

Report of External Evaluation and Review

The Learning Connexion Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 10 March 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:	The Learning Connexion Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1 November 1993
Location:	182 Eastern Hutt Road, Taita, Lower Hutt, Wellington
Delivery sites:	Lower Hutt and distance delivery, including delivery at 14 Corrections facilities
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate of Art and Creativity (Level 4)• Diploma of Art and Creativity (Level 5)• Diploma of Art and Creativity (Honours) (Level 6)• Diploma of Art and Creativity (Advanced) (Level 7)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 603 – 272 EFTS (equivalent full-time students); Māori, 182 (30 per cent); Pasifika, 21 (4 per cent); on-site delivery, 26 per cent; distance delivery, 74 per cent International: three students
Number of staff:	35 full-time equivalents, 34 part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	The Learning Connexion holds accreditation and approval for the four programmes listed. No other

active accreditations currently exist.

Distinctive characteristics: The Learning Connexion is a Lower Hutt-based provider of creative art qualifications, delivered through distance or at the on-site campus. In addition to the accredited full-time and part-time qualifications, The Learning Connexion also provides a number of short courses for adults delivered in evening, weekend and block-week classes during the term; as well as children's classes after school, school holiday programmes, and free creativity workshops.

Around 80 per cent of delivery at The Learning Connexion is through distance, while the remainder is on-site delivery.

Two unique programmes are available for students requiring further learning support. The Inclusive Education programme provides support for needs-based learning and deaf and hearing-impaired students. The Restricted Programme engages learners in prison and provides resources to students in Corrections facilities around New Zealand.

Recent significant changes: The Learning Connexion underwent an organisational restructure in June 2015, resulting in a flat 'hive'-based management structure. The chief executive resigned in August 2015, and the organisation is currently focused on ensuring a strategic 'agile' process, and defining the senior leadership roles. In the new structure, the governance is made up of the directors, heads of school, representatives of the executive team, students, external stakeholders, government funding bodies and the external advisory panel. They are responsible for driving the overall pedagogy and philosophy, programme development, networking and trust management. The new management consists of the chief executive and the executive team, representing each of the business and teaching functions of The Learning Connexion, including operations, resources, sales and entry, delivery, the Restricted Programme, and culture and employment. The senior executive is responsible for the running of

The Learning Connexion, involving business planning, reporting, complaints and financial accountability; while the executive team manages strategy, policy and staff, departmental reviews, recruitment, mentoring, area reporting and business and staff growth.

Previous quality assurance history:

NZQA conducted an external evaluation and review (EER) of The Learning Connexion in 2011. NZQA was Highly Confident in the organisation's educational performance, and Confident in the organisation's capability in self-assessment.

A memorandum of understanding was signed with UCOL (Universal College of Learning) at the beginning of 2015, to undertake national external moderation. In November 2015, the moderation report identified that samples met the required level.

Other:

The Learning Connexion is premised on creative processes, and the outcome of training is for students to move on to 'sustainable creativity'. This means continuing to practise creativity in a working environment. Weekly classes over each term, one-week intensive block classes, and evening and weekend classes are available to both full-time and part-time enrolled students. Entry to courses is through achieving lower-level courses, or through recognition of prior learning.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included three focus areas:

- Governance, management and strategy – a mandatory focus area.
- Diploma of Art and Creativity (Honours) (Level 6) – delivered on site and through distance. This programme makes up 27.5 per cent of the total learner cohort of The Learning Connexion, with 167 learners.
- Restricted Programme – delivered entirely by distance to inmates of 14 Corrections facilities across New Zealand. The programme makes up 22 per cent of distance delivery, and 87 learners are currently enrolled.

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.

A face-to-face scoping meeting was held between the lead evaluator, the EER principal advisor, the The Learning Connexion project manager, deputy director and executive team. Potential focus areas were identified and a draft agenda developed as a result of this meeting, to assist in the undertaking of the EER visit. A self-assessment summary and a range of other applicable documents were made available prior to the EER visit.

The EER was conducted in November 2015, over two days. The evaluation team, consisting of two evaluators and an observer, reviewed a range of documentation and met with the following groups:

- Governance representatives consisting of the managing director, deputy director, senior executive, head of school, governance advisor, and senior quality assurance representative.
- Management, consisting of executives from the senior academic board; the Restricted Programme; strategy, culture and employment; and the senior executive, compliance and marketing.
- External stakeholders, consisting of two graduates, three industry partners, a local employer and an advisor.
- Programme leaders from the programme focus areas.
- Tutors, mentors, learners and graduates from the programme focus areas. Two group interviews were held with seven learners and five graduates of the level 6 diploma. Two learners and a graduate from the Restricted Programme were contacted by phone. Security clearance was sought from the Department of Corrections for phone calls to current learners of the Restricted Programme.

Following the on-site visit, interviews with external stakeholders (two community partners) were conducted by phone.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **The Learning Connexion Limited**.

- The Learning Connexion enrolment has consistently grown, and exceeds the internal Māori and Pasifika participation targets. The Learning Connexion also achieves consistently strong completion rates, and benchmarks positively against comparable providers of similar creative arts programmes.
- Graduates gain and grow interpersonal skills within the art environment, which are transferable to employment and the community. Programmes develop entrepreneurial skills for self-sustaining practice, which enables graduates to pathway to employment in galleries, libraries and art retail. Learners engage regularly with internal and external art practitioners, who provide valuable feedback on their work.
- Programmes are designed around the individual needs of each learner, exploring the unique creative processes of each person. This effective process responds to the changing needs of the organisation and the strengths of personnel to undertake appropriate tasks. Learning needs are effectively monitored and accommodated by designated personnel, who engage social services and family in the development of learning plans for learners with special needs.
- Appropriate teaching methods are used, supporting action-learning teaching practice. Recruitment processes are robust and tutors possess practical experience and knowledge in their field, and attain adult education qualifications to assist and qualify their teaching practice. Additionally, tutors have broad knowledge of all programmes delivered at The Learning Connexion. Assessment is appropriately moderated and meets current requirements as per the external moderation report 2015. Internal moderation processes are continually developed with external advice, and staff are supported through training.
- Learner needs are assisted by a learner support group which identifies the appropriate services required to meet learning needs and reduce barriers. An inclusive learning environment enables learners with learning challenges to be fully engaged in classes. Learners, both on-site and distance are also supported through access to an online platform, and ongoing direct contact with tutors and mentors. A learner representative group communicates needs and matters to the academic board, executive team and governance, which are promptly responded to. Pastoral services effectively and successfully support the learners.

- The organisational restructure has been effectively managed, and the new structure responds to an identified need for change and improvement. The strategic vision is led by strong leadership and effectively supported by the executive team and staff. The organisation represents learner and community voices, in particular for key stakeholders involved in programmes. The Māori and Pasifika strategy effectively works towards Tertiary Education Strategy priorities to grow and develop these learners.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **The Learning Connexion Limited**.

- Effective tracking systems monitor completion and achievement of learners' work at 10 per cent, 50 per cent and 80 per cent increments throughout the programme. These increments demonstrate progression of the learner against creative and wellbeing measures, and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and internal targets. However, The Learning Connexion could strengthen its understanding of learner achievement through contact and assessment processes.
- Useful mechanisms exist to collect information on the value of the programmes to the learners and community. Graduate employment surveys and destination data inform The Learning Connexion about learner wellbeing and self-practice and employment pathways in the art sector. Communication with the Department of Corrections ensures regulatory suitability and also ensures processes are appropriate, flexible and responsive to match the department's needs.
- The organisation's creative spiral model and course briefs are primary sources facilitating determination of the learning goals and needs of learners throughout the year, to continue the learners' own art practice, to enable them to exhibit and sell art work or gain part-time or full-time employment. Initial needs are identified in the recruitment processes for programmes, through learner interviews, assessment of creative ability in the creative submission, and diagnostic testing. Ongoing learner contact is maintained, and there are feedback mechanisms such as surveys exist for on-site learners, and an annual review for distance learners.
- A performance management system supports teaching and training opportunities for staff. Learner feedback is collected regularly in formative and summative assessments; evaluations monitoring tutor effectiveness are monitored against an 80 per cent benchmark. However, there is no comprehensive internal moderation occurring and involving all staff, or an organisation-wide appraisal system to understand teaching practices, themes and challenges.

- The Learning Connexion communicates with external agents and families to understand and effectively meet their needs, and to support learners' learning and creativity, including ensuring suitable moderation partnerships and processes. Collaborative approaches help learners and tutors to understand the support needed, and effective strategies are put in place to address these needs. However, the PTE needs to gather evidence of its own comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of guidance and support for learners and graduates.
- The organisational restructure and the chief executive vacancy have provided an impetus for enhanced self-reflection and collaborative management. The vacancy has been well managed, with the development of the senior executive role, supported by the executive group. Organisational processes and systems are transparent, systemic and robust, and reporting and monitoring is regular and meaningful.

Findings¹

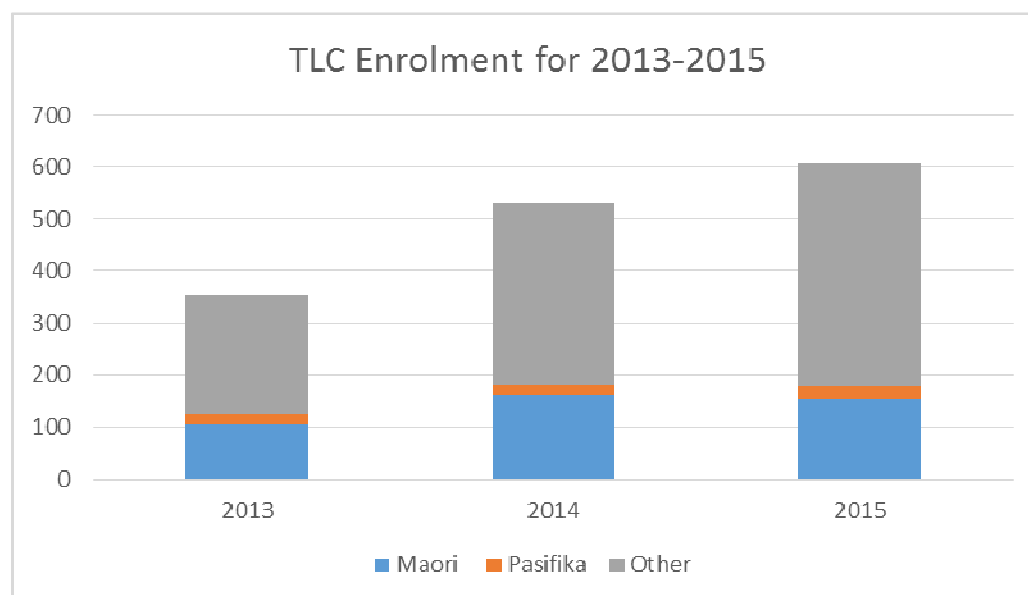
1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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 **Good**.

Overall participation and enrolment rates for The Learning Connexion have increased significantly since 2013, and are appropriately managed by the recruitment of mentors and tutors. Enrolment numbers are tracking positively against previous years. Enrolment comprises 30 per cent Māori (exceeding the internal targets of 25 per cent) and 4 per cent Pasifika learners. Around 20 per cent per cent of learners are under 25 years of age, and 10 per cent are first-time tertiary learners. Graph 1 illustrates the growth in enrolments since 2013.

Graph 1. The Learning Connexion (TLC) enrolments for 2013-2015

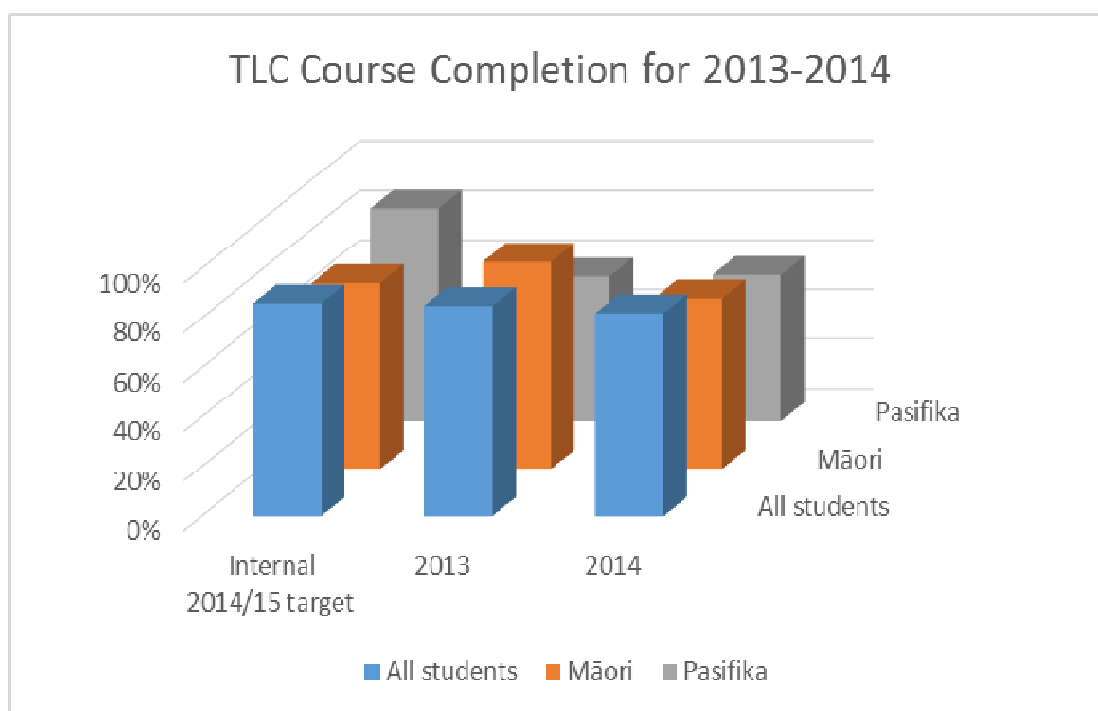


Several benchmarking mechanisms meet the creativity expectations of the industry and the quantitative measures of the TEC. The desired outcomes for learners include attendance, creation of a body of work, completion of Small Starts and major works, and overall commitment to the course. These are effectively tracked on an individual basis through the monitoring of course briefs and ongoing communication between staff and learners. Commitment to the course is measured by learners' ongoing engagement with tutors/mentors, and reflected on at 10 per cent, 50 per cent and 80 per cent increments in the course against course briefs and visual journals. These are effective mechanisms to monitor and respond

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

to challenges identified, including attendance (for on-site delivery) and engagement (for distance) throughout the year.

Graph 2. The Learning Connexion (TLC) course completions for 2013 and 2014



The Learning Connexion uses TEC and internal targets to understand how well learners achieve and benchmarks itself favourably against UCOL. Overall course completion rates across programmes have consistently sat at or above 82 per cent since 2011. Māori learner achievement is on a par with non-Maori. Pasifika learner numbers are small. As Table 1 shows, learner achievement in 2014 was just below the internal target.

Table 1. The Learning Connexion completion rates for 2011-2014

	Internal target 2014-2015	2011	2012	2013	2014
Course completion	86%	83%	85%	85%	82%
Qualification completion	96%	101%	111%	95%	100%
Progression	47% (Māori/Pasifika)	41%	46%	45%	54%
Retention	68%	65%	65%	68%	69%

Course completion for the Diploma of Art and Creativity (Honours) programme has consistently been strong, sitting at 90 per cent since 2013. Comparatively, the Restricted Programme had a cumulative completion rate of 64 per cent between 2011 and 2014, which brings the overall rate to 85 per cent. The Restricted Programme is the leading contributor to the overall completion rates not meeting the internal target. This is largely due to the challenge of consistently tracking these learners. Tracking is affected by the stop/start nature of study for offenders

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due to frequent transfer across Corrections facilities, and individual facility regulations and processes to allow study and resources. While communication to The Learning Connexion about location changes by learners relies heavily on the motivation and processes of each Corrections facility, the PTE has implemented effective communication and monitoring processes to adequately track, locate (where possible) and connect with Restricted Programme learners.

Effective tracking systems monitor completion and achievement of learners' work at 10 per cent, 50 per cent and 80 per cent increments throughout the course year, as well as creative and wellbeing measures and progress against TEC and internal targets.

Reporting of learners' achievement uses a grading system that is suited to measuring the competency of the learner to undertake the journey to produce a body of creative work. A reliable and robust system is used to track progress, analyse the learner development journey, and report achievement and performance data through digital recordings, tutor insights, and formative and summative assessments.

There are some areas where The Learning Connexion has identified that it could strengthen its understanding of learner achievement, and the organisation is in the process of developing several initiatives such as the student management systems' tracking of learner work hours and tutor contact, as well as an employer feedback process.

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

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

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

Graduates, both distance and on-site, experience personal growth development as a result of enrolling and participating in courses offered by The Learning Connexion. Graduates' self-confidence and self-esteem increases from exhibiting to peers and in local galleries. Progress is effectively monitored through an online platform that measures learner progress and engagement in programmes.

Graduates acquire a set of transferable lifelong learning skills such as reflection, self-management and goal identification which contribute to employable skills. As a result of study at The Learning Connexion, some learners intend undertaking further study, or working towards self-employment and business ventures such as designing sports and clothing labels. These goals are identified from graduate research and surveys, and effectively analysed through summative assessments, exit surveys and sector and employer surveys, to identify improvements and challenges in programmes.

The Learning Connexion analysis of the pre- and post-course questionnaire identifies learners' improved holistic wellbeing, assisted by having learnt to engage with the community, to use language appropriate to the style of art, and to develop open minds leading to effective communication. This positive shift is also manifested in ways such as improved communication between Corrections officers and learners as a result of enrolment in the Restricted Programme.

The Learning Connexion increases opportunities for learners to gain employment or develop entrepreneurial skills for self-sustaining practice. Graduates pathway to employment in local galleries, libraries and gift shops, and also produce and sell pieces of work in local exhibitions. Graduate employment surveys, and destination data two years post-graduation, collect responses to increased wellbeing, employment gained, and reflections on organisational practice. In 2014, 67 per cent of graduates continued their own art practice with a large percentage also exhibiting and selling their work. The types of employment gained range from administrative to creative specialists, with some becoming embedded creative workers and support workers. Graduates also indicated that wellbeing grew significantly during study at The Learning Connexion.

Mechanisms, such as emails and social media, help The Learning Connexion to maintain contact with graduates. This is assisted by activities such as Small Start, which involves a requirement to connect with the community to extend creative practice, which has led to permanent employment for some graduates. Associate organisations of Small Start said they positively value learners from The Learning Connexion, and their contribution to the community.

Examples of positive role modelling in the community were heard and seen by the evaluators. Learners contribute to the community through small starts and work placements, scholarships and voluntary community projects such as murals on a skate park in Lower Hutt, and a dedicated exhibition officer to manage exhibition opportunities at Rimutaka Prison for the Restricted Programme learners. These contributions are acknowledged and celebrated by the community and community leaders.

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 **Excellent**.

The programmes are appropriately designed around the learner, using The Learning Connexion creative spiral model as the premise to elaborate on the individual learning goals and needs of each learner, which is at the heart of teaching and learning.

Learners and staff work collaboratively to develop ideas, actions, feedback and review systems (the creative spiral) to understand the creative process for the individual, as well as complete course briefs which are continually monitored throughout the year. The Learning Connexion has a consistent and embedded focus on action learning which is regularly monitored and tested, as was evidenced in the revision of the online platform for a virtual classroom.

Diagnostic testing for learners is reasonable and appropriate and includes conversations to identify goals, prior experience, and an assessment of literacy and numeracy.

Inclusive learning environments are facilitated to enable learners with physical and intellectual impairments to access tertiary art education through a needs-based teaching methodology and appropriate processes. The evaluators heard and saw evidence of resources adjusted to meet the needs of dyslexic learners, such as increasing font size and using bullet points and plain language in text. Similarly, effective resources were developed to meet the needs of deaf and hearing-impaired learners, such as closed captioned course DVDs and a sign language communicator on staff.

Delivery styles are flexible and customised to the learners' delivery mode. This is evidenced by the use of mentors for distance learners, tutors for on-site learners, and a range of activities and short courses such as weekend and evening programmes, and the availability of a wide variety of arts (jewellery, hot art, carving, 3D and painting). The short courses provide a taster to the programmes available at The Learning Connexion.

The Learning Connexion has embedded a process to respond to the changing needs and strengths of the organisation to support learner educational needs. This is evidenced by the sourcing of 'appropriate' resources and people with the relevant expertise and knowledge to undertake or share information about relevant activities, including staff who are practising artists in their fields of expertise.

The need and value of programmes is determined by attendance at weekend and evening classes, tutor experience and learner requests. These have led to the incorporation of 'trial courses' becoming established classes, such as stone carving and photo-shopping, indicating that The Learning Connexion is able to match the needs of learners.

The Learning Connexion understands, responds and adapts their own processes to meet the needs of the stakeholder, as is apparent in interactions with the Department of Corrections. Communication and strong relationships with the department, and The Learning Connexion's ability and willingness to adapt processes, has enabled learners in Corrections facilities to receive, prepare and send work to and from the PTE, and the organisation to effectively manage risk to match the needs of the department. This has contributed to the longstanding delivery to learners in Corrections facilities.

Learners are exposed to, connect, and regularly engage with authentic practitioners of creativity and art who provide feedback to the learners' work. Additionally, a wide selection of subject areas are offered as a medium for learners to develop and evolve their creative thinking to become self-sustaining artists.

Ongoing tutor/mentor and learner communication, and feedback mechanisms exist through twice-yearly surveys for on-site learners and annual review of the block courses for distance learners. These mechanisms are used to inform and improve the delivery of programmes and activities. Information reporting learner achievement is robust and informative. Summative assessments with learners are undertaken annually and are effectively measured against the course briefs, providing useful information for learners to pathway to the next level of qualifications.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

As mentioned, delivery of programmes is flexible and suited to the individual. Delivery modes include distance and/or on-site learning. Teaching methods support action learning, self-directed learning, and the exploration of new ideas that inform direction and focus. The creative spiral is a positive mechanism that ensures consistent monitoring of learner needs and achievement along a continuum. Learners and staff spoke positively and meaningfully of the creative spiral, indicating the extent to which this mechanism is embedded in the culture of the organisation.

Tutors have high expectations of learners to develop and extend their creative processes. This is apparent from the encouragement by staff to learners to undertake further study and exhibit work in local galleries and exhibitions. Learners discussed their significant creative transformation as a result of the encouragement and perseverance of tutors to help them to reach the expectations of the programmes.

Staff are suitably experienced and there are effective mechanisms to help ensure they have a good understanding of the programmes delivered. Appropriate specialists and field experts are engaged for programme delivery, such as for rāanga (weaving).

Recruitment processes are robust and ensure staff fit the organisational direction, are practising artists, and have adequate teaching and/or tutoring experience. Around three-quarters of staff are former learners of The Learning Connexion and understand the learning needs and programmes from a learner perspective. Staff inductions are suitable and a buddy system exists for tutoring and assessment, with added coaching where needed.

Staff development days are held four times a year, and provide organisational and programme updates that staff find beneficial to their roles. As such, learners are regularly exposed to and connected with authentic practitioners of creativity and art, not only by tutors and mentors, but also by meeting graduates who give presentations and are active art practitioners.

Feedback on the effectiveness of tutors and mentors is sought in evaluations, and responses are monitored by the executive team against an 80 per cent benchmark for tutor effectiveness, whereby investigation and intervention is implemented if needed.

Learner progress is purposefully monitored through visual diaries, independent study worklogs, photographic evidence of creative processes, one-to-one conversations, and the online platform (virtual classroom). Formative and summative assessments are regularly completed by learners throughout the year, as well as formative assessments by mentors. Feedback is overall positive for tutor effectiveness as well as programme delivery and value.

Assessment and moderation processes are overseen by the academic board. Assessment is transparent and expectations are clearly outlined in handbooks for learners.

Moderation is externally facilitated and internally undertaken by a designated assessment and moderation group in conjunction with delivery and programme support staff. Recently formalised external moderation arrangements follow established moderation processes with UCOL, and all moderation requirements were met.

Internal moderation includes robust discussions between moderators, as well as internal training opportunities including on-site meetings and Skype sessions. Learning from formal and informal moderation informs teaching practice.

Internal moderation processes have recently been strengthened and are being improved with external advice from a consultant, and the implementation of action plans and sampling strategies. Internal moderation practices involving peers/staff across the organisation could be developed to allow for consistent and systematic teaching and assessment that is embedded and robust.

Effective and robust processes are embedded to monitor and manage plagiarism, including reverse image identification using online platforms to compare learners' and existing work in the public domain, thereby identifying whether work is original or taken from another source. This has been a reliable resource, and evidence of plagiarism has resulted in further investigation of learners' work, consultation with family, and on occasion an imposed penalty.

Regular communication systems are embedded in the organisation, including formal and informal meetings and open forum discussions. These provide effective opportunities for sharing teaching methods and information.

The Learning Connexion monitors and develops action plans for engagement with learners, involving communication and language strategies and delivery. These include peer observation of phone calls, and class observations of staff undertaking the certificate in adult teaching. There is also informal reflection among tutors and mentors about teaching effectiveness, including discussions on strategies. A tutor appraisal process includes observations and conversations with staff involving quality of teaching, responsiveness to learners, class content and planning. This could be further developed across the organisation for consistency of appraisal systems, and to better understand at a management level teaching practice, themes and challenges.

Where required, internal and external professional development opportunities are provided to all staff, such as those coordinated by Ako Aotearoa. Professional development includes adult teaching and mentoring workshops, first aid, inclusion training, induction, and moderation and effectively engaging Māori and Pasifika learners, such as cultural sensitivity. Staff professional development records for each staff member documents all internal and external training, and shows that staff regularly attend this training. Tutors identified the benefit of the training for teaching practice and engaging a wide range of learners.

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**.

Initial interviews with learners identify learning and other support required. Learners' needs are identified by the images and portfolios submitted; and learners are matched with appropriate mentors. The Learning Connexion uses innovative methods of assessing readiness for programmes, such as the 'travelling egg', which tests the presence of creative ability and processes desired by the organisation, and supports the identification of learners' suitability for the programmes.

Where appropriate, staff with relevant expertise are drawn on to facilitate learning plans or learning support. This has benefited learners with learning challenges, such as dyslexia, autism, hearing or vision impairments.

The Learning Connexion responds to literacy and numeracy needs on a case-by-case basis, and the evaluators heard evidence of staff who work with families to develop a plan for these learners, using the creative spiral and individual learning plan. Similarly, the course briefs (referred to in Findings 1.2) are monitoring tools to assess a learner's progress against their identified goals. Where work is not being achieved, a learning plan is developed to assist the learner.

As some of the programmes can be delivered by distance and on site, the online interface has been an effective tool for learners to gather feedback from peers and tutors/mentors on their work. In response to the vulnerability that online platforms

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create, the interface is under revision to better suit the learner and organisational needs and expectations. Concurrently, learner handbooks and mentor and tutor contact support the learners' understanding of programme expectations and structure.

Positive tutor/mentor and learner relationships facilitate constructive communication. Learners indicated that tutors and mentors are the first port of call to address any issues. A learner representative group reports to the academic board on all learner needs. Additionally, an easily located logbook provides an opportunity for learners to give feedback safely. The Learning Connexion responds promptly and directly to feedback given through this mechanism.

Communication with learners and support continues post-graduation, and evidence was heard from graduates who maintain contact with and receive advice from The Learning Connexion. As well as summative and formative assessments, an exit survey is also completed, collecting information on the value of the programme for the individual. This information informs and supports programme design. The organisation understands the effectiveness of its guidance and support. However, the PTE needs to gather evidence of the effectiveness of guidance and support for the learners and graduates.

Further assistance and support for learners includes a subsidised bus and an 0800 number for distance learners. The 0800 number is particularly significant for learners of the Restricted Programme to ensure they are able to make contact with mentors. All staff of this cohort are highly responsive to the needs of these callers. Additionally, success is celebrated with a graduation for on-site and distance learners.

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 **Excellent**.

The Learning Connexion has strong leadership from the director, driving the strategic vision of the organisation, which includes a Māori and Pasifika strategy to grow this cohort. This is evidenced through Māori and Pasifika dialogue and community engagements such as the iwi radio station.

The recent organisational restructure resulted in the reassignment of roles, and the development of a flat 'hive' structure that promotes interconnectedness and flow of information across the organisation. This was evidenced by the transparency and inclusiveness of all staff in conversations across the organisation, drawing on the strengths and specialist knowledge to perform activities or share information.

The revised organisational structure responds to the need for more agility and interrelation of senior management and governance. The vacated chief executive role has been effectively managed by the development of the senior executive role, and the executive group and hive structure, as part of an agile response to the organisation's needs. Hierarchy is less evident, and the value of the collective and collaborative management of the organisation is heightened. This is an effective and well-managed interim measure while the recruitment process for a chief executive is being undertaken. The senior executive role manages the daily running and undertakes and compiles the regular reporting to the academic board and the executive team. The managing and deputy directors drive and maintain the direction of the organisation.

A knowledgeable executive team is meaningfully connected across the organisation, and is representative of key delivery hubs. Succession planning for the directors' responsibilities is also undertaken to share these across the executive team and organisation. This is embedded in the revised organisational structure. However, the directors remain fully engaged in the PTE's governance.

Learner representatives inform the executive team and governance of matters affecting learners, and these are embedded in planning and decision-making processes. Management is regularly informed about learner achievement, and performance data is shared with the academic and executive teams. There is effective and robust data collection, recording, analysing, reporting and monitoring, with a dedicated person to input, interpret and produce reports. The monthly governance meetings provide regular updates about learner achievement, and there are weekly reports to the executive team.

Reporting is transparent and systemic between the academic board and the governance team for educational outcomes and functions such as assessment and moderation, quality assurance, mentoring and programme review. This information informs areas of development and knowledge to advance the organisation, and regularly keeps the governance body abreast of educational outcomes, such as degree development, the mandatory review of qualifications, technology needs, future growth, marketing and programme updating. Robust marketing processes are supported by information systems, and effectively monitored regularly.

The Learning Connexion embodies diversity, and there are meaningful stakeholder relationships with local and wider community groups. These are maintained through professional engagements, learner support, recruitment initiatives, programme delivery, event management, work placements and creative opportunities. As an example, The Learning Connexion works collaboratively with a number of providers located locally and across New Zealand to deliver programmes to schools or the Restricted Programme to learners in Corrections facilities. Additionally, a formal memorandum of understanding was signed with UCOL to undertake reciprocal external moderation. Informal and formal feedback is sought from external stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the relationship. Regular ongoing communication is maintained with stakeholders.

Overall, The Learning Connexion effectively engages internally and externally with stakeholders, staff and students to understand needs and outcomes. Effective self-assessment ensures programmes and the organisation are informed by robust data collection, analysis, reporting and monitoring. The new organisational structure reflects the interconnectedness and strengths-based approach to meeting needs by using expert skills and knowledge to inform areas of development. The Learning Connexion regularly reflects on achievement and performance, and responds appropriately to required improvements. Self-assessment by governance and management is effective and supports educational achievement.

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: Diploma of Art and Creativity (Honours) (Level 6)

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Restricted Programme

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

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

Recommendations

Recommendations emerge in the body of this report for the external evaluation and review.

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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