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External Evaluation and Review Report

Learning Innovations Limited

Date of report: 17 January 2020

About Learning Innovations Limited

Learning Innovations Limited focuses on meeting the learning needs of Maori, Pasifika, refugees and migrants by providing flexible delivery of foundation learning in literacy, numeracy, computing and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	301 Railway Road, Central City, Hastings; plus three other teaching sites at Napier, Waipukurau and Flaxmere
Number of students:	Domestic only: 187 students over 2019 Māori 47 per cent, Pasifika 17 per cent, refugee/migrants 36 per cent; 26 per cent 15-19 years, 24 per cent 20-29 years, 18 per cent 30-39 years, and 32 per cent are 40+ years of age; 66 per cent female, 34 per cent male
Number of staff:	Five full-time equivalents (30+ hours per week); six part-time (10-29 hours per week)
TEO profile:	See: Learning Innovations on the NZQA website
Last EER outcome:	At the most recent EER in 2015, NZQA was Confident in both the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of Learning Innovations.
Scope of evaluation:	Training Scheme, Future Directions, unit standard 504; Produce a CV (Level 1, 2 credits) unit standard 10781 ; Produce a plan for own future direction (Level 2, 3 credits); Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN), 139 students; Intensive Literacy and Numeracy-English for Speakers of Other Languages (ILN-ESOL), 48 students
MoE number:	7627
NZQA reference:	C36821
Dates of EER visit:	30 and 31 October 2019

Summary of Results

Learning Innovations enables a diverse range of students to meet their employment and life goals. Highly skilled tutors and flexible learning opportunities provided at regional sites are keys to this success. Restructure of governance and management is underway. Self-assessment is developing but is not yet fully embedded across the organisation.

Confident in educational performance

- Learning Innovations' tutors develop pathway plans with students that acknowledge past learning experiences, assess current competencies, and guide future learning and personal goals.
- Students develop their foundation skills and confidence sufficiently to take the next step in their life journey, be it further study, work, family or social goals.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Learning Innovations consistently meets government expectations for ILN and ILN-ESOL contracts, and entry and exit expectations for literacy level progression.
- Learning Innovations has restructured to accommodate the retirement of a director. This restructure has included seeking external expertise on governance and forming a senior leadership team to support management and the remaining sole director.
- Appropriate external support and expertise, in combination with more effective use of existing internal staff skills, has enabled a managed, inclusive restructure and transition process.
- The transition process has led to a more explicit understanding of Learning Innovations' values and mission and the many ways staff contribute to these. Self-assessment is not yet fully embedded across all aspects of the organisation.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Achievement at Learning Innovations is good. Students enrol because they have a specific requirement or skill gap. For example, they may need credits to achieve National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1, or English or math skills to pass career tests. The flexibility of the programmes (rolling enrolments, part-time, individual learning plans called pathway plans) allows the students to achieve their goals at their own pace within a time period that suits them. Pathway plans clearly document learner progress across a range of goals, including social goals.</p> <p>For the training scheme Future Directions, all students are enrolled on the ILN or ILN-ESOL programmes first. In 2019, 32 of 187 students (17 per cent) completed the training scheme as a component of their individual learning package.</p> <p>Students know how they are progressing and increasingly take ownership of learning as success increases motivation. Tutors report weekly on student progress. Separate reporting on the achievement of Māori and Pasifika students (64 per cent of the total) needs greater focus and development.</p> <p>Individual learners, sites and programmes are monitored regularly. Annual reporting on learner progress and review of Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) targets show that Learning Innovations consistently meets TEC contractual arrangements and entry and exit expectations for literacy level progression.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Students are motivated to succeed by flexible programme delivery that meets specific skill gaps and is future focused. Learning Innovations monitors student achievement and consistently meets contractual funding obligations. Separate</p>

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

	reporting on priority groups needs development.
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1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Valued outcomes for students include reducing social isolation, supporting and being supported by each other, making new friends, and feeling part of the Learning Innovations' whānau.</p> <p>The value of the outcomes from the NZQA-approved training scheme, Future Directions, varies with the age of the student. Younger students consider it a useful tool to help them decide what their next step in life could be but put more value on gaining the extra credits. Adults see it as a necessary step in making, in some cases, some big life-changing decisions such as a career change or relocating their family. These students are less interested in the opportunity to gain credits. In addition, students report that Future Directions has helped them be clearer and more confident at job interviews. All outcomes are highly valued and meaningful to each student.</p> <p>Referral agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development and Hastings District Council value that Learning Innovations is able to assist in getting their clients work-ready while also providing training to assist with literacy and numeracy needs. The combination of the two types of training has been a definite positive for both the agencies and their clients.</p> <p>Analysis of destination data indicates that most students reach their goals of study, employment and NCEA credits. This is significant as the vast majority have not experienced success in these goals previously.</p>
Conclusion:	Learning Innovations fosters an inclusive learning environment where students from diverse ethnic, age range and socio-economic backgrounds meet their goals, sometimes for the first time. Learning Innovations contributes to meeting external agency requirements.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Programme design and delivery is guided by individual student needs assessment which includes an interview by the tutor and entry-level testing of literacy and numeracy. These components form the pathway plan which includes achievable academic and social goals and is revised frequently. A unique point of difference is that student attendance at class is organised around family and work commitments.</p> <p>Lessons are one-to-one with a tutor, but interaction between students is encouraged. Students sharing learning goals and helping each other is beneficial as it fosters acceptance of others, introduces new topics of interest and builds social confidence, all areas that students need to develop.</p> <p>The Future Directions training scheme is offered as an additional learning option to students enrolled on Learning Innovations' ILN and ILN-ESOL courses. It is not offered as a standalone course. The training is self-paced. Learning Innovations provides all the resources students need to complete the requirements for the two unit standards: computers, internet, study spaces and, most importantly, staff who can give advice or assist the students to seek advice on available employment and training options.</p> <p>A moderation liaison person was employed early 2019. This person has been updating scope of accreditation and moderation requirements directly with NZQA. In 2018, Learning Innovations met the majority of NZQA post-assessment moderation requirements. Moderation meetings occur each month at Learning Innovations and provide opportunities for staff to discuss assessments and marking consistency. However, greater understanding of moderation's purpose and function in assuring valid and consistent outcomes for students would be beneficial to Learning Innovations.</p>
Conclusion:	Students benefit from individual pathway plans which are reviewed and updated regularly. Self-assessment of moderation processes and practices would be beneficial for staff.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Learning Innovations' values and mission ensure that students feel welcome and comfortable. A non-judgemental approach to students encourages self-acceptance and acceptance of others. This creates a relaxed, engaged learning environment where individual and collective success is celebrated.</p> <p>Tutorial staff are longstanding (many up to 13 years), active in their communities, and know their communities and families well. The accessibility of the regional sites and flexibility of attendance reduces barriers to learning for students and enables them to study while continuing to meet work and family obligations.</p> <p>Within this flexibility, tutors encourage students to contact them daily. This may not be face-to-face but is important for gauging students' well-being and ongoing learning needs. Students value this support highly. Graduates are encouraged to maintain contact with Learning Innovations staff. They readily return to Learning Innovations for advice and further upskilling, and to share their successes.</p> <p>A student support person is assigned to help students at tutors' request. Support staff move around the centres during the week and engage informally with students and discuss how they are progressing towards their learning goals.</p> <p>The quality of the tutor-student relationships is excellent. Tutors are experienced with foundation-level learners and their management. There is commitment by all staff to the priority of student needs. Student evaluations of tutors occur at six weeks and at the end of study. Evaluation questions are well-constructed, provide useful feedback, and are discussed at monthly meetings. These discussions lead to actions that are reviewed at subsequent meetings.</p>
Conclusion:	Effective student support and involvement is achieved by the accessibility of regional sites, flexibility of learning delivery, access to support staff, and the quality of the tutor-student relationship.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>PTE management and staff work closely together. In 2018, management engaged with staff, and an external facilitator, to revamp Learning Innovations' purpose, focus and core values. This included establishing a senior leadership team of key staff who will contribute to Learning Innovations' ongoing strategic planning and direction. Strategic development meetings are scheduled for 2020. The leadership team meets each month with the external governance facilitator.</p> <p>Since the restructure, staff feel less siloed and more involved in the organisation's overall purpose. Tutors are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities that enhance their student-facing skill sets. Tutors are well-resourced and share resources collegially.</p> <p>Managers take part in local, regional and national organisations and attend key educational conferences and forums to keep updated on the education landscape in New Zealand. Learning Innovations sponsors community events that staff are involved with, such as sport teams.</p> <p>Monthly meetings comprise a moderation forum (tutors bring assessments to moderate), a tutor forum (tutors discuss student outcomes), followed by an all-of-staff meeting. These meetings are minuted and actions noted. Concentrating three meetings in one day is an efficient use of resources, particularly for staff who need to travel to Hastings.</p> <p>Overall, the strategic planning and resulting restructure is being given serious consideration to ensure the sustainability of the PTE. The capability of staff, including the director, is being enhanced by input from the external board.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Learning Innovations has restructured and sought external expertise to manage the transition from two to one director. These changes add value but are not yet fully embedded. However, early indications are that staff are adjusting to the restructure. The senior leadership team has the potential to add value to strategic decision-making and provide added support for the sole director.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>A 2019 TEC audit found that in 2018, four of 23 learners were ineligible to enrol in ILN and two of 12 learners were ineligible to enrol in ILN-ESOL. Also, Learning Innovations had not supplied financial information to the TEC in a timely manner. To address these issues, Learning Innovations has provided the TEC with monthly updates.</p> <p>The learner eligibility criteria for ILN and ILN-ESOL in the TEC funding conditions letter has been uplifted and embedded into the Learning Innovations enrolment process. An eligibility checklist is now part of the enrolment process and consistently used at enrolment by tutors.</p> <p>Resubmission of the final 2018 ILN and ILN-ESOL reports with the six ineligible learners has been completed. This has no financial impact because of over-delivery. Credit reporting is being reviewed to ensure that it is meeting NZQA's 90-day reporting expectation. Management of this is compounded by no set start and finish dates for students. The training scheme is being delivered as approved. However, it needs reviewing because some students have already completed the unit standards in the training scheme before they enrol.</p> <p>Learning Innovations' non-compliances reflect the PTE's ambition to meet all student needs. The ineligible students were not compromised as they continued to be taught. Learning Innovations now manages this type of student on a voluntary basis. Each tutor volunteers to teach them outside of funding, as a contribution to the student and the community.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Management of compliance has been affected by both internal and external factors. These include the retirement of a long-standing director and the added workload for the remaining director; and the inability to meet government agency obligations due to ineffective communication between external professionals on whom Learning Innovations relies. NZQA has encouraged the Learning Innovations director to prioritise management of this situation and report directly to NZQA on progress.</p>

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Intensive Literacy and Numeracy

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good

2.2 Focus area: Intensive Literacy and Numeracy-ESOL

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good

2.3 Focus area: Future Directions

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good

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 Learning Innovations Limited consider:

- the value of separate reporting on the achievement of Māori and Pasifika students who comprise over 50 per cent of students
- reviewing the training scheme and its fitness for purpose
- upskilling of staff around moderation processes and practices
- the most effective ways to embed self-assessment across the organisation
- the most effective way to manage ongoing compliance with government agencies
- the most effective way to manage external professionals who directly impact Learning Innovations' ability to manage its business responsibilities and compliance obligations to government.

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 fraud²*
- *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.*

² 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.

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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