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External Evaluation and Review Report

The Learning Connexion Limited

Date of report: 1 July 2020

About The Learning Connexion Limited

The Learning Connexion (TLC) provides training in creativity processes expressed through an art medium. Learners develop their own creative processes and complete New Zealand qualifications in creativity through on-site, blended or distance delivery modes.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	182 Eastern Hutt Road, Taita, Lower Hutt, Wellington
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 623 equivalent full-time students (on-site, distance delivery and Restricted Programme) Māori: 228 (37 per cent), Pasifika: 45 (7 per cent) International: 0 equivalent full-time students
Number of staff:	28 full-time equivalents, 28 part-time
TEO profile:	See The Learning Connexion
Last EER outcome:	The Learning Connexion was Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment at the previous external evaluation and review in 2015.
Scope of evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Certificate in Creativity (Level 4)• New Zealand Diploma in Creativity (Level 6) TLC also provides opportunities for these qualifications to be gained by prison inmates via distance delivery through a Restricted Programme option.
MoE number:	9410
NZQA reference:	C36822
Dates of EER visit:	26 and 27 November 2019

Summary of Results

The Learning Connexion prepares students using a holistic education approach, leading to the achievement of generic creative skills. Graduates apply skills in the wider environment, not just within their chosen creative discipline. The governance and management structures enable the organisation's vision to be realised.

Confident in educational performance

- Students are achieving their goals, as shown through course and qualification completions data. Further achievement-related trends could not be identified from the data provided.
- There is value to the students in the development of multiple, transferable skills and attributes primarily aligned with creativity, irrespective of the field, but also with wellbeing. However, related trends were not discussed or identified.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Programmes match individual needs through the use of a student-centred, holistic learning practice.
- Assessment is appropriate for the nature of the programmes. It confirms that skills are being developed that meet the qualifications' requirements, while catering for individual creative projects.
- Learners are well supported and systems enhance the effectiveness of the learning process, while minimising learning barriers.
- The governance and management teams are well structured and informed to carry out the organisation's vision and ensure organisational outcomes are being achieved.
- NZQA compliance is now being managed, including funding requirements.

Key evaluation question findings¹

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Overall qualification completion rates² show that 73 per cent and 71 per cent of students completed a qualification with TLC in 2018 and 2017 respectively, which are higher than the overall sector rates.</p> <p>However, the underlying qualification achievement data for each programme is not analysed to compare results from year to year, or between different student groups. In addition, TLC did not provide evidence of analysis of completion and withdrawal by subject or by delivery mode. This lack of analysis makes it difficult to compare results across years to identify whether the changes to support or programme delivery have led to improvements.</p> <p>The 2018 course completion rates were higher than the qualification achievement rates, with 81 per cent in 2018 and 77 per cent in 2017. The organisation states that completions have improved again in 2019 as a result of increased student services involvement. The organisation also plans a greater focus on improving literacy³, with more support for the tutors to further increase completions. This support is also seen to contribute to the higher progression rates between different programmes each year. The 2019 completion and qualification achievement rates are yet to be finalised.</p> <p>The data the organisation provided for Māori, Pasifika and youth student achievement across all programmes (Appendix 1) shows a lower and decreasing successful qualification completion for Māori students (average of 51.5 per cent and 54.1 per cent respectively for 2018 and 2017), as well as static achievement for the youth students. The data is not shown by</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.

² See Appendix 1.

³ A new requirement is being planned for students to have an individual literacy profile.

	<p>programme level or mode of delivery. There is no clear strategy to address the declining trend.</p> <p>The implementation of the Workroom⁴ enables the academic team to monitor individual cognitive and creative skills development to support the students' success. This online portfolio provides examples of recognising and reflecting on the evolving creative process. However, how well this has led to increased wellbeing and application of skills could be further explored, including an analysis of students' feedback about improvement in their wellbeing aligned to the acquisition of skills.</p>
Conclusion:	Overall achievement is high. However, there are limitations in data analysis to understand trends within separate programmes or identify areas for improvement. The overall data also shows a persistent gap in performance by Māori and youth students but no analysis of actions to take or implemented

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Responses from wellbeing surveys, exit interviews and graduate surveys provides TLC with the following value-related information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students' sense of wellbeing is noticeably enhanced through undertaking training with this organisation. • The students gain understanding of the creative process to develop skills that enable them to successfully enrol in further study⁵ or gain work in creative and other environments post-study. • The continued application of skills and knowledge gained through undertaking study has resulted in an increase of 35 per cent of the students gaining training-related employment over the two years after completing training.

⁴ The Workroom is a dedicated website for TLC learners to share their work.

⁵ In 2018, 67 per cent of level 4 graduates progressed to level 5, and 54 per cent of level 5 graduates enrolled in level 6.

	<p>Beyond this, there is a lack of analysis of destination trends for each level, ethnicity or mode of delivery, which makes it difficult to monitor outcomes year to year for further trend identification. However, as a result of feedback from the 2019 assuring consistency reviews, the organisation has implemented surveys to gain more understanding of graduates' application of skills using employer and graduate feedback to support the value of the programmes.</p> <p>TLC's community networks enable it to engage with stakeholders, such as local art galleries and the city council, to support community projects and provide public creative workshops, as well as providing opportunities for student to exhibit, thus enhancing the development of their creative process. This is supported by the feedback gathered by TLC.</p> <p>The findings of the 2019 assuring consistency reviews⁶ were that this organisation needed to gain more understanding of graduate and destination evidence.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>There is good evidence of students' enhanced wellbeing and the creation of employment opportunities as a result of completing programmes. However, this will be strengthened by destination surveys to gather data for analysis. Stakeholders value the community engagement and opportunities provided by TLC.</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>The organisation revised all its level 4–6 programmes of study following registration of the New Zealand creative qualifications in 2015. These new qualifications enable students to staircase from level 4 to the higher-level qualifications. The programmes are also regularly reviewed to ensure that the activities are suitable and current.</p> <p>Students choose the content of the programme that suits their creative motivations during the year. The programmes have</p>

⁶ This organisation took part in the 2019 reviews for the New Zealand Certificate in Creativity (Level 4) and the New Zealand Diploma in Creativity (Level 6). The organisation was initially found not sufficient for the level 6 qualification as a result of not separating its destination and graduate evidence from the level 5.

	<p>been designed to support this flexibility. The students develop their skills and understanding of their own creative processes across different fields, and the tutors support them by teaching the methodology and tool use. The delivery of the programme helps students develop personal skills in alignment with TLC's philosophy and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework level statements, while developing responsibility for self, resilience, caring for others and leadership.</p> <p>Uniquely, the programme meets the needs of a variety of learners in different locations. The students learn using feedback from peers, tutors and mentors. Mentors meet with students at set points during the programme to conduct formative assessment on their progress.</p> <p>The student handbook introduces the 'creative spiral', the self-learning process of creating, gaining feedback and reflection. The student handbook also provides the assessment criteria and marking guide. This enables the mentors to guide the final submissions for assessment at the end of the year.</p> <p>Assessments are marked by a panel of distance tutors and mentors who assess using the students' written description of their work submitted using an online platform. Currently, 100 per cent of all assessments are moderated by an experienced assessor appointed by the academic board, which provides objectivity. Feedback from moderation has assisted programme reviews conducted by the academic team. Feedback from students and external stakeholders is also used in the review.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Student-centred programme design and delivery is meeting the needs of students. This includes a fluid approach to creative process development, reflecting all communities where creativity is relevant. Assessment is robust through an independent panel, and feedback from a range of sources is used to review programmes.</p>

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>All prospective students are interviewed to identify the most suitable programme for them. The student handbook is a comprehensive study guide providing programme information, study expectations and support processes. Students also receive a beginner's kit with basic resources. TLC caters to students with a wide range of needs. These are identified at enrolment to ensure appropriate support is available and to remove any barriers to learning.</p> <p>Literacy and numeracy development activities are embedded in the programme and learning resources. Low literacy was identified as an issue for some students, particularly for Corrections students. As well as one-to-one mentoring, prison inmates have an 0800 to call for support, which some tutors said was being used.</p> <p>Students have ongoing feedback individually and in groups from peers, tutors and mentors as part of the learning process. Mentors' feedback entails formative assessment and helps guide and encourage students to complete projects. The tutor and mentors are well versed in developing the creative process to help students move past blockages and develop their skills. Students are also effectively supported by the staff who monitor mentor engagement and attendance, and communicate with the relevant staff or students, as required.</p> <p>Student feedback is routinely gathered using an online survey at the end of term, as well as after every distance delivery block course. Feedback is also gathered from student comment books around campus, as well as from student representatives who attend academic board meetings. There is clear evidence of a quick turnaround in responding to suggestions taken from comprehensive and ongoing student feedback to improve the learning and support.</p>
Conclusion:	TLC provides comprehensive information at enrolment that assists students to select the appropriate programme. Students are highly supported in their learning, with close mentoring and support from tutors, mentors and support staff. Students' involvement in their learning is evident in the choices they have in their learning activities to suit their creative project. Students

	have multiple opportunities for feedback to ensure their voices are heard and to enhance support.
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1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TLC reviewed its organisational structure following the incorporation of the TLC Trust into the TLC PTE. This resulted in changes to the management groups to ensure they are effective in carrying out the vision and are able to respond to future ventures and directions. Financial considerations, monitored by the funding agency, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), were taken into consideration while the organisation merged the two entities.</p> <p>The organisational review has led to new initiatives including the adoption of a new IT system to better facilitate student feedback and assessment, and a resource management tool for distance delivery. In addition, the organisation has employed a learning support person to help meet literacy needs. There is also evidence of increased involvement with Māori organisations. These are all useful initiatives generated from self-assessment activities.</p> <p>All staff have industry experience and teaching qualifications. Staff are valued by management; recently re-established annual performance appraisals allow for professional development. Staff networks have been developed to identify any issues and provide support across the school to meet the needs of the students.</p> <p>While the New Zealand Certificate in Creativity and the New Zealand Diploma in Creativity are relatively new programmes, there is a high level of monitoring undertaken by the academic teams. There are some limitations in the analysis of achievement.</p>
Conclusion:	Plans for future growth and ensuring students can succeed have been implemented following the recent review of the organisational structure, enabling the TLC vision.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>TLC's compliance team meets regularly to monitor compliance responsibilities. After a period⁷ during which this organisation was required by NZQA to submit attestations within a prescribed timeframe, there is now evidence of comprehensive coverage of key issues and follow-up to maintain compliance. This, along with regular notifications, shows efforts towards management of compliance areas.</p> <p>Currently, financial monitoring completed by the TEC⁸ has required the PTE to engage with a specialist accounting firm to better suit the nature and size of the organisation. It is expected that this relationship will result in an improvement in timeliness in response to compliance matters. The organisation has addressed all requirements identified at the previous TEC audit.</p>
Conclusion:	Comprehensive management of compliance and other activities has enabled identification of areas for improvement.

⁷ May 2018 through to October 2019

⁸ Culminating in the TEC audit, September 2019. A copy of the financial briefing was received by NZQA, from TEC, November 2019

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Certificate in Creativity (Level 4)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Creativity (Level 4) is delivered via three different modes with a large number of students enrolling in the Restricted Programme (40–50 per cent). These students were not part of the original scope for this EER, as agreed by TLC, due to the logistics of contacting the students. However, the overall results include these students.</p> <p>The complexities around management of delivery, student support and student achievement, as they relate to the Restricted Programme, are recognised by TLC. The PTE provided evidence of how understandings in programme delivery and support from this area have guided improvements across all of the organisation’s programmes.</p> <p>Overall, analysis of the evidence provided with regard to student achievement for this programme still requires development.</p>

2.2 Focus area: New Zealand Diploma in Creativity (Level 6)

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 The Learning Connexion Limited:

- Develop systems to capture data to analyse programme completions by level, delivery mode and different groups of students.
- Break down feedback for each programme, so the organisation can identify and respond to the specific needs of stakeholders, including students, community groups, local councils and employers to ensure programmes continue to meet needs and provide valued outcomes.

Requirements

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

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

Appendix 1: Outcome data tables

Table 1. 2016–2018 qualification achievement levels 4–7⁹ %

All students (Ngā Kete data)	2016	2017	2018
Level 4	60.5	64.6	67.3
Level 5	71.2	76.3	76.8
Level 6	69	77.3	76.7
Level 7	83	92.9	82.6
Total	66.9	71.4	72.8

Table 2. 2016–2018 course completion %

All students (Ngā Kete data)	2016	2017	2018
Level 4	70.5	64.6	65.2
Level 5	88.1	85.2	91.8
Level 6	89.6	86.1	87
Level 7	83.6	100	92.9
Total	81.7	76.7	81.0

Table 3. Overall Māori enrolment and completion data¹⁰

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Overall enrolment numbers for each year	193 (30% of overall)	183 (30% of overall)	187 (32% of overall)	201 (until 27.9.2019) (34% of overall)
Qualification completion	80 (56.3%)	79 (54.1%)	50 (51.5%)	Data not available

Table 4. Overall Pasifika enrolment and completion data

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Overall enrolment numbers for each year	33 (5% of overall)	23 (4% of overall)	27 (5% of overall)	35 (until 27.9.2019) (6% of overall)
Qualification completion	15 (55.6%)	10 (52.6%)	15 (not available%)	Data not available

⁹ Enrolment data has been provided by the PTE on request, with the qualification data being provided through Ngā Kete.

¹⁰ Withdrawal and progression data was not provided for any of the priority learner groups.

Table 5. Overall youth (under 25) enrolment and completion data

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Overall enrolment numbers for each year	154 (24% of overall)	143 (23% of overall)	115 (20% of overall)	108 (until 27.9.2019) (18% of overall)
Qualification completion	109 (67.7%)	93 (71%)	70 (72.2%)	Data not available

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud¹¹*
- *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.*

¹¹ 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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