment is insufficiently ongoing, comprehensive and robust to lead to worthwhile improvements and successful delivery of significant initiatives.

The evaluators are encouraged that the GTE has also identified that it needs to improve its capability in self-assessment. It has developed the relevant section of its quality management system to help facilitate this and published its first Evaluation for Improvement report in April 2015.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Career Recruit Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 2)

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

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

2.2 Focus area: Career Qualified Firefighter TAPS programme (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 **Adequate**.

2.3 Focus area: Governance of the GTE functions of training

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that the NZFS GTE:

- Roll out and operationalise its new training management system to its full potential as soon as possible.
- Review the frequency and use of reassessments in the initial training in particular.
- Develop and support station officer signoff of post-initial recruit training as a matter of priority.
- In the meantime, allocate trainees to stations where it is confident recruit trainees will receive effective support and signoff.
- Develop the current trainer peer observations and performance appraisals based on firefighter debriefs to enable trainers to share good practice more effectively.
- Provide a wider range of information for recruit career firefighters which better prepares them as to what to expect and what is expected of them in the initial training.
- Develop support for learners with literacy and numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages barriers to learning and assessment success.
- Gather from a range of relevant sources quality quantitative and qualitative self-assessment information to collate, analyse, consider, discuss and use to identify, develop or deliver initiatives.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Final report