External Evaluation and Review Report

The Learning Connexion Limited

Date of report: 22 March 2024

About The Learning Connexion Limited

The Learning Connexion Limited (TLC) provides training in creativity processes and offers creativity qualifications via distance, on site and for learners who are in prison.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	182 Eastern Hutt Road, Taita¸ Lower Hutt, Wellington
Eligible to enrol intl students:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 303 learners – 209 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)
	Māori 59 EFTS; Pasifika 11 EFTS
	2022 – 43 per cent of learners self-identified as having a disability; 2023 data was not provided
	International: 0.75 equivalent full-time students (one learner)
Number of staff:	23 full-time, 26 part-time
TEO profile:	The Learning Connexion Ltd – provider page on NZQA website
	The Learning Connexion has been delivering to learners in prisons since 2005 and has a memorandum of understanding with Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Corrections).
Last EER outcome:	At the previous EER, conducted on 26 November 2019, NZQA was Confident in TLC's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	• New Zealand Certificate in Creativity (Level 4) ID:121494 Ref: 2869-1
	• Diploma of Art and Creativity (Advanced) (Level 7) ID:106751, Ref: PC9305-5

MoE number: 9410

NZQA reference: C55172

Dates of EER visit: 14-16 November 2023

Summary of results

TLC facilitates the learning of creative processes through creative art programmes. These are delivered in supportive and inclusive environments to learners with varied educational backgrounds. The programmes are highly valued by key stakeholders and meet learner and stakeholder needs. These programmes are particularly important and have valuable outcomes for learners who are in prison. Self-assessment is generally strong, but ongoing financial challenges have impacted the organisation. The effectiveness of improvements to achieve financial stability is still to be determined.

Confident in educational performance

- Comprehensive and individualised guidance and support underpins generally strong learner achievement. Learners gain lifelong skills and knowledge that prepare them to pathway to further study. They can apply their skills and add value to whānau and communities. Learners complete creative projects which lead to financial and personal rewards. Priority learner achievement is variable and requires closer focus to understand learner needs and the support required to be successful.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- TLC works closely with key industry partners, government, community agencies and other education stakeholders to understand their training needs and the requirements for creative and artistic areas. The PTE is effective in meeting stakeholder needs, and the stakeholders recognise and highly regard the value of the training.

- Tutorial, mentor and support staff are knowledgeable, with industry experience and connections. They provide a supportive and encouraging learning environment for individual learners. Individual learner progress is comprehensively tracked to enable wraparound support and guidance when needed. TLC has begun to integrate te ao Māori into the creativity programmes and across the organisation.

- Since 2021, TLC has failed to meet the Tertiary Education Commission's (TEC's) financial viability requirements. TLC is working closely

with the TEC and an external financial organisation to give effect to sustainable changes towards financial viability. TLC has restructured governance and management into a more agile team that is able to respond appropriately to challenges.

- The PTE has also made several improvements to its systems and processes. The impact of these changes is still to be seen.

Key evaluation question findings[1]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Overall achievement data for all programmes from 2022 indicates that learners have strong course completions (82 per cent), although there was a drop in the achievement of qualifications (66 per cent).[2] Since 2020, qualification completions have consistently fallen, in particular in the level 5 and 6 programmes. It is unclear whether TLC understands the reasons for this drop, which may prevent self-assessment rectifying the issue. Average qualification completion rates for Māori (54.8 per cent) and Pasifika (56.5 per cent) are not on par with other learner groups (77.2 per cent) across the reporting period (2019-23).[3] The majority of Māori and Pasifika learners attending TLC are in prison. Sixty-five per cent of these learners also identify as low achievers, having left secondary school with only NCEA Level 1, School Certificate, or equivalent. Stakeholder feedback indicates that personal and wellbeing challenges have further impacted these learners' completions. The large percentage of Māori and Pasifika learners in the distance programmes also do not achieve well. In an effort to respond appropriately, TLC has analysed the reasons[4] why these incarcerated priority learners have not been achieving. Some measures have been instituted, but the effectiveness of these is still to be seen. TLC has started to collect data for learners with a lived experience of disability. In 2022, 43 per cent of students self-identified as having a disability. Achievement

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

[2] Data from TEC Ngā Kete.

[3] Data supplied by the PTE. Refer to tables in Appendix 1 for further details.

[4] TLC has identified several personal issues involved in the lack of achievement, such as learners gaining early release from prison, moving to other facilities, or having their privileges removed. These changes may impact their ability to complete their study.

Final

| | information for these students has not been disaggregated and therefore not analysed. Data for 2023 has also not been provided.

TLC has developed some systems to analyse achievement data. There is an opportunity to further disaggregate and analyse longitudinal achievement data by mode of delivery, programme and priority group. This should help TLC to better understand learner needs at programme level and the appropriate support required for learners in the differing modes of delivery. |
|---|---|
| Conclusion: | Strong learner achievement is having positive impacts on the learners' lives. Self-assessment has improved and some factors impacting achievement are understood. There are opportunities to strengthen analysis of priority group data and the effectiveness of actions taken. |

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	The creativity programmes focus on whole-of-person development through the creative process. In a 2023 survey, 67 per cent of learners said that personal development was the primary purpose for study, while 32 per cent were seeking a qualification. TLC's key stakeholders acknowledge the strong and ongoing demand for the training, which reflects TLC's credibility and the quality of the training. Learners appreciate the flexible, blended delivery approach which allows them to work or care for their families while studying.

Learners, graduates and other stakeholders attest to gaining life-changing skills, improved self-confidence, boosts in morale and significant development of positive personal attributes and a sense of purpose. These are the most important outcomes for second chance-learners in long-term incarceration.

Mainstream learners develop and continue to use their skills in research capability, critical thinking, problem-solving and innovative thinking well after the programme ends. Some learners pathway to next-level programmes |

	within TLC or other institutions. Learners attest to being more discerning about valid and legitimate bodies of knowledge. Graduates produce creative work that contributes to communities and bodies of knowledge, both in New Zealand and internationally. They are able to make valuable industry connections to exhibit their work, or are commissioned to produce art pieces. These are significant accomplishments and evidence of the value of the training.
	The long-term relationship with large Māori whānau, and engagement with Māori consultants has led to greater understanding of how to develop indigenous creative projects with learners and community bodies. TLC is integrating and embedding te ao Māori into future programme content.
	TLC collects and analyses multiple sources of feedback from graduates, mentors and Ara Poutama Aotearoa management. The feedback confirms the significant impact and high value of the programmes. Several learners indicate an intention to return to further study, although the actual number returned is not clear. It is unclear how this data informs further actions for improvement and decision-making.
	Given that the philosophy behind the programmes is to develop people to use their creativity in any context, not necessarily in art forms, there is an opportunity to collect and analyse data regarding the use of the creative skills in non-art contexts.
Conclusion:	TLC education is highly valued by all stakeholders. A strong community and industry network ensures stakeholder needs are well met. There is an opportunity to consolidate data with more focus on overall valued outcomes for graduates.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Programmes have been robustly reviewed in consultation with key creative artists and industry specialists who advise about community and industry needs. Learner feedback has prompted significant work to restart support for cultural needs and align future programmes to matauranga Māori and te ao Māori. Feedback from learners, staff and professionals informs programme change. Learning environments are well resourced, both online and on site. Learners have an individual learning plan which clearly defines the learning journey. Tutors and mentors provide expert and professional guidance and support for activities that are aligned to the individual learner's areas of interest. Planned checkpoints allow opportunities for formative assessment and regular progress monitoring of the learner, which leads to timely responses to learner needs. Feedback shows how this significantly helps learners progress. Academic standards are well monitored and discussed with staff to inform further actions or improvements. A regular and robust internal moderation process mitigates against potential fraud, and clear assessment integrity processes are maintained. Moderation verifies that the assessment criteria has been achieved and assessment decisions are fair and valid. External moderation is conducted annually and follows the same process as internal moderation, with an independent external moderator. The moderator's findings confirm assessor decisions. TLC responds well to the findings of the moderation, and reviews its policies and procedures as a result of the feedback and the findings.
Conclusion:	Programmes are relevant and learner-centred. Learning is supported by experienced and qualified staff. Self-assessment is used purposefully to review and enhance teaching and learning.

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

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learners are supported very well from the start of a programme. Learner goals are well understood at initial contact to ensure learners' choices are well informed. TLC has rolling intakes which require programmes to be individualised and offer learners flexible learning options. The organisation is linked to an education trust which provides scholarships to students who require financial support.
	Mentors and tutors discuss progress and provide thoughtful ideas to challenge learners' thinking. Appropriate pastoral care and wellbeing support provides a wraparound service for on-site and distance learners. Learners in prison receive helpful academic support from mentors, and Ara Poutama internal staff provide the necessary wellbeing support. This well-organised collaboration provides good support for these learners.
	Tutorial staff have astute awareness of learners experiencing barriers to learning such as emotional barriers and learning disabilities. Such barriers are minimised through support strategies to ensure the learners receive appropriate assistance. It is not clear how well these strategies lead to successful outcomes.
	An inclusive learning environment now includes cultural opportunities, te ao Māori and tikanga embedded into future programmes. The creation of Te Roopu is guiding a more cultural focus in the teaching space, and staff capability is improving.
	The learner voice is captured through learner representatives who attend academic board meetings. The tutors are invited to attend student meetings once a month. Learner, tutorial and mentor feedback is collected to inform and review the Code of Practice and inform changes.
	TLC is making changes to its processes for supporting international students. Currently one international student

	is supported weekly by a specific mentor. A revision of agents is a work in progress. During the EER interviews, feedback from level 7 programme learners highlighted some inconsistencies in communicating assessment expectations and the assessment process. There is an opportunity to improve communication and provide clarity on expectations for TLC's teaching and assessment practices. These do not follow mainstream practice and can be confusing to learners who have engaged with other tertiary providers.
Conclusion:	TLC has mostly effective contributing processes to provide support to the on-site, distance and restricted programme learners. Some analysis on the effectiveness of priority learner support for would inform decisions. Timely feedback and appropriate responses to learner concerns and needs would be beneficial.

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

Performance:	**Marginal**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	TLC has a clear organisational purpose and direction, underpinned by a strong vision set out by the founding director and well understood by staff at all levels. Over the last four years, TLC has experienced financial difficulties and had to develop measures to reduce risk and improve the financial situation. The current management structure was formed in early 2023 to improve the business direction. The PTE is being supported by an external financial advisor to reduce the risks and support viability action plans. This has had a positive impact, and some improvement can be seen. However, Covid lockdowns and funding changes have impacted TLC significantly. TLC acknowledges this and has realigned its goals to respond to the new challenges. The impact of these changes on the organisation's financial sustainability is still to be determined.

	Clear communication processes ensure staff input supports effective decision-making and actions for ongoing improvement of the business.

Data analysis has improved since the last EER and is effectively used to inform management decisions. The academic board ensures that academic compliance, programme review and moderation, and assessment and course development are well considered.

Recruitment and induction of staff is purposeful to contribute different strengths to the organisation. Tutorial staff are encouraged to complete adult teaching qualifications. Tutorial staff keep current with changes and the development of new techniques and technologies. Staff are valued and are well supported by management. Professional development, including cultural capability, is ongoing. Class resources are appropriate for teaching online, and tools are available in several on-site production workshops.

There is a strong focus on addressing funding shortfalls and realigning the business and become a more sustainable business. However, the impact of these changes is still to be seen. |
| Conclusion: | A newly formed management team has been reflective and strategic in implementing change to support the knowledgeable and experienced academic and support teams to ensure important organisational goals are being met. However, the compounding financial challenges have not been resolved and it is still too early to tell whether the measures taken will be successful. |

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	TLC is meeting most of its compliance requirements, with compliance responsibilities managed by a compliance team.
	Some of TLC's key compliance accountabilities being met, are:
	• NZQA attestations and returns have been provided within required timeframes.
	• TLC has sound processes for monitoring programme delivery so that it occurs as approved, and programme review is purposeful and well informed. Effective internal and external moderation processes validate that assessment outcomes are appropriate.
	• TLC's self-review of the Code of Practice[5] is a sound process, involving relevant staff. Responsibilities under the Code of Practice for international students have been well managed, and a review to strengthen processes is ongoing.
	• TLC has been delivering to learners in prisons since 2005 and continues to meet related compliance requirements.
	TLC has published a complaints procedure on their website, and a complaints register is available on request. A health and safety register is in place to monitor any incidents. At the time of the EER, no significant events had occurred. Staff are police vetted to meet the requirements of Ara Poutama Aotearoa.
	TLC has under-delivered on its TEC funding plan for three years of the reporting period and continues to be a high risk. TLC continues to work with an independent financial advisor and the TEC, and improvements are ongoing.
Conclusion:	TLC is meeting most of its key compliance requirements. Work is ongoing to address funding and delivery challenges and meeting TEC requirements.

[5] The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021

Focus areas

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

2.1 New Zealand Certificate in Creativity (Level 4) ID: 121494, Ref: 2869-1

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learners in this programme are mostly on the distance or restricted programme. Qualification completions for 2020-23 have remained constantly good, although the significant parity gap in Māori learner completions continues. TLC understands the reasons for low completions occurring in the restricted programmes. However, data for Māori learners on the distance and on-site level 4 programme suggests there is an ongoing parity gap in those modes of delivery as well.
Conclusion:	There is strong evidence of the value TLC provides to relevant stakeholders, graduates and learners, in particular those with significant challenges and those in prison. There is an opportunity for TLC to strengthen its analysis of achievement data across the different modes of ethnicity to better understand achievement.

2.2 Diploma of Art and Creativity (Advanced) (Level 7) ID: 106751, Ref: PC9305-5

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Learner achievement is generally strong across all years. Learners gain important knowledge and transferable skills. There is an opportunity to strengthen the communications process to better inform learners about the programme and assessment expectations.
Conclusion:	A learner-centred model of teaching and assessment underpins learner success.

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that The Learning Connexion Limited:

- Review achievement data for priority learner groups (Māori, Pasifika and disabled) in all programmes with the intention of identifying factors that may influence their success or progress.

- Consider ways to gather feedback from key stakeholders that includes valued outcomes for graduate destination data that is non-art related.

- Develop whole-of-organisation strategies to support Pasifika and disabled learners, including: specific support for these learners and development of the cultural capability of staff.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

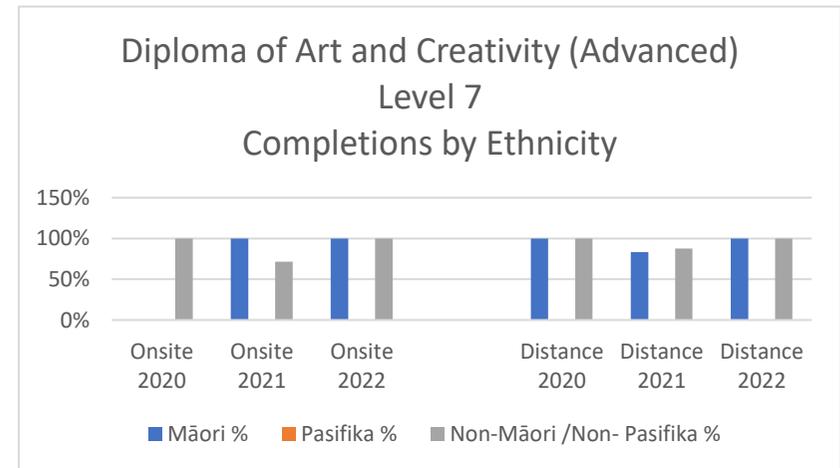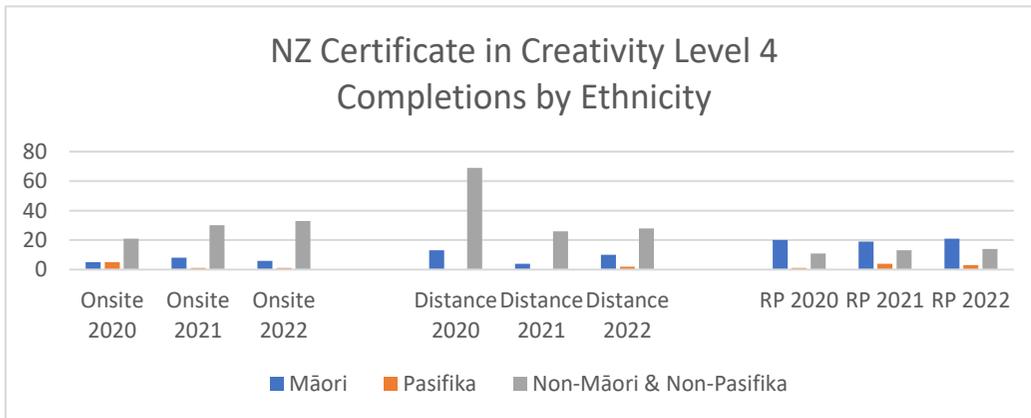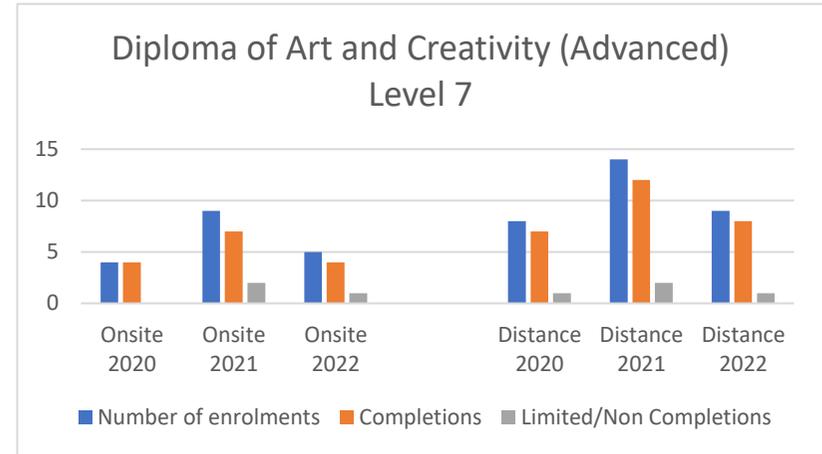There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix 1

Data provided by The Learning Connexion Ltd[6]

Level 4	No. enrolments	Māori enrol	Pasifika enrol	Non-Māori and non-Pasifika enrol	Completions	Māori	Pasifika	Non-Māori and non-Pasifika	Limited/non-completions
On site 2020	35	6	5	24	31	5	5	21	4
On site 2021	49	15	1	33	39	8	1	30	10
On site 2022	45	8	2	35	40	6	1	33	5
Distance 2020	115	24	2	91	82	13	0	69	33
Distance 2021	52	10	2	39	30	4	0	26	22
Distance 2022	53	15	2	36	40	10	2	28	12

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[6] RP represents learners in the restricted programme at Ara Poutama Aotearoa

This report is draft only and is subject to checking by The Learning Connexion Limited for factual accuracy.

RP 2020	59	36	6	17	32	20	1	11	27
RP 2021	51	32	5	19	32	19	4	13	19
RP 2022	88	59	8	21	38	21	3	14	38
Level 7	**Number of enrolments**	**Māori**	**Pasifika**	**Non-Māori and non-Pasifika**	**Completions**	**Māori**	**Pasifika**	**Non-Māori and non-Pasifika**	**Limited/non-completions**
On site 2020	4	0	0	4	4	0	0	4	0
On site 2021	9	2	0	7	7	2	0	5	2
On site 2022	5	2	1	2	4	2	0	2	1
Distance 2020	8	1	1	6	7	1	0	6	1
Distance 2021	14	6	0	8	12	5	0	7	2
Distance 2022	9	2	0	6	8	2	0	6	1

NZ Certificate in Creativity Level 4

Diploma of Art and Creativity (Advanced) Level 7

NZ Certificate in Creativity Level 4
Completions by Ethnicity

Diploma of Art and Creativity (Advanced)
Level 7
Completions by Ethnicity
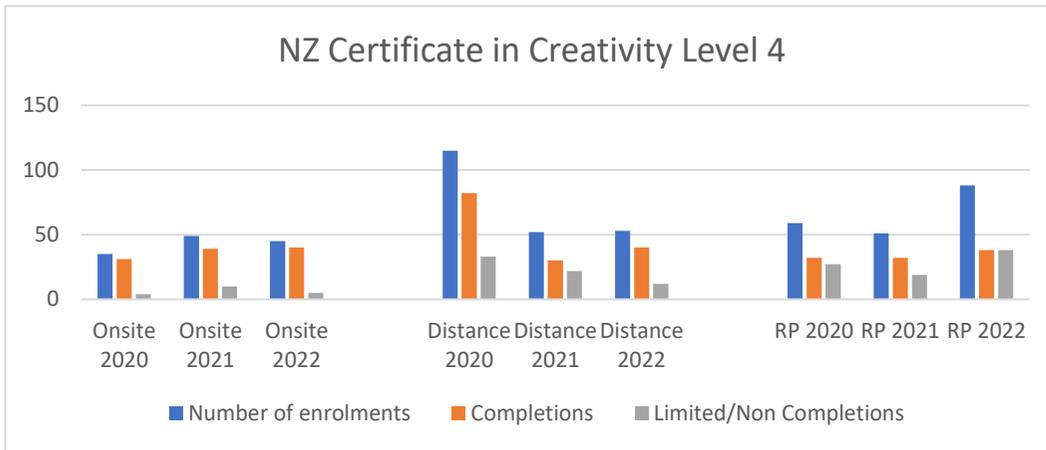
Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. 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 fraud[7]*

- *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.*

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[7] 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.

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Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*

- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs excluding universities, and*

- *maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, micro-credentials and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022. 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). All rules cited above are available at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz