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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Fire and Emergency New Zealand

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 5 March 2018

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Final Report

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:	Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)
Type:	Government training establishment (GTE)
First registered:	3 August 1998
Location:	80 The Terrace, Wellington (Headquarters)
Delivery sites:	67-69 Te Hauki Crescent, Rotorua (National Training Centre) Some training is conducted at facilities based in Christchurch, Dunedin, and Auckland.
Courses currently delivered:	Volunteer Qualified Firefighter Training and Progression System (TAPS) programme (Level 2) FENZ also delivers training for recruits, career firefighters and rural firefighters.
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 618 undertook training towards a Qualified Firefighters qualification in 2016. Around 13,500 firefighters engage in some training activity each year at training facilities throughout New Zealand, alongside their on-job training and progression system, to develop their skills. There is no data captured on Māori or Pasifika firefighters' participation in training.

Number of staff:	25 full-time equivalents
Scope of consent to assess:	<p>Sub-field accreditation under Adult Education and Training (to level 5), Community and Workplace Fire and Emergency Management (to level 7), and Fire and Rescue Services (to level 7).</p> <p>For the full list of domain and standards consent to assess accreditation, go to: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=906402001</p>
Distinctive characteristics:	The National Training Centre in Rotorua is the main location for training. FENZ also runs recruit training from bases in Dunedin, Christchurch and Auckland. Other services, such as police and the navy, also use the National Training Centre for training as it has purpose-built facilities that enable simulated training scenarios for incident responses.
Recent significant changes:	<p>Fire and Emergency New Zealand was established on 1 July 2017 following the amalgamation of the New Zealand Fire Service, the National Rural Fire Authority, 12 enlarged rural fire districts and 26 territorial rural fire authorities.</p> <p>The amalgamation was the result of a review undertaken between 2012 and 2015. This led to the repeal of two Acts of Parliament and the creation of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>At the 2014 external evaluation and review (EER), NZQA was Confident in the then New Zealand Fire Service's educational performance and Not Yet Confident in its capability in self-assessment.</p> <p>FENZ has met The Skills Organisation and Skills Active external moderation requirements.</p>
Other:	As a result of the recent amalgamation of the rural and urban services, FENZ is essentially a new organisation with systems for monitoring and reporting educational activities in the early stages of development at the time of this EER.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The EER team evaluated the Volunteer Qualified Firefighter TAPS programme (Level 2) to gather information about the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment. This programme was selected because it covers a large proportion of the training activities carried out by FENZ.

Embedded in the programme is the New Zealand Certificate in Fire and Rescue Services (Urban Fire and Rescue Operations) (Level 2). This certificate consists of unit standards, making up 43 of the 53 credits of the total Volunteer Qualified Firefighter programme.

FENZ also delivers a career firefighter course over 12 weeks at the National Training Centre, which does not include unit standards. Similarly, a five-day recruit firefighter course is delivered at the National Training Centre. While the recruit programme has more trainees, this programme was not selected because the Volunteer Qualified Firefighter programme is at a higher level and contributes to organisational measures for the number of qualified firefighters on stations nationally.

The rural training programme is assessed using unit standards. The organisation has only recently undertaken responsibility for training rural firefighters following the merger of rural and urban firefighting services. Therefore, this area was not selected as a focus for this EER.

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.

The EER team of two evaluators met with the director of training, acting manager education services, team leader education technology, team leader business services, resource development team, and the acting National Training Centre manager at the FENZ head office in Wellington on day one. The evaluators also met with a board representative as well as the chief executive off site.

Day two was spent on site at the National Training Centre in Rotorua. The evaluators met with current volunteers attending a qualified firefighter course, the volunteer firefighter instructors, training quality advisor and business services manager, team leader and former attendees. The documents reviewed included

planning templates for future reporting on programme outcomes, business planning on the future education direction of the training arm of FENZ, volunteer firefighter training materials, course completion data, student feedback, a literacy and numeracy report, learning support report, along with the organisation's self-assessment summary received prior to the visit.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud¹*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

¹ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Summary of Results

Statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance and **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Fire and Emergency New Zealand**.

The key reasons for these judgements are:

- FENZ is achieving valued outcomes for volunteers. On the completion of the qualification, graduates achieve the rank of qualified firefighter, equipping them to contribute to a number of functions within an urban fire and rescue team under general supervision from an officer in charge. The achievement of the qualified firefighter qualification also helps to meet the overall organisation and individual station staffing need for 50 per cent of staff to be qualified firefighters.
- The organisation uses data on the number of volunteers who complete the practical course delivered at the National Training Centre to plan for future courses. However, there is a lack of analysis of overall qualification completion data to determine whether the majority of volunteer firefighters complete the online test following attendance at the National Training Centre course, and therefore achieve the qualification. In addition, there is no data captured to understand the qualification achievement rate for Māori or Pasifika volunteer firefighters.
- FENZ has a wide understanding of stakeholders' needs. Programme content is informed using input from industry-related research, sector specialists, and analysis from emergency response incidents to ensure the training content is effective and maintains currency.
- FENZ uses internal expertise to develop resources that engage students with the online learning environment as well as the practical training. This is enhanced by the National Training Centre facilities for delivering training using simulated tasks for specialist risk areas within a safe environment. Trainers are well qualified and capable of supporting students throughout the course. However, there is a gap in self-assessment information used to understand whether the online component is valued and meets the needs of students.
- The qualification learning outcomes are complemented by on-job skills development using station activities, known as the training and progression system (TAPS). This is the organisation's internal staff training system which provides evidence that students have demonstrated competency towards assessments, leading to the achievement of the qualification. However, further development of feedback systems would help identify whether students had the

appropriate support and opportunities to consolidate the skills and complete the online test to achieve the qualification following the practical course.

- FENZ's governance and management team was established following the merger of rural and urban firefighting services in July 2017 and is still in the early stages of formalising many of its systems for ensuring the quality of the training, including the embedding of recent management structures. However, a clear strategic direction for the training has been developed and aims to provide a professional career pathways framework to cater for both volunteer and career firefighters.
- The organisation has identified key staffing requirements to support the training goals, including increasing the number of training quality advisors and training coordinators for both rural and urban firefighters. However, because the merger of all the sectors under the one entity is very recent, there is still some way to go before the training is aligned to the needs of the areas covered by FENZ, such as urban firefighters, and the success of the training pathways for volunteer firefighters is demonstrated.

Findings²

1.1 How well do students 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**.

Most students complete the pre-course and practical component of the volunteer firefighter training. This is the key measure of student success. However, there is no formal analysis of the data to see how many of the students complete the post-course online consolidation component and gain the level 2 qualification. In addition, there is no data to monitor Māori or Pasifika achievement, as this information is not gathered at recruitment.

The responsibility for completing the post-course consolidation components mainly rests with the individual station. Better understanding of barriers for completion would help identify the support required for station chief fire officers or brigade training officers to help students complete within reasonable timeframes.

The FENZ training quality committee is currently using course completion numbers to monitor the level of qualified firefighters at stations and identify potential training courses to ensure each brigade has the required 50 per cent of qualified firefighters. The committee is reviewing how it could better record data to develop dashboard reports on course completions by cohort, region and brigade, as well as nationally. This would assist the identification of student success, such as completions by ethnicity, region and course component to develop strategies to improve outcomes.

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

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**.

Students achieve the necessary practical skills and knowledge that they apply on the job. These range from increased confidence to use equipment or working in confined spaces, to the understanding of correct terms, and risk management to work effectively on a fire crew. Students also develop personal skills such as resilience to trauma, a key requirement now that firefighters are first responders at

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

medical emergencies and motor vehicle accidents. Feedback gathered by FENZ supports that students are achieving these outcomes.

Prior to and following the practical course held at the National Training Centre, the development of skills and refreshers completed on the job is monitored using a traffic light system, which is part of the organisation's training and progression system used to track individual firefighter competency levels and ensure that refreshers occur at required intervals. The on-job training component helps to ensure training is relevant to the region and station practice, as well as to ensure the required proportion of 50 per cent of qualified firefighters at each station.

The key value of the training is having qualified firefighters to support the well-being of the community in prevention and incident response, and who are able to work alongside other agencies (police, ambulance and local council). The Volunteer Qualified Firefighter qualification also gives volunteers a set of recognised skills that are part of a career pathway. Timely incident reporting is another indicator of the value of training, with data showing reporting delays are reducing. However, it is difficult to directly attribute this to training outcomes but could form part of a wider system of evaluating outcomes.

FENZ is mapping skills within each role to develop progression pathways based on competencies required to carry out the job at various levels, from pre-recruit to recruit, qualified firefighter and on to senior station officer. This will lead to qualifications encompassing core skills, as well as health and safety and risk management. These skills can be applied to different career pathways within the services or comparable roles outside.

Additional information would help to demonstrate that the training is worthwhile for the students and is valued overall. Such information could include how well training outcomes meet station staffing requirements or whether recruits progress to qualified firefighter status or higher, as well as whether the training contributes to volunteer retention.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant 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 Volunteer Qualified Firefighter programme is well matched to the needs of students and fire stations. The programme aims to help facilitate career pathways and to provide the skills for firefighters to work as crew on stations nationally. The off-job training course integrates with the firefighter training and progression system. The students record on-job tasks, which are signed off by station officers or brigade

training officers and recorded in the operational management system. This provides evidence of teaching and learning towards the programme outcomes. An operational skills management system also monitors refresher training requirements, such as first aid skills. Overall, the on-job and off-job training components makes up the programme's 100 hours of learning and assessment.

The programme is delivered by distance and face-to-face training. Volunteers who have passed the recruit training programme are required to demonstrate they have carried out a range of tasks on station and have attended training nights signed off by the station's chief fire officer or a senior officer before they are eligible to sit a pre-course online test. On completion of the test, they attend a four and half day training course at the organisation's National Training Centre in Rotorua where they carry out practical training and assessments. Following the course, volunteers complete another online test. This part of the training is regarded as a consolidation period where skills are confirmed before the students achieve the certificate.

The National Training Centre has a purpose-built training facility used for simulating specialist, high-risk activities such as fire response, under supervised and controlled conditions. Having a centralised training facility helps with the consistency of learning. It also enables students from stations around the country to gain experience in activities not available at their own station, such as loading helicopters, gas detection, and using different pumps. There has been a deliberate shift in focus towards recognising the National Training Centre as a training centre as opposed to just an assessment centre.

The course content is research based and materials are designed using instructional design principles to meet the students' needs. Regular ongoing reviews at the National Training Centre and with the design team ensure that course content is up to date. Learning activities are developed purposefully to engage students using interactive materials and online learning and assessment. The organisation is currently developing more online resources, including case studies, 3-D modelling and videos to support the learning.

Assessment activities are well aligned to learning outcomes and embedded in the practical tasks completed on the course. The practical components are assessed by instructors using guidelines throughout the National Training Centre course. Where possible, naturally occurring evidence is used to assess skills; opportunities to demonstrate skills are available throughout the course. Re-sits are available during the practical course if students do not demonstrate competency at the initial assessment. Assessment of theory knowledge is carried out using a pre-course online test and post-course online consolidation test. Station officers or brigade training officers verify the skills demonstrated on the job that contribute to the overall assessment. Moderation of assessment activities occurs at the development stage. A training quality advisor then checks that National Training

Centre assessments are consistent, and identifies areas for improvement. Peer tutoring also helps to ensure verification and validity of assessment decisions.

The learning environment is well planned; students work in groups with a minimum of two instructors. Students' feedback is gathered at the end of each day to review issues or reflect on training activities. This feedback, along with the lead trainer report is used to inform future training activities and identify any changes to materials. However, feedback from the online learning is not gathered to identify any changes required or understand how well this mode of learning matches students' needs.

The organisation uses a formal change management process to review programme content and delivery. There are good lines of communication to ensure that the learning design team is kept up to date with any changes made at the National Training Centre, and vice versa. FENZ reviewed the training materials in response to feedback about the amount of course information given to students at the start of courses, which led to a change to modular delivery. The popularity of this style of delivery has increased overall demand for the National Training Centre to run volunteer qualified firefighter courses, showing that the training matches the needs of key stakeholders.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

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**.

There are a number of ways in which students are well supported in their training. Students are advised of requirements to become a volunteer qualified firefighter prior to attending. Suitability for the role is checked at various stages and applicants are screened using the organisation's employment procedures. This involves applicants undergoing strict medical and criminal checks to be accepted to work as a volunteer firefighter. Once accepted, the applicants are required to attend regular training events on station monitored by chief fire officers or appointed brigade training officers. This helps to identify whether the student is suitable for the role and ensures they are taught relevant skills at their station before attending a recruit's course. However, formal evidence of assessment of suitability is not part of the formal recruitment checks completed at the National Training Centre. When they have completed the recruit training the students can apply for the volunteer qualified firefighter training.

Following enrolment, the learning resources are sent out to students to read prior to attending the National Training Centre. Previously, the information was lengthy and off-putting, but following a comprehensive review in 2016 the course materials

were reduced to a single handbook and learning guide to make it easier to read and more engaging.

Student feedback shows that they feel well supported on the course and that the learning environment is safe. The online learning tool is used on stations to support students to complete assessments using group sessions, particularly where literacy or numeracy skills are a barrier. A new role created recently aims to help students with completing the on-job training requirements.

1.5 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**.

Comprehensive planning at governance and management level has been carried out since the establishment of FENZ on 1 July 2017, which provides a clear direction for the overall organisation's activities. Plans incorporate the training arm of the organisation, which is responsible for providing training for approximately 13,500 firefighters nationally, of whom around 11,600 are volunteers and include rural and urban firefighting units.

The PTE's planning and direction are supported by the development of strategies designed to link the training programmes across the service. The intention is to have a framework showing the various roles and career progression of a firefighter, both career and volunteer, that covers the rural and urban firefighting positions – from recruit to senior firefighter level – to promote a learning culture across the organisation. The framework will be used to model what a professional pathway would look like within the service and help with future career opportunities within and outside the fire service based on the transferable specialist skills learnt. This is reflected in the organisation's slogan: 'Proud history, bright future'.

Nationally based training provides consistency which benefits the regions. Success is measured by decreased fatalities in the community as a result of response to emergencies or incidents (earthquakes, fires, and motor vehicle accidents) and a decrease in health and safety incidents within the service. The consistency of training aims to help align core skills training and practices when firefighters are co-responding alongside police, local councils, Civil Defence and medical emergency services.

The organisation is in the early stages of operationalising the strategy using whole-of-workplace planning activities, including identifying the technical and leadership roles required. Business planning includes a recruitment plan to cover the roles required to meet training needs, including the recruitment of regional training advisors, training quality advisors, business service coordinators, to also include

positions to cover training needs for the rural sector. The majority of these positions are yet to be filled. However, the training quality committee was recently established to oversee training activities and review outcomes to make improvements to contribute to the training support roles. The committee – which includes the director of training, the education manager, National Training Centre training manager, and training quality advisor – meets quarterly and is informed by regional training managers and programme managers reporting on training outcomes and recommendations for improvements.

The training business service team, based at the National Training Centre, supports the training management team with reporting on course events and future demand. This area is evolving as it identifies relevant reports using the data gathered for better analysis. This will enable better decision-making about future training activities and achievement of different student groups, particularly, gathering of data to help identify how well Māori or Pasifika students achieve.

There is some evidence of improvements to the training as a result of feedback. This is shown in the increased uptake of training following a review of course materials in 2015. This has led to more courses being planned for the remainder of 2017 through to 2018 to meet the increased demand. Reporting on completions is also used to monitor the achievement of qualified firefighter qualifications against the station targets for qualified firefighters.

FENZ has strengthened its feedback systems to ensure the training is meeting needs, such as central operations providing input into training resource development. There is also funding available for research activities to inform training content and ensure that programmes are current and relevant. A potential collaboration is being explored between the learning development team and a Dunedin-based animation company to develop online resources. However, improving the gathering of feedback following course completion, and formalising feedback from senior station officers and brigade training officers would enhance information to improve outcomes.

While the identification of relevant data and reporting on outcomes is under development, there is evidence of effective planning to deliver training to meet organisational goals. Strategic planning and emerging business plans show how the organisation intends to promote achievement. Clear reporting at chief executive and governance level on outcomes, long-term trends, changes, as well as the evaluation of the contribution of the training to goals, will help identify the success of the strategic direction and any improvements required.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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**.

FENZ is managing its important compliance accountabilities using regular programme reviews and reporting to management and the board. A culture of compliance with health and safety is embedded throughout the organisation and is evident in the daily debriefings on courses; the risk management framework is taught within the programme. However, clearer documentation showing review of educational compliance at board and management level would help ensure that compliance is systematically managed, particularly for monitoring compliance with NZQA programme rules.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Volunteer Qualified 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 **Good**.

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that FENZ:

- Implement a system for evaluating and analysing the effectiveness of training and whether the organisation is achieving valued outcomes within reasonable timeframes.
- Analyse the value of the qualification in relation to retention of volunteers and pathways to career progression.
- Include reporting on programme compliance, qualification achievement and the value of qualification outcomes at board and management level.

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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