

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Links Training (2008) Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 3 September 2014

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Links Training (2008) Limited
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Levin
Delivery sites:	Four delivery sites at Levin, Paraparaumu, Wanganui, and Palmerston North. In addition, delivery occurs at organisation/workplace venues.
First registered:	22 June 2009
Courses currently delivered	First Aid Training, and unit standards leading to a range of national certificates in the community support and care sector. The main qualification achieved by students is the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3).
Code of Practice signatory:	N/A
Number of students:	Just over 1,000 students per year undertake the one-day first aid training course. Thirty-two students are enrolled in community support and care service unit standards leading to national certificate qualifications.
Number of staff:	One full-time; six part-time (five instructors/assessors and one administrator)
Scope of active accreditation:	Links Training is accredited to deliver first aid unit standards, as well as a First Aid Training Scheme (level 2). The PTE also has consent to assess a

range of unit standards and domains in subject areas relating to community support and care, and occupational health and safety.

Distinctive characteristics: Links Training was set up as a PTE in 2008 to provide training for people working in the support/care sector in the community, rest homes and care facilities. Training is largely delivered within the workplace.

Currently, the bulk of the training relates to first aid (unit standards 26551 *Provide first aid for life threatening conditions*, and 26552 *Demonstrate knowledge of common first aid conditions and how to respond to them*). This involves 8.5 learning hours for the Elementary course and six learning hours for the Revalidation course.

All courses are self-funded. Links Training does not receive government funding.

Recent significant changes: In response to growth in the volume of training delivered, the director recently reduced her teaching work to focus more on management. As a result, additional part-time staff were appointed, including an office administrator.

Previous quality assurance history: Links Training underwent an external evaluation and review (EER) by NZQA in August 2010, where it received statements of Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.

Links Training also underwent a focused review of first aid training in 2013. Links Training met all requirements, including minimum hours of delivery, and trainer and qualification requirements.

Links Training's first aid assessments were most recently externally moderated by NZQA in 2013. The assessment materials for unit standards 26551 and 26552 met national external moderation requirements. While unit standard 6400 *Manage first aid in emergency situations* had not met external moderation requirements, this unit standard was not delivered in 2013 because of insufficient demand.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the EER included the following focus areas:

- Governance, management and strategy – mandatory for all EERs
- First Aid Training
- National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3)

The two non-mandatory focus areas were selected because First Aid Training is the primary course delivered by Links Training (full course and revalidation), while the main national certificate that students enrol in is the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Core Competencies).

3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The 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.

Prior to the EER site visit, Links Training submitted a number of documents to NZQA. In addition, the external lead evaluator communicated with the director on site and by email and telephone to agree on and finalise the scope and agenda for the EER.

The evaluation team of two visited Links Training over two days. The team met with the director and two instructors. Telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of students who had recently completed the First Aid Training course and the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Core Competencies). Telephone interviews were also held with a number of external stakeholders (including the main workplace organisations whose employees were enrolled in either the First Aid Training course or the national certificate programme), and Careerforce Industry Training Organisation. The evaluation team also viewed a range of documents on site.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of the **Links Training (2008) Limited**

- Course achievement for the First Aid Training course (Elementary and Revalidation) has been consistently high. Just over 1,700 trainees have completed the training over the past 18 months, of whom 99 per cent successfully completed the course and met the requirements for obtaining a current first aid certificate.
- There was sufficient evidence to show that the First Aid Training course is both appreciated and valued by trainees and client organisations.
- High learner achievement levels, for both unit standard credit achievement and qualification achievement, were also evident for the small number of students who enrolled in the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Core Competencies).
- Students, graduates and workplace organisations spoken to by the evaluation team, together with examples viewed of student evaluation forms, confirmed that the national certificate programme had enhanced employee knowledge, skills and confidence levels.
- Stakeholders contacted by the evaluation team, including Careerforce, highly value the training delivered by Links Training.
- There was good evidence to show that the flexible, contextualised, student-centred delivery approach used by Links Training across all its courses and programmes, combined with the one-to-one support provided to students, has been a significant contributor to the high learner achievement levels.
- Links Training's ongoing engagement with external stakeholders has resulted in strong relationships being developed, enabling all parties to have a clear picture of industry and student needs, ensuring that teaching and assessment resources remain current and relevant.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of the **Links Training (2008) Limited**.

- Learner achievement for all Links Training's first aid courses is reviewed following each course delivered. Any non-completions are discussed with the instructors. Given the high achievement rates, this approach has enabled Links Training to have a clear understanding of why a small number of trainees do not succeed, which has been identified as being largely beyond the control of the PTE.
- The trainee evaluation forms completed by first aid trainees are reviewed by the director after each training session, and any issues that arise are discussed with the tutor and matters addressed as needed. In practice, very few issues have arisen in the past few years.
- Having relatively small numbers of students enrolled in the national certificate programme has enabled Links Training to monitor student progress on an individual basis and provide relevant support as needed to maximise success. It is evident that this individual approach has worked well, given the high levels of learner achievement, both in unit standards and qualification completions.
- For the national certificate programme, there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the regular contact Links Training has with client organisations, learners and Careerforce has enabled the PTE to have a clear understanding of the value and needs of key stakeholders, and to accommodate and implement any changes required. As with the First Aid Training course, Links Training considers that repeat business for the national certificate programme is an important indicator to them that clients value the training.
- Instructors are actively involved in professional development. In addition to attending monthly staff meetings to share feedback and ideas, instructors also regularly attend national workshops and conferences to maintain currency in their discipline, and in teaching and assessment. A number of examples of using what was learned from this were provided, including changes to delivery and content.
- Recent changes have been made to address the continued and expected future growth in enrolments, including the development of a business plan, a related action plan, the updating of the data management system, and a more documented and formal approach to self-assessment. Links Training acknowledges that such changes are currently a work in progress.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Course achievement for the First Aid Training course (Elementary and Revalidation) has been consistently high. Just over 1,700 trainees have completed the training over the past 18 months, of whom 99 per cent successfully completed the course and met the requirements for obtaining a current first aid certificate. The level of achievement was also validated by external moderation results, which showed that the unit standards delivered for the First Aid Training course in 2013 are meeting national standards. Self-assessment is largely fit for purpose, with all training results reviewed by the director. If any trainees are unsuccessful, this is discussed with the tutor. The main reason for the small number of non-achievements was identified as being linked to trainees either not attending or arriving late/departing early, and therefore not being able to meet the required minimum hours of training. Trainees are made aware of these requirements before they enrol.

High learner achievement levels were also evident for those students who enrolled in the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Core Competencies). It is evident that all students successfully complete the unit standards they enrol in following the final submission of their assessment materials. Over 90 per cent of the 28 students who have enrolled since the beginning of 2012 passed their unit standard assessment following their first submission. Links Training says an important contributing factor to this high rate of credit achievement is the relatively small number of students enrolled, which enables students to be monitored and supported as needed, as well as enabling instructors to contextualise delivery to meet the learners' needs.

Individual monitoring of students is also used to track their progress against qualification completions. Most students who enrol in the national certificate programme do so through their workplace organisations that subsequently contract Links Training to deliver the related unit standards. Since 2012, 20 of the 28 students who enrolled in the programme have either completed the programme or are currently progressing towards completion. Seven of the remaining eight students had chosen not to complete the programme because they have left their employment or the industry, which is recognised as being beyond the control of

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

Links Training. The connection between non-completions and leaving employment was verified by Links Training's main client organisation.

Students, graduates and workplace organisations spoken to by the evaluation team, together with examples viewed of completed 'How's it Going' student evaluation forms, confirmed that the national certificate programme had enhanced employee knowledge, skills and confidence levels.

While no overall analysis is done to identify learner achievement patterns or trends for the certificate programme, this is understandable given the small enrolment numbers, the current high level of achievement, and the variability in student enrolment dates. To cater for the likely continued growth in the national certificate programmes and first aid training delivered, Links Training has been making changes to the data management system. While such changes are currently a work in progress, Links Training will need to ensure the system is used to obtain a broader understanding of learner achievement data, and how this is analysed and used.

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

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

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

It was evident from graduate and stakeholder interviews that the first aid training is both appreciated and highly valued. This was further evidenced from the trainee evaluation questionnaires sighted by the evaluators. A common theme was the knowledge and confidence trainees acquired, which made them feel well prepared to provide first aid in emergency situations.

Most of the national certificate training is delivered to students employed by a small number of workplace organisations. Links Training has maintained training contractual agreements with these providers for a number of years, with enrolment numbers subsequently growing. As with first aid training, there are a number of other tertiary organisations that provide similar training in community support and care service. Given this competition, Links Training considers that repeat business is an important indicator that clients value the training.

Because of the small number of workplace organisations involved, Links Training has been able to maintain regular contact with its clients, and from the feedback received the PTE is aware that the training is highly valued and promoted. This was confirmed by phone interviews the evaluators conducted with the main client organisations and Careerforce. Client organisations and graduates interviewed were also able to detail the benefits of the training, a common one being that employees who are currently enrolled in or have completed the programme will often share what they have learned with other staff members in their workplace, resulting in improvements to the support services provided to customers and

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patients. One client organisation also identified and confirmed that it will be encouraging employees to build on the current national certificate gained and pathway to a specialist certificate that will link with their current or potential employment area. Links Training is aware of this development and anticipates that it will be an important area of growth for the business in the future.

Satisfaction surveys are sent to first aid clients every two years, and any issues that arise are addressed. While there are currently no formal processes used for analysing the survey results and any informal feedback gathered from graduates on the value of the training, there is a noticeable trend of increasing enrolments, particularly the Revalidation course enrolments which have increased by almost 50 per cent over the past two years.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

First aid training is delivered to both the general public and to workplace employees. As first aid skills may be used by trainees in different situations, at the beginning of the class the instructors gain feedback from the trainees in order to create practical scenarios that are contextualised to meet the potential health and safety issues of relevance to the trainees. This scenario-based approach was validated by evaluator conversations with client organisations and with trainees who had recently attended a first aid training course. Trainees valued this approach, with high levels of satisfaction noticeable in the completed trainee evaluation forms viewed by the evaluators.

When asked by client organisations to deliver the national certificate programme, Links Training meets with the client organisation to gather background information on the students and then create a programme study and time plan that meets both client and student needs. The plan is considered to be an expectation rather than a requirement, as flexibility is sometimes needed to meet student workload and availability issues. This needs-based, flexible approach to delivery was confirmed by client organisations spoken to by the evaluators, and it was evident that it was highly valued. While the flexibility can occasionally result in qualification completion dates having to be extended, it was evident that Links Training works collaboratively with client organisations to keep within the planned timeframes.

Training resource materials for delivery and assessment are provided by Careerforce, which enables the programme content to maintain currency and consistency in meeting learner and stakeholder needs. Training content, delivery and assessment are contextualised to meet the specific needs of trainees, which

was evident from the feedback evaluators gained from students interviewed and from the three-monthly 'How's it Going' student evaluation forms.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Teaching at Links Training is highly effective. To validate the effectiveness of the teaching in both the first aid courses and the national certificate programme, managers of the client organisations are invited to sit in on classes. All trainee evaluations are reviewed by the director after each training session, and any issues that arise are discussed with the tutor, and matters addressed as needed. In practice, very few issues have arisen in the past few years.

The way the instructors tailor their delivery to meet the different contexts and learning styles of students is a strong indicator of effective teaching, and an important contributor to the high student achievement rates. The initial contact made with workplace organisations when enrolling students in the national certificate programme has enabled Links Training to obtain important information on students' backgrounds. An effective induction process is then used by the instructors at the first training session, enabling them to gain a clear understanding of the students' backgrounds, learning styles and work roles. This is then used to provide a contextualised, student-centred delivery approach. Standard methods used include practical, scenario-based delivery, and students using formative, peer-assessment methods. These student-centred delivery methods were verified by evaluator interviews with students and client organisations, who considered these methods to be highly effective.

Links Training employs trained and certified first aid instructors, who maintain currency in meeting first aid qualification requirements. Similarly, the instructors who deliver the national certificate programme are appropriately qualified in both their specialist care and support area and in adult tertiary teaching.

Instructors are also actively involved in professional development activities. In addition to attending monthly staff meetings to share feedback and ideas, instructors also regularly attend national workshops and conferences to maintain currency in their discipline, and in teaching and assessment. Instructors attend a biannual moderation 'cluster group' workshop held by Careerforce, the standard-setting body for the national certificate programme. Careerforce confirmed that Links Training not only maintains high standards of assessment, but that the PTE also uses a Links Training tutor to facilitate many of the moderation cluster group workshops. The value and benefits of attending national workshops and conferences are reported back to the director, and ideas are subsequently shared.

A number of examples of using what was learned from this professional development activity were provided, including changes to delivery and content.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

The guidance and support provided by Links Training to its trainees is excellent. A registration and checklist form is used to capture details of all trainees enrolling in the First Aid Training course. This is used to identify any issues should additional support be needed. Even if trainees are not 'up-front' about their needs, the instructors make it clear to all trainees at the commencement of the training that additional support is available if required. The importance of identifying and managing barriers to learning is emphasised by Links Training through the creation of an instructor checklist. This is completed by instructors at the end of the training session and given to the director. The instructor checklist asks them to identify whether any trainees had barriers to learning and, if so, how these were managed. Additional support is provided to students on the training day if they are struggling to demonstrate competency in the assessment. This may involve extra time being made available at the end of the day if needed.

The first training session of a certificate course involves students completing a 'How I learn best' quiz, which adds to instructors' understanding of student needs and the type of support students may require. As well as providing additional support for students during the course sessions, the PTE also holds a monthly tutorial session which primarily focuses on students who may be struggling with their learning.

An attendance list is used for all training sessions. Where students are unable to attend the national certificate programme delivered in workplace organisations, the training materials are left with the relevant staff person who will work with the student to bring them up to speed. If students do not provide sufficient evidence of competency in a unit standard assessment, relevant feedback and support is provided. All parties also become aware at an early stage if a student has literacy and numeracy issues. A part-time tutor interviewed by the evaluation team, and who also works full-time in the care and support industry, spoke of how she built up the confidence of a student with low levels of literacy and numeracy by initially moving the focus away from the quality of writing by using practical and verbal methods so the student could demonstrate competency in the initial unit standard.

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

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

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

Links Training employs experienced and qualified staff who engage in regular professional development, which clearly informs their teaching. Monitoring of staff performance occurs on a regular basis, with the manager reviewing student feedback forms and gathering information from client organisations. Any matters arising are discussed with staff and addressed. One recent example was a concern students had with the quality of the facilities used for a first aid training session. As a result, the venue was immediately changed, with all staff made aware that all future venues must be thoroughly checked to ensure they conform to an appropriate standard. The monthly meetings with the instructors are also used to share ideas and feedback on issues that may arise of relevance to training, including any regulatory changes and lessons learned from professional development activities.

It is evident from the evaluators' interviews with instructors and external stakeholders that there is strong respect for, and confidence in, the way Links Training is led and managed, which is likely to be an important contributor to the current high levels of learner achievement. Communication with clients, students and instructors is considered to be highly effective, with client organisations indicating that the effectiveness of their engagement has resulted in flexible pedagogical approaches and course scheduling, together with a collaborative approach to supporting students to maximise their success.

The ongoing engagement with external stakeholders, including client organisations and Careerforce, has resulted in strong relationships being developed, enabling all parties to gain a clear understanding of industry and student needs. Understanding the changing demands and needs of industry also enables Links Training to plan ahead. For example, Links Training is aware that there will be a significant growth in community support and care in the future to meet the needs of an ageing population. Similarly, given the stronger industry emphasis on health and safety requirements, the PTE is also aware that the demand for first aid and other related training will also increase in the future.

During the past 12 months a number of changes have been made to accommodate the organisation's growth, including the appointment of additional part-time staff. The director now focuses more on the management side of the business. An action plan linked to the recently created business plan is currently under development, which is intended to create strategies that will be used for ensuring the business plan goals are met. At this stage, it remains uncertain whether each of the goals will include performance indicators and/or benchmarks, and what self-assessment processes may be used and linked to these.

The PTE's current focus on meeting the individual needs of students and clients is working well for Links Training, which is evident from its high achievement levels and

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from learner and stakeholder feedback. Given that the organisation plans to continue its current growth into the future, creating a more formalised and systematic approach to self-assessment will be needed if Links Training is to maintain its current high levels of educational performance.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

2.2 Focus area: First Aid Training

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

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

2.3 Focus area: National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3)

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Links Training (2008) Limited:

- Develop a more formalised self-assessment process that accommodates the projected growth in learner enrolments to ensure current high levels of educational performance are able to be maintained.²

² Guidelines and key features relating to effective self-assessment can be found on NZQA's website: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/self-assessment/what-is-self-assessment/>

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are 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.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which 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.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 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 and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

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).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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