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External Evaluation and Review Report

Real World Education

Date of report: 18 July 2019

About Real World Education

Real World Education (RWE) provides education and qualifications for domestic and international students that lead to employment in testing and research laboratories in New Zealand. RWE also provides training and a manager certificate for laboratory staff employed in New Zealand high schools.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Real World Education Centre, TSB Tower, 8 th Floor, 1-19 Fitzherbert Avenue Palmerston North
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes, 2016 (first EER as Code of Practice signatory)
Number of students:	Domestic: 25, no Māori or Pasifika; 66 per cent female, 33 per cent male; majority of students are over 30 years of age; 40 per cent born overseas International: 10 (all on student visas) Indian 70 per cent, Nepalese 10 per cent, Indonesian 10 per cent, Filipino 10 per cent
Number of staff:	Three full-time equivalents, one part-time, and contractors
TEO profile:	See: NZQA - Real World Education
Last EER outcome:	2015 – Highly Confident in both educational performance and capability in self-assessment
Scope of evaluation:	The following NZQA approved programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programmes that lead to the New Zealand Certificate in Applied Science (Level 4)¹• Programmes that lead to the New Zealand Diploma in Applied Science (Level 5)²• Programmes that lead to the New Zealand

¹ Laboratory Skills Programme, Laboratory Technician Comprehensive Programme, School Science Laboratory Technician Programme, School Laboratory Manager Programme

² School Laboratory Manager Programme, Laboratory Technician Programme (no longer being offered)

Diploma in Applied Science (Level 6)³

- The programme that leads to the Postgraduate Diploma in Analytical Science⁴ and the programme that leads to the School Laboratory Manager Certificate.⁵

MoE number: 7170
NZQA reference: C34508
Dates of EER visit: 23 and 24 May 2019

³ Laboratory Technician Comprehensive Programme, Advanced Laboratory Technician Programme (no longer being offered)

⁴ Postgraduate Diploma in Analytical Science Programme

⁵ School Laboratory Manager Certificate Programme

Summary of Results

Distance learning and practical application of skills at laboratory placements ensures RWE graduates successfully complete qualifications and are work-ready. Self-assessment is comprehensive and meets student and industry needs well. RWE is a niche provider with the capacity and capability to grow both the domestic and international student markets.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Learning environments are planned and structured for the benefit of learners. The interactive distance learning is self-paced, closely monitored by RWE staff and aligned to industry processes.
- Students apply skills learnt from study on placements in partnering laboratories. These placements often lead to job offers.
- All students studying from 2016-2019 successfully graduated and gained relevant employment.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Organisational purpose and direction are clear. Academic leadership is strong and effective. Increased student numbers and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding (first received in 2019) has led to more staff and resources. These changes have been well managed to maximise the student experience.
- RWE is a highly reflective organisation which regularly reviews and updates programme content to meet the existing and emerging needs of students and stakeholders.
- A proactive approach to compliance is shown through regular review and active engagement with government agencies. Compliance and Code of Practice obligations are understood and well managed.

Key evaluation question findings⁶

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Student achievement is high. For example, of 14 enrolments in programmes that lead to the New Zealand Certificate in Applied Science (Lab skills) (Level 4) in 2014, there were two non-completions for identified reasons. Four students progressed to level 5. For level 6 enrolments since 2017, two of four did not complete. To address this issue, RWE increased the pastoral support for domestic students to a similar level as international students. RWE knows why students do not complete and makes comprehensive attempts to help them do so.</p> <p>Consistency of assessment outcomes is regulated by a second tutor looking over the online assessments. However, the most effective moderation occurs in practical sessions. If a student is not meeting the required skill level, this is quickly identified either during training or on laboratory placements.</p> <p>The moderation of undergraduate student assessments, while understandable given the way the programmes are arranged, is largely informal. More formalised systems of external moderation of undergraduate assessments would be an improvement.</p>
Conclusion:	All programmes are delivered online by distance, therefore completion rates of around 80 per cent across all programmes are very good. RWE tracks student progress closely and makes comprehensive efforts to assist students to complete programmes. However, systems for external moderation require further discussion and development.

⁶ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>All stakeholders benefit from RWE programmes. Students gain real laboratory industry experience while laboratory employers gain committed unpaid labour and the opportunity to gauge a student's skill set. Employer feedback indicates that RWE programmes have a role in career advancement.</p> <p>Laboratories are audited by International Accreditation New Zealand and other agencies against rigorous standards. Near the end of a placement in a partnering laboratory, RWE assesses the students but relies mostly on the ongoing student records kept by the laboratory supervisor. The high standards required for laboratories to maintain compliance, and the daily contact with participants on partnering laboratory placement by RWE staff, provide assurance that students are competently meeting industry standards.</p> <p>In the years 2016-2019, 100 per cent of graduates (domestic and international) had a laboratory job on programme completion or within a week of receiving a post-study work visa. Of those already in laboratory jobs at secondary schools, many had increased responsibilities after completing the School Laboratory Manager Programme or School Laboratory Manager Certificate Programme. The laboratory manager role comes with added legal and regulatory responsibilities. RWE is the only provider of this schools-based programme.</p> <p>Demand for trained laboratory staff is high. Often laboratories where students have had placements employ these graduates once qualified. RWE has limited competition from other educational organisations and all graduates get jobs.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>RWE's programmes lead to valued outcomes for both domestic and international students. Both students and employers benefit from industry placements that realistically gauge student skills, build competence and foster work-readiness. RWE is informed by industry feedback and adjusts programmes as needed. Graduates gain qualifications, relevant employment and promotions from completing RWE programmes.</p>

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:	<p>Provision is driven by industry needs and matching of needs is very strong. RWE's programmes closely align theory and practice. RWE built the video interface for the distance learning because no off-shelf e-learning product was suitable. Interactive online theoretical knowledge is flexible, engaging and accessible by personal computer and will soon be available on students' mobile phones. Students progress at their own pace and can revisit topics for revision. Practical competency is measured by the ability to repeat a task three times continuously.</p> <p>Partner laboratories provide practical experience for the students. Placements also provide exposure to New Zealand working conditions and work expectations. RWE provides guidance pre-placement on suitable topics for conversation at work and the interpersonal skills that employers value. Placements are proxy job interviews where punctuality, timeliness and teamwork are all being assessed.</p> <p>Laboratories benefit from the unpaid work of students. They also enjoy the kudos of supporting the wider industry through involvement in training students. RWE is responsive to industry needs. When a partner laboratory identified a need for students to understand how to use microscopes, RWE responded by purchasing a microscope and incorporating its use into training.</p> <p>Based on concerns expressed by some laboratories about the spoken English abilities of some participants, RWE did a review and increased speaking and listening sub-score requirements for all programmes.</p>
Conclusion:	RWE programmes are regularly reviewed and updated. Programme design and delivery is engaging to students and is industry-relevant. Students understand the importance of successful laboratory placements for their future options, particularly the ability to live and work in New Zealand.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>RWE became a Code of Practice signatory in 2016 and gained TEC funding for the 2019 academic year. These changes have led to a steady growth in student numbers (domestic and international) and enabled targeted investment in extra staff and improved facilities. These factors have contributed significantly to RWE's capacity to support domestic and international students, academically and pastorally. Students describe RWE as 'like a second family'. Staff are helpful, positive and responsive.</p> <p>Pre-selection of students is rigorous. It includes interviews to assess capability in English language skills, both spoken and comprehension. Rolling enrolments often mean induction is undertaken with individual students or in small groups. Students and tutors know each other well. Students are mostly mature, well motivated and familiar with study and its requirements. Each student has their own individual learning plan which is worked out with a tutor and regularly reviewed to ensure it supports appropriate progress goals. RWE monitors the time students take to complete parts of the online programme modules.</p> <p>A contact person at each laboratory sets up and follows the student on placement. RWE visits a month after the placement has started and at the end of the placement. Students provide daily email feedback to RWE detailing their progress and tasks undertaken each day. RWE calls each laboratory weekly to check on the students and gain feedback. This information is collated in the student's file, is available to all staff and leads to change if required.</p>
Conclusion:	Mature, self-motivated students manage their distance learning goals effectively. RWE monitors online and laboratory placement student activities. Regular contact between students, RWE staff and contact people at laboratories ensures that academic and other issues are proactively managed.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>RWE is meeting the New Zealand government and industry need for highly skilled immigrants. Entry to the postgraduate qualification is rigorous. It includes higher English language proficiency, a related tertiary qualification and relevant work experience. RWE has let agents know that RWE also wants to gradually raise the bar for entry to undergraduate programmes because higher-skilled workers add greater value to the New Zealand economy.</p> <p>Before TEC funding, all domestic students had to be self-funded which put the programmes out of reach for most domestic students, including Māori and Pasifika. The STEM⁷ focus and practical nature of laboratory jobs provide opportunities for these groups, including pathways to work. RWE's TEC investment plan includes engaging with Māori and Pasifika students.</p> <p>Advantages of this engagement include laboratory placements near high concentrations of Māori and Pasifika; these groups can participate with a computer and get tutor help without leaving home. TEC funding will allow RWE to take learning activities (block courses, tutorials, travelling laboratory) to these communities and allow the students to celebrate their achievements with family and friends. RWE has contacted Māori leaders in Palmerston North and career counsellors in Auckland high schools to discuss these ideas.</p> <p>RWE supports educational achievement through student scholarships which are well utilised. TEC funding has enabled better resourcing, increased staffing, IT upgrades and purchases of laboratory gear and books.</p>
Conclusion:	RWE management is student-centred. Academic leadership is strong and staff are highly valued. RWE balances innovation and continuity of business. TEC funding has enabled managed growth, increased resourcing and provision of programmes to domestic and international students.

⁷ Science, technology, engineering, mathematics

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Compliance management accountabilities have increased considerably since RWE became a Code of Practice signatory in 2016 and in receipt of TEC funding in 2019. To manage these added accountabilities, RWE has introduced a calendar system to meet deadlines. Other measures include an encrypted file server and hourly back-up of data.</p> <p>RWE reviews its compliance with the Code of Practice annually, as required. In 2017, RWE's self-assessment was randomly selected by the NZQA Code Team and the feedback used to inform the next year's self-assessment. RWE quickly responded to the 2019 Code of Practice amendments to enable the changes to be incorporated.</p> <p>RWE's programmes do not fit easily into TEC systems. To address this, RWE contacted the TEC to discuss reporting requirements. The TEC has said it will be tolerant of any reporting problems.</p> <p>RWE has one postgraduate student currently and is due for an NZQA degree monitoring visit in 2019. RWE needs to consider how it will meet degree monitoring requirements for moderation and a more formal advisory board. RWE wants to develop useful systems and structures that meet the needs of NZQA monitoring, RWE and students.</p> <p>Contracts with partnering laboratories are clear. International students are vetted by immigration as well as RWE processes. RWE submits a Criminal Conviction check request with the Ministry of Justice before they arrange any placement in any partnering laboratory.</p>
Conclusion:	RWE manages compliance accountabilities well. Some systems are not yet fully developed due to recent TEC funding and degree-level monitoring requirements. RWE is fully committed to meeting these requirements effectively.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Certificates and Diplomas in Applied Science (Levels 4-6)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.2 Focus area: Schools Programmes

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.3 Focus area: International Students: Support and Wellbeing

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

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 Real World Education:

- Consider reviewing external moderation processes for undergraduate programmes to ensure they provide sufficiently strong validation of the practical assessment outcomes of the students at partnering laboratories.
- Consider formation of an advisory board to further formalise input from varied stakeholders.

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

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 fraud⁸*
- *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.*

⁸ NZQA and the 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.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

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 including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, training schemes 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 2016. 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/>.

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