External Evaluation and Review Report

Industry Skills Limited, trading as iskills

Date of report: 7 June 2022

About Industry Skills Limited, trading as iskills

iskills provides training for skills development and compliance requirements throughout New Zealand, mainly in the utilities sector (electrical distribution, water, traffic and street lights, and telecommunications). Most training is delivered by short courses (one to two days) in the clients' workplaces. iskills also delivers trainee/apprenticeship programmes through a mix of block courses and on-job assessments and support. Alongside the training delivery, iskills specialises in workforce competency management and manages training requirements for large client companies and network asset owners.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	15 Totara Street, Mt Maunganui, Tauranga, Bay of Plenty
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: for 2018-21, 6347 students including 524 students in NZQA-approved programmes (1574 in 2021); 692 (11 per cent) of students were Māori and 387 (6 per cent) were Pasifika[1]
	International: nil
Number of staff:	27 full-time and two part-time
TEO profile:	Industry Skills Limited (provider page on NZQA website
	In March 2021, iskills was sold to Pegasus Management[2] which was subsequently sold to Avetta, a global provider of risk management software.[3]
Last EER outcome:	NZQA was Highly Confident in the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of iskills in 2018.

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[1] 936 (15 per cent) of students did not declare their ethnicity.

[2] https://www.iskills.co.nz/new-beginnings-iskills-powered-by-pegasus

[3] https://www.iskills.co.nz/pegasus-avetta-acquisition

Final

Scope of evaluation:	• Manual handling; short course, 116 enrolments in 2021
	• New Zealand Certificate in Telecommunications (Level 3) ID:126085; NZQA-approved programme, 86 enrolments in 2021
MoE number:	7436
NZQA reference:	C48155
Dates of EER visit (virtual):	12-14 April 2022

Summary of results

iskills delivers highly effective training and support to meet the clearly defined workforce safety and compliance needs of highly regulated industries. Comprehensive and well-documented, continuous improvement processes underpin very strong educational performance and high rates of stakeholder satisfaction.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Highly effective stakeholder engagement and comprehensive needs analysis inform the development and delivery of relevant and useful training solutions.

- Students mostly successfully complete the required short courses (and refreshers) and qualifications, which meets the compliance and licensing requirements of their employment.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

- iskills' training is practical and engaging for the students. An integrated approach to supporting students to complete programmes, especially the on-job components, is working well.

- Trainers have relevant industry knowledge and experience and are well supported by iskills to develop their teaching and assessment capabilities.

- A comprehensive quality management system and effective record-keeping support consistency across priority activities including delivery. Systematic gathering and analysis of information informs decision-making.

- iskills has strong and effective leadership. Effective planning, resourcing and communication practices ensure that high-quality educational provision is maintained during significant change and disruption.

- There are appropriate systems and monitoring processes in place to effectively manage compliance accountabilities.

Key evaluation question findings[4]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Short course achievement rates are very high (98-99 per cent) across all cohorts, as is usual with this type of learning. Apart from withdrawals (usually arising from a change in employment status) most students are successful in gaining required unit standards and achieving qualifications. There was some impact on completion timelines as a result of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, due to rescheduling of block courses and job-related demands for essential workers. Students are acquiring the required skills and knowledge, both theory and practice, to meet the safety and compliance requirements of their employment and/or industry licensing. Appropriate assessment and moderation practices support reliable and valid results. Student participation, progress and achievement in longer programmes is closely monitored at the individual student, programme and employer client levels. Monthly reports and reviews of progress by management ensure issues relating to non-completion are identified and addressed promptly. iskills has effective systems for collection, analysis and reporting of achievement data. Further review of cohort analysis could be useful for identifying improvements, although this is not considered significant given overall high rates of achievement.
Conclusion:	Detailed, real-time information is reported and reviewed throughout the year, and used to support consistently high rates of achievement. A greater use of aggregated data, trends and themes could provide further insights into educational performance and opportunities for improvement.

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[4] 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:	The PTE's long-term relationships with employers (and repeat business) show that iskills has credibility as competency management specialists and trainers, and that the outcomes for students and the wider industry are valued. Highly effective and regular stakeholder engagement, including participation in industry forums, ensures that iskills has a good understanding of employer needs for staff training and development in highly regulated industries. This ensures the ongoing currency and relevance of courses and programmes. iskills has informal and formal mechanisms for gathering feedback on valued outcomes of the training including surveys of students and employers. Feedback is generally positive, confirming that content and skills are highly relevant and practical, and that the training supports their application in the work environment. In addition to gaining new skills and knowledge, students have opportunities to gain recognition for work experience and to achieve industry qualifications. Evidence of the employment or promotion benefits for students achieving qualifications is largely anecdotal. The development of ongoing relationships with graduates could further evidence the value of this training.
Conclusion:	iskills training is valued for ensuring students remain compliant and are able to upskill or gain recognition for work experience. iskills is a valued contributor to compliance management and workforce development, delivering relevant and practical training required by businesses operating within highly regulated environments. Strong evidence is available of iskills regularly evaluating the value of the training and identifying improvements.

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:	Short courses and programmes are designed to meet industry needs. iskills training is practical and engaging, and training activities are well aligned to content, technologies and industry practice. Delivery at workplaces, using client facilities and equipment, ensures learning is immediately relevant and accessible to the students. iskills has detailed processes and documentation which support training consistency and standardisation to ensure compliance requirements are reliably met. Training assessment strategies (TAS) are developed during programme design, and guide all planning and resourcing for delivery and assessment. TAS are regularly revised in response to student, trainer and industry feedback. Trainers have relevant industry knowledge and experience and use appropriate teaching and learning materials (which are moderated and regularly reviewed and updated). Post-COVID, iskills is working towards introducing a mixed delivery model, incorporating some online components where suitable for course types and client needs. Sound assessment and moderation processes are in place. Quarterly internal moderation events take place, although there was some disruption during 2020. iskills generally met the requirements of external moderation by standard-setting bodies during the period[5]. All moderation outcomes are tracked and followed up by management to improve assessment capability and practice. Actions arising from the use of feedback from a range of processes (including delivery reflections by trainers, feedback

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[5] Summary external moderation information and related samples were sighted for Waihanga Ara Rau (Connexis)and Toitu te Waiora (Skills Org), and NZQA NEM, which confirmed standards were met in the majority of cases.

	from trainee coordinators and students) are documented and tracked in a continuous improvement initiatives log.
Conclusion:	Connections to industry and ongoing self-assessment ensure iskills' courses and programmes effectively match industry and student needs.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	iskills provides effective guidance and support for students in the context of short course provision and on-job learning. Learner handbooks and course workbooks are provided prior to course delivery. Learning needs (such as literacy and numeracy, or ESOL[6]) are identified during enrolment and followed up by the trainers.
	Trainers, trainee coordinators and on-job supervisors share the responsibility for supporting and motivating students to remain engaged in programmes, to complete assessments and to succeed in their learning. iskills regularly contacts students and/or visits workplaces to monitor progress and provide information and practical support, for example with evidence gathering for assessments. Records of all interventions and touchpoints are maintained. Additional support, with a wellbeing focus, was offered during the COVID lockdowns.
	Students benefit from small, interactive classes in the short courses. Trainers have effective strategies for building relationships with students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. These include identifying learning needs, engaging reluctant learners in activities (for example, through practical exercises and group work), and offering individualised support as necessary.
	iskills is responsive and accessible to the students, who have regular formal and informal opportunities to provide feedback on their learning experience. Overall, feedback is very positive, with

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[6] English for Speakers of Other Languages

	students reporting good rapport with the trainers and the engaging learning environments.
	In response to the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021, iskills reports plans to develop specific cohort strategies to enhance support for the cultural and learning needs of the students.
Conclusion:	An integrated approach to guiding and supporting students is working well. Support interventions and functions are reviewed to ensure they are effective. iskills regularly gathers student feedback which is acted on.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	iskills is a responsive and resilient organisation with strong leadership and clear strategic direction. This has contributed to strong educational performance during ownership transitions and the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as changes in the wider tertiary environment.

The PTE is very well organised for educational delivery and stakeholder engagement in tightly regulated industries. Effective management and communication practices, and a comprehensive quality management system provide an excellent framework for day-to-day operations and self-assessment. These features also support continuity in educational services and quality, despite recent significant staff turnover, including of key management and trainee coordinators.

Trainers are recruited for their industry knowledge and are inducted and upskilled to develop their teaching and assessment capability. Performance is monitored through peer and management observations, and student and stakeholder feedback. Trainers meet regularly as a group and with managers, have opportunities to offer ideas for improvement, and report feeling valued and supported.

iskills uses data effectively to inform decisions and to report to key stakeholders. In some cases, further analysis of data to |

	identify trends or themes could strengthen the evidential basis for making changes and monitoring outcomes.
Conclusion:	iskills has effective leadership and has maintained strong educational performance despite significant disruption in recent years. The PTE is responsive to its industry stakeholders and has a clear focus on meeting needs and student success. iskills regularly and systematically gathers and reviews data and feedback to improve quality and outcomes.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	iskills has effective compliance management processes, including: • Ongoing monitoring and review of information from industry bodies and regulatory agencies. Follow-up actions are identified and delegated. • Ongoing programme reviews, internal moderation processes and monitoring of programme delivery and student learning hours to ensure consistency with NZQA Rules and programme approvals. • Procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of standard-setting bodies. Any issues raised through external moderation exercises are addressed. • A comprehensive quality management system, which is well disseminated and widely used in day-to-day activities. The system is subject to regular review and revision. • A review against the Education (Pastoral Care of Domestic Tertiary Students) Interim Code of Practice 2019, identifying areas for improvement. • Effective processes and record-keeping so iskills meets reporting obligations and can respond to student complaints, should they arise.

	• Systems in place to maintain compliance with other key legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.
Conclusion:	iskills is effectively managing key areas of compliance. No concerns were identified during this evaluation.

Focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Manual Handling (Short course)

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	This is a half-day course, to equip students to identify the causes of back injury and methods to prevent such injuries at work. The maximum class size is 12 participants. Class activities include slideshows and videos, reviews of case studies and practice exercises to demonstrate learning. A webinar is available for students requiring a refresher. The majority (98.5 per cent) of enrolled students successfully completed the course over 2018-21, achieving unit standard 17592.
Conclusion:	Positive feedback on the learning experience and the relevance and usefulness of the course is confirmed in student and stakeholder surveys.

2.2 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Telecommunications (Level 3)

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	This is a 12-month, 134-credit programme, delivered through a combination of three block courses (one week long) and on-job practical evidence gathering. There has been significant uptake of the Recognition of Current Competency option in the New Zealand Certificate in Telecommunications (61 per cent of all enrolments at the time of the evaluation), enabling candidates to gain recognition for work experience and knowledge. The evidence requirements and assessment processes are clearly defined and aligned with the requirements of the industry standard-setting body. Submissions and assessments are subject to iskills' robust quality assurance processes, including internal moderation. Most of the 2021 students were enrolled in this programme (86 out of a total of 99) to meet the requirements of a major

| | telecommunications infrastructure provider. Rapid technological and business development in the telecommunications sector creates challenges for further programme design and development.

It is not possible to identify any achievement trends for the qualification as yet. iskills closely tracks individual progress through programme components and assessments. Progress is regularly reviewed by the trainers and trainee coordinators, as well as management. |
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| Conclusion: | This programme enables students to achieve an essential minimum qualification for employment. |

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.

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

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 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.

Final

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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