Report of External Evaluation and Review

Horowhenua Learning Centre Trust

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 2 December 2011

Contents

MoE Number: 9535

NZQA Reference: CO5585

Date of EER visit: 21 and 22 September 2011

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

Location:	152 Bath Street, Levin
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1 May 1994
Number of students:	103 domestic students (60 EFTS)
Number of staff:	16 full-time and eight part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	• National Certificate in Security (Site Strand) (Level 3) • National Certificate in Hospitality (Introductory Cookery) (Level 2) • National Certificate in Hospitality (Basic Cookery) (Level 3) • National Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1) • National Certificate in Work and Community Skills (Supported Learning) (Level 1) • Unit standards towards National Certificate in Community Support Services (Core Competencies) (Level 3)
Sites:	Horowhenua Learning Centre Trust (HLC) has two additional sites in Lower Hutt and Palmerston North solely delivering security training.
Distinctive characteristics:	HLC delivers vocational courses (13 weeks to full year) at mostly levels 1-3 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, including security, hospitality, and care workforce training, and

foundation and employment training for adults, youth, and people with learning disabilities. HLC is the sole provider of security training in the region. HLC also delivers workplace literacy programmes to small and medium-sized businesses, short upskill training courses to business, STAR courses to schools, and a supported employment service.

Courses are delivered using funding from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). HLC has considerable Māori student participation – between 30 and 43 per cent over the last five years.

Recent significant changes: A management restructure at the end of 2009 resulted in the appointment of an operations manager in 2010. A business relationship manager was appointed in January 2011.

A further training site was recently established to provide security training in Palmerston North from August 2011. A new Foundation Focused Training Opportunities course commenced in February 2011. The Care Workforce programme was redeveloped from a 19 to a 13-week course in 2011. Business administration and computing courses (levels 1-4) were closed in 2010.

HLC is currently growing in the area of business training and has undertaken a related rebranding exercise. This growth includes the delivery of literacy training and the introduction of short courses to local businesses.

Previous quality assurance history: HLC was previously quality assured by NZQA by audit in August 2007 and mostly met the requirements of the then standard, Quality Assurance Standard One. Five requirements not met were being addressed at the time of that audit.

HLC met all NZQA national external moderation requirements in 2009. In 2010, assessment materials required modification for two unit standards and related scripts. One unit standard was not approved and related scripts did not meet the national standard.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review included the mandatory focus area of governance, management, and strategy. In addition, the following focus areas were evaluated:

- Security training

- Targeted training programmes (Adventures in Learning, Care Workforce, Community and Work Skills).

Security training was selected as a focus area because it is one of two Student Achievement Component (SAC)-funded programmes delivered and the sole programme offered at the Lower Hutt site. The targeted training programmes focus area enabled consideration of the three programmes delivered at the main Levin site and represents approximately one-third of HLC's trainees. This focus area included one MSD and two TEC-funded programmes, for youth and adults and for trainees with a learning disability.

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 external evaluation and review was conducted over two days by two external lead evaluators who visited both the Levin and Lower Hutt training sites. The evaluation involved engagement with:

- The chair and members of the trust board

- The senior management team, including the chief executive, operations manager, and administration manager

- Stakeholders of HLC, including employers of HLC's trainees

- Staff, students, and graduates from the focus area programmes selected

- The business relationship manager.

Documents sighted included a range of self-assessment, planning, and strategy documents, and a variety of quantitative data relating to student achievement and satisfaction, and related analysis.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Horowhenua Learning Centre Trust.**

All EER participants identified the significant life-changing achievements many students make at HLC. Numerous narratives demonstrated the significant gains made in students' communication, confidence, participation, grooming, health, and overall well-being. Individual learning plans are a key process utilised across the organisation to identify and match the needs of the whole person.

Consistently good course completion rates, as benchmarked by HLC across time, have mostly been achieved, averaging 62 per cent in the last five years. Targeted funded courses have good credit achievement rates, exceeding the TEC's 20 credit per student requirement in 2009 and 2010. This is significant for learners who had difficulty achieving in previous learning environments. It confirms feedback that the HLC learning environment is very engaging, relevant, and supportive.

Course and qualification completions for SAC-funded courses have mostly met or exceeded TEC requirements. In the period 2007-2009, security training completions ranged between 82 and 86 per cent. Retention, at 82 and 100 per cent in 2009 and 2010 respectively, confirms feedback regarding tutors' sector knowledge and relevant and engaging teaching approaches.

Work experience provided for all students (and diverse experiences) is highly valued as it helps students to experience different opportunities to develop pathways, is important for employment preparation, and leads to employment.

HLC stakeholders interviewed highly regarded the nature and relevance of the training delivered at HLC, as confirmed by the consistently good labour market outcomes being achieved. Over 2007-2009 these outcomes averaged around 70 per cent across all courses, with some fluctuations under the 60 per cent TEC requirement. Outcomes have been assisted by HLC's strong stakeholder connections, niche courses that meet industry demand, and internal processes, including post-placement support involving a focus on opportunities for trainees who leave without employment.

The governance and management team has strong connections to the community and identify and respond to opportunities to enhance outcomes for HLC trainees, as well as the community on an ongoing basis. Recently, this has been evident through short courses being developed for business, appointment of a business relationship manager to further industry connections, and the work the chief executive is contributing to a regional initiative to seek enhanced opportunities for youth in the region.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Horowhenua Learning Centre Trust.**

HLC has well-established formal and informal self-assessment processes at all levels of the organisation to capture data from different key sources and use it to regularly evaluate all programmes and activities across the organisation.

Informal self-assessment processes work well for HLC due to small classes, close relationships between staff, students, and management, and consistent application across the organisation. This includes: daily student observations to monitor well-being; staff discussions of issues arising; weekly student debriefs to review work placements; regular employer engagement to understand student progress and employer needs; and governance and management's involvement in community initiatives to inform HLC programme development. The regularity of these activities enables immediate responses to issues identified. Formal self-assessment activities build on informal processes and include:

- Ongoing review of learner pathway plans to understand learner progress and to identify additional support and other actions where needed

- Monthly academic forums and reporting to review assessment and achievement data, attendance and withdrawals, analysis of which is used to reflect on the effectiveness of teaching and areas requiring further work

- Board members' review of students' academic and personal development to ensure achievements meet funding requirements and organisational goals

- Course evaluations used by HLC to review teaching and course content

- Programme reviews at the end of all courses using stakeholder feedback, labour market outcomes information, student satisfaction data, and credit achievement, course, and qualification completion data.

Achievement and outcomes data is analysed by course, gender, and ethnicity, over time and against organisation and TEC-required targets. These methods are used by HLC to drill down to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the data and to identify where specific action may need to be taken.

HLC provided many examples demonstrating its use of self-assessment findings to make comprehensive improvements, including: HLC's drive to increase qualification achievement (leading to nearly 20 per cent improvement); revising course activities to improve achievement outcomes (i.e. restructuring its Adventures in Learning course and increasing post-placement support); employing a business relationship manager to enhance employment outcomes; and utilising stakeholder feedback to revise programmes (security and care workforce training).

TEO response

HLC has considered and confirmed the accuracy of this report.

Findings[1]

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

All participants engaged with for the EER identified the significant personal and life-changing achievements of many students since training at HLC. Numerous narratives were shared to demonstrate examples of key attributes students have acquired including: confidence (identified through participation and heads raised high); communication skills (seen in class, during excursions, and by families); goal and boundary-setting and career development.

HLC has a strong learner retention rate, as compared by HLC against national averages identified by the TEC, and which evidences the supportive and engaging learning environment at HLC. In 2009 and 2010, HLC exceeded the sector median[2], with 82 and 100 per cent retention respectively.

Credit achievement is a key measure regularly reviewed by HLC for targeted funded programmes. Average credits for Training Opportunities learners have been around 45 over the last three years and well above the TEC's minimum 20-credit requirement. Similarly, individual credits for youth averaged around 33 over 2009-2010, increasing significantly from 15 in 2008. Māori and non-Māori achievement trends are comparable, with Māori credit achievement and course completions slightly above that for non-Māori.

SAC-funded course completion rates have mostly met or exceeded the TEC and related organisational targets[3], with security training completions an example at 82-86 per cent over the period 2007-2009. Qualification completions were comparable.

Across all courses, HLC identifies a steady 62 per cent completion average over the last five years, although there have been some fluctuations in particular courses or specific years. For example, completions in the Adventures in Learning programme were under 30 per cent from 2007-2009. HLC attributes this exception in part to some students leaving early to take up employment opportunities, and others taking longer to complete their training. HLC has also reviewed the course

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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] The TEC identifies this as 66 per cent in 2009 and 69 per cent in 2010.

[3] In 2009 the TEC requirement was 74 per cent and in 2010, 80 per cent.

and made changes to the content and has since seen an improvement in completions to 50 per cent in 2010.

Over the period 2007-2009, an average of around 70 per cent of learners attained employment or moved on to further training. This average was slightly higher for security trainees. Outcomes have fluctuated for targeted funding students, with the three programmes mostly meeting or exceeding the 60 per cent organisational and TEC target in 2007 and 2009, and just under this in 2008 and 2010.

Learner achievement is understood at an organisation level through the collection and collation of comprehensive data across all programmes. Achievement and labour market outcomes information is analysed across different variables and benchmarked across time and TEC targets. The information is used to inform programme review, including decisions about the content and continuance of programmes, as well as driving key areas of focus for the organisation (such as an enhanced focus on qualification achievement leading to an approximate 20 per cent increase over time).

Tutors review learner achievement through close engagement and relationships with students to identify progress, and through regular monitoring of learner pathway plans. Stories of achievement are shared at daily staff meetings and at monthly academic fora and board meetings attended by staff and management. These self-assessment activities lead to specific actions taken to better respond to learners' needs (e.g. enhanced support and revised course activities). They also enable the sharing of different teaching strategies among staff and provide confirmation that HLC is making a positive difference to peoples' lives.

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.**

HLC provides its trainees with support to develop personally, to experience new opportunities and identify and plan for attainable goals and, as identified in 1.1 above, to achieve employment or further training opportunities.

In the Adventures in Learning and Community and Work Skills courses, excursions to diverse organisations raise awareness of opportunities and help facilitate student goal-setting. HLC describes the value as providing students with a purpose and moving a number of at-risk and disaffected people from the fringes of society to become contributing community members. Tied to this is the work tutors do to strengthen students' family situations, including linking caregivers to community services (e.g. counselling) and involving family in students' development.

Work experience is provided to all trainees and is facilitated through HLC's longstanding stakeholder relationships. This is of mutual value to trainees and employers. It enables students to experience different facets of training, introduces them to prospective employers, and provides solid preparation for employment. Post-placement support also ensures that ongoing opportunities are actively sought for students who finish their courses without immediate employment outcomes.

Employers interviewed confirmed that security and care workforce trainees are actively sought after by employers as they are enthusiastic and professional and come with core skills and current requisite knowledge. HLC is the sole provider of security training in the region and is therefore meeting a core industry need.

HLC board members and management contribute to the community through close involvement with community organisations whose focus aligns with HLC. Examples include the work the chief executive is doing to enhance youth opportunities in the region. HLC has partnered with the local council on several occasions to involve trainees in community-centred work which is important to the social development focus of the council and HLC.[4] Strong community connections and knowledge are also used to ensure HLC courses respond and remain relevant to current needs.

HLC has recently employed a business relationship manager to enhance business connections and opportunities for students and industry. The establishment of an "employment forum" and a recruitment agency-type approach is enabling an organisation-wide awareness of employment opportunities and the ability to more accurately meet trainees' and employers' mutual employment needs.

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.**

HLC and stakeholders interviewed indicated that through strong industry and community connections and membership of community forums, HLC board members, management, and staff maintain a current understanding of education and labour market needs, and engage regularly and closely with stakeholders to ensure the relevance and currency of programmes, course content, and delivery.

Examples of matching needs include:

- The importance of HLC's security training to the sector, given the content of delivery and given that no other provider offers this training in the region

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[4] The chair of the HLC board is a current councillor of the Horowhenua District Council and HLC's operations manager is the current deputy mayor.

- HLC's consultation with all regional care home managers to review the ongoing relevance of the Care Workforce course and to shape its delivery

- The establishment of short courses and industry-specific programmes in response to identified community needs

- Consideration being given currently to options to respond to the needs of marginalised young people in the region.

Employers interviewed confirmed that HLC students complete their training with relevant skills and knowledge. They indicated that they employ students from the targeted training programmes because of the professionalism of HLC staff, the level of personal and work-focused training that students undergo, and students' work-readiness and enthusiasm. Similarly, security employers valued the breadth of security training, and that students come with required industry certification, knowledge of the sector, and core skills, making them immediately work-ready.

Students interviewed were highly appreciative of the diverse work experience opportunities and other activities available which provide an in-depth awareness of, and a chance to experience, different career options. Courses provide a stepping stone, either directly to new careers through the training received, or as a basis for further career training (e.g. nursing or with the police).

Individual learner pathway plans are an ongoing point of reference to review progress to goals or to redefine these as new experiences shape new goals. HLC also uses a number of formal and informal mechanisms to ensure courses and activities match needs. These include course evaluations, weekly conversations with employers, daily interactions with learners, and analysis of achievement data. Examples of changes made as a result of self-assessment include revising the Adventures in Learning course activities to better engage students, expansion of security training, and the development of short courses to meet local needs.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Students interviewed across the focus areas commented on the diverse mix of practical, social, and skills-based learning activities at HLC. These include significant work experience opportunities across all courses, diverse excursions, and team-building within classes and across other courses, all of which students viewed as highly relevant to their chosen path of training. While course completions have fluctuated somewhat in some courses and in some years, tutors and management have worked together to consider reasons underlying any less-than-strong achievement, and subsequently made changes to teaching and learning activities.

All tutors interviewed either have teaching qualifications or are currently studying towards them. Tutors bring relevant sector experience to their roles as well as personal attributes which contribute to meeting learners' needs. Students, particularly in the industry-focused courses, value the sector experience of their tutors, including how their industry connections have opened up opportunities and provided insights into possible pathway options. Students also highly appreciate the personal interest and respect with which they are treated by their tutors.

Students confirmed that learning materials are broken down to ensure they are easy to understand. Industry-developed training materials (and pre-moderated assessments) are used to ensure consistency. Students identified that tutors add to these materials where weaknesses have been identified. Assessment outcomes are used to understand the extent to which learners are achieving their goals, as are ongoing reviews of individual learning plans.

All students commented on the one-to-one support tutors provide and how this helps, particularly when students struggle in specific areas. The availability of this support, either inside or outside of class, was seen as a recognition that some students and some issues are better supported on a more personal basis.

Tutors regularly reflect on their own teaching through analysis of assessment outcomes, one-to-one engagement and feedback from learners and employers, and analysis of outcomes and course evaluation data. Course evaluation data analysis identifies consistently high learner satisfaction, of between 92 and 98 per cent across all courses in the last ten years. Such information is used to review staff performance alongside feedback from students. Where any potential concerns arise, the operations manager will investigate further through classroom observation and discussions with staff and students. An example shared was a change made to an area of one tutor's teaching in response to a learner's concern, and which the tutor and operations manager continue to work together to address.

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 **Excellent.**

The focus on providing holistic guidance and support is organisation-wide and is assisted by expectations set by management and ensured through resourcing support provided, organisational processes (such as the individual pathway plans for all students and post-placement support), and staff recruitment to ensure the employment of staff with the same holistic ethos as the organisation.

Individual learning plans are informed by the holistic needs assessed for each learner. Required actions and support are identified to assist individual learners to achieve their goals. This extends to support to improve physical health and to

address personal issues that can impact on attendance and training, support for mental well-being, and budgeting assistance.

Students and graduates interviewed attributed their personal growth, development, and training success at HLC to the high level of individual support received and facilitated by small class sizes and the close, individualised staff-student interactions. Students across all focus areas spoke about the one-to-one support provided by their tutors, either inside or outside of class. Tutors also work closely with caregivers to involve them in students' journeys and to identify potential support that can strengthen the family (e.g. counselling referrals).

In addition, the evaluators consistently heard that through introductions to employers, training establishments, and community organisations, staff members guide students to develop and achieve vocational goals on an ongoing basis.

Post-placement support is provided by all staff and extends to ongoing efforts to place graduates into training who have left HLC without employment. This support includes assistance with personal and employment matters. Examples included helping students to negotiate employment contracts to ensure a fair arrangement, and stakeholders' appreciation that tutors remain involved and help students to deal with personal issues impacting on employment.

The evaluators heard examples of how support provided is immediate and responsive to individual needs that emerge. This is enabled by the close relationships and interactions between staff and students. Attendance is also closely monitored, with absences immediately followed up to identify particular support needs. Individual learning plans are regularly reviewed by students, staff, and management to ensure progress towards desired goals.

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.**

Close community relationships and engagement are achieved by HLC through its board members' diverse community involvements (including representation on local government and in the private and education sectors), management's involvement in community initiatives, and by staff with strong backgrounds in the sectors within which they teach. HLC utilises these connections to seek enhanced opportunities for learners (confirmed by labour outcomes data and by students and stakeholders interviewed for the EER), and to develop and review courses delivered.

HLC identifies that its original and continued focus is to enhance community well-being, change lives, and provide second-chance learning and opportunities for its students. This focus is evident across the organisation's activities and is led by

governance and management through staff recruitment, organisational policies, resourcing, and community connections. HLC recently added to its vision, aiming to be the preferred provider of niche programmes in the region, and focusing on upskilling local industry through short programmes. This is seen as complementing its original vision. This aim is being furthered through HLC's close knowledge of industry needs and trends, the recent appointment of a business relationship manager with significant business connections, and recent rebranding of HLC.

HLC tutors confirmed that courses are well resourced to enable them to holistically meet students' needs. Courses are structured by set lesson plans to ensure consistent teaching and as a contingency measure. Tutors have significant input into budget decisions and autonomy to bring their particular experience to courses. Staff confirmed that they are very well supported both personally and professionally.

The board and management work closely with staff to ensure effective teaching and learning. HLC appointed an operations manager in 2010 to drive enhanced education and employment outcomes and self-review. He meets regularly with staff to review student and course feedback, industry feedback, outcomes data, and to identify strengths and areas requiring improvement. Specifically, an academic forum was established as an additional mechanism to regularly review outcomes being achieved. Staff members meet daily to discuss student progress, to discuss challenges and developments, and to remain connected.

There is clear evidence of improvements being made as a result of self-review at multiple levels, including the restructuring of course activities to better engage students, organisational refocusing of staff on qualification achievement leading to enhanced outcomes, and expansion and development of programmes in response to industry needs (e.g. security training and business courses).

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 **Excellent.**

2.2 Focus area: Security training

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Targeted funded programmes

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

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

Recommendations

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

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

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).

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/

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