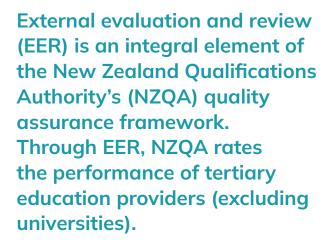# Real-world examples of good practice in tertiary education

Stories of provider success against NZQA's Tertiary Evaluation Indicators

External evaluation and review (EER) is an integral element of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority's (NZQA) quality assurance framework. Through EER, NZQA rates the performance of tertiary education providers (excluding universities).

It does so by asking how effectively each provider supports its students and enables them to achieve their goals. In reaching its conclusions, NZQA is guided by the quality of the relevant evidence presented by the provider and other stakeholders, including the students themselves.

This Insights paper looks at some examples of good practice identified by EER in recent years. This paper takes a deep dive into how providers ensure that their 'programmes match needs' using extracts from EER reports. In a companion to this paper (available from www.nzqa.govt.nz/insights), we share stories of provider good practice from across the remaining four TEI categories, as recalled by EER evaluators.

Good practice and the tertiary evaluation indicators

Through the EER process, NZQA evaluators are privileged to see many examples of what is working well across the tertiary education sector.

During the EER process, tertiary education providers use evidence and accompanying analysis to answer six key evaluation questions, which are aligned to NZQA's five tertiary evaluation indicator (TEI) categories, as outlined in Table One below.

NZQA developed 35 TEIs under these five categories, to give tertiary education providers common points of reference for what 'good' can look like in education and training. The TEIs serve as a useful tool for providers and evaluators alike throughout the EER process.

This Insights paper illustrates real-world examples of good practice, drawn from EER reports and the first-hand experiences of EER evaluators.

Detailed prompts and guidance to aid evaluative enquiry can be found in NZQA's publication on Tertiary Evaluation Indicators.

Table One: Five tertiary evaluation indicator categories and related key evaluation questions

Tertiary evaluation indicator category	Related key evaluation questions
Programmes match needs	How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?
Achievement and outcomes	How well do students achieve? What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?
Student engagement	How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?
Governance and management	How effective are governance and management at supporting educational achievement?
Compliance	How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

A deep dive into 'Programmes match needs'

The TEI category 'programmes match needs' consists of nine indicators, aligned to the key evaluative question: *'How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?'*.

The indicators that guide providers to succeed in this category are:

- Programmes maintain relevance to stakeholders and communities.

- Programmes are regularly reviewed and updated to meet existing and emerging needs of students and stakeholders.

- Learning environments are planned and structured for the benefit and needs of students.

- Academic standards and integrity are maintained.

- Learning activities and resources are effective in engaging students.

- Key stakeholders, including students, are clearly identified and engagement is appropriate and ongoing.

- Assessment is fair, valid, consistent, and appropriate.

- Assessment provides students and teachers with useful feedback on progress.

- Learning activities and assessment tasks are purposefully aligned with learning outcomes.

What helped providers to ensure programmes matched needs?

The 94 EER reports analysed for this TEI, and discussions with the evaluators involved, illustrated that there are many ways in which providers across Aotearoa New Zealand are working to ensure that their programmes are relevant, academically sound, engaging and fit for purpose. Good practice examples have been grouped into the following eight themes:

1. Strong, collaborative relationships with industry

2. Meaningful, active engagement with iwi and the community

3. Partnerships with other organisations to improve learner outcomes

4. Workplace relevance and real scenarios

5. Staff at all levels and from across the organisation contribute to programme development and review

6. Organisational motivation and processes to support continuous change

7. Feedback collection includes formal and informal approaches

8. Data-led programme development and review

For each theme, this paper summarises what providers across the country are doing and shares some specific examples.

1. Strong, collaborative relationships with industry

Strong, collaborative connections with industry allow providers to gain insight into workplace needs, and to work with industry representatives on content reviews and programme design to ensure that programmes produce work ready graduates.

Real-world examples: What can this look like in practice?

Master Drive Services Limited hold a "one-on-one annual review meeting with large clients" which allows their key clients to provide direct input into the following year's programme offerings. Bakels Training Organisation similarly maintains deep connections with key stakeholders and have a practice where industry and other stakeholders conduct reviews of programme content before final iterations of the programme are delivered.

Leadership at Adventure Works Limited work closely with their sector in the development and design of new outdoor instructor qualifications, which will ultimately mean their new qualifications are fit for purpose and meet the needs of employers and other industry stakeholders.

The Institute of Professional Legal Studies make use of connections with practising legal practitioners for external moderation, which contributes to course relevance through "ongoing input into the appropriateness of legal fact patterns used in assessment."

Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) actively engages with employers and local body and business sector leaders to ensure alignment of programmes with the needs of key industries. EIT is a longstanding member of regional economic development strategy and governance groups, and it has strong collaborative with local businesses who contribute to EIT programmes as guest speakers, support work placements and internships, and employ graduates.

2. Meaningful, active engagement with iwi and the community

As providers actively engage with iwi and the wider community, they are better informed on how their programmes align with community goals and can equip students with knowledge and skills that are valued by their communities and iwi. This engagement should be meaningful, with providers actively listening to iwi and community voices in the community and changing what they offer to better meet community needs.

Real-world examples: What can this look like in practice?

Le Cordon Bleu New Zealand has for many years worked primarily with an international student base. However, in recent years, they have been delivering to more domestic students. To ensure that their programmes match the needs of these domestic students and the local community, they commissioned a report on 'embedding bicultural design and delivery' to help inform their engagement with local iwi and Māori organisations.

ETCO Training identified that they could better meet the needs of their learners from certain demographic groups and have subsequently increased iwi and Pasifika community links and created separate Māori, Pasifika and female advisory groups to assist with this increased community engagement.

Through engagement with local iwi, Naturopathic College of New Zealand have updated their programmes to include Te Ao Māori, tikanga and te reo, which help meet the needs of the community and their learners. Following this, Naturopathic College of New Zealand have experienced whānau group enrolments, demonstrating the value of this community engagement to the community and the college alike.

EIT has long standing relationships and partnership agreements with iwi, hapū and Māori community groups. These arrangements provide opportunities for partners to influence the curriculum, for example incorporating mātauranga Māori content, and to ensure graduate outcomes will support the growth of the Māori economy.

3. Partnerships with other organisations to improve learner outcomes

Open, collaborative approaches to building partnerships with external organisations helps fill gaps, supports learner achievement and improves learner outcomes. Partnerships can take many forms – they can involve working with another organisation to develop a programme that addresses a need, or they can be connections which help facilitate the learner's study journey and career progression through working with another provider to offer complementary services.

Real-world examples: What can this look like in practice?

Central Otago Rural Education Activities Programme partner with various agencies to deliver customised programmes to their clients. A recent partnership with the Department of Corrections resulted in additional offerings of Lifeskills courses, which enable Corrections' clients to complete community service hours.

GET Training have employment partnerships with businesses who support young learners through work placements. GET Training learners, many of whom are eager to enter the workforce, can access viable employment opportunities whilst training, which in some cases lead to ongoing employment for their graduates. Similarly, New Zealand School of Dance have developed strong partnerships with key players in the dance community, which provide valuable access to industry practitioners and real-life opportunities to support performances.

Taranaki Education Training Trust has a memorandum of understanding with the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand to provide learner pathways and study support for their graduates who may wish to enrol in the next level of study, which is not offered by Taranaki Education Training Trust. This pathway is highly valued by learners as it ensures that their needs are met in the immediate and long-term.

4. Workplace relevance and real scenarios

On-campus learners are more likely to be motivated and engaged when the learning involves examples or case studies from real scenarios. Learners in the workplace benefit from being able to apply their learning in their own context. Workplace relevance also ensures that learning is more closely aligned with employer and industry needs and, therefore, learners' future job opportunities.

Real-world examples: What can this look like in practice?

Solomon Group deliver programme content in an industry-like context, wherever possible. Infrastructure activities and community projects, such as work on car parks and driveways for marae, simulate on-the-job roles, responsibilities, and use of equipment. A new contact centre lab also simulates the commercial environment, including equipment, software, and call scripts. Role plays and similar activities provide an opportunity for scenario-based learning and assessment, which meets the needs of their learners, many of whom are studying with Solomon Group to improve their employment prospects.

Similarly, Mr Barber Training Centre's training facility is set up as a real 'barbershop' to give students relevant experience and to support them to transition easily into the workplace. For practical roles such as barbering, learners appreciate the opportunity to apply practical skills which are relevant to their chosen career path.

Lines & Cables Training Limited training takes place on the business client's site using the client's own equipment which better meets their needs. More generally, Lines & Cables Training Limited tailors its training to meet client requests, while meeting industry compliance requirements. This ensures that their learners are learning in a context which is relevant to their work, and business clients can be assured that their staff are gaining knowledge and skills which will assist them in their roles.

Agoge Training Limited, SIS Training, and Fire Rescue and First Response Limited each work to engage their learners through linking theoretical learning to real-world situations. These providers often draw upon the knowledge and experience of staff, who share

anecdotes and case-study examples from real life to contextualise learning.

5. Staff at all levels and from across the organisation contribute to programme development and review

Prioritising regular interactions between teaching staff, administration staff, academic leadership, and organisational management at different intervals can be beneficial. Through including staff from across the organisation and at all levels in programme development and review and moderation processes, providers benefit from the full breadth of knowledge available to them. This better informs necessary changes and how to implement them to ensure programmes match the needs of stakeholders.

Tutors and teaching staff provide insight into learner voice and on-the-ground updates from current programmes. Academic leadership offer expertise in programme design and educational best practice, and organisational management ensure strategic oversight and relevant decision making.

Learners and other key stakeholders often have relationships with a range of staff at a provider in different roles – teachers/tutors, administration staff, assessors, guest lecturers and management. Staff connecting with one another ensures that these different perspectives inform programmes in a coherent way.

Real-world examples: What can this look like in practice?

Besafe Training Limited engage staff at different levels in programme reviews through regular (often weekly or fortnightly) "community of practice" meetings with teaching staff, where teachers are encouraged to provide feedback on programme delivery, learner feedback and teaching materials. WhiteCliffe College takes a staggered and continuous approach to programme review, hosting monthly management-level meetings, and engaging a range of staff in quarterly programme reviews, which ultimately inform the annual programme reviews.

Target Education hosts full-day moderation events

with all staff across their campuses. This brings together the wealth of knowledge held across the organisation and their staff work together to moderate assessments. People Potential Limited engage a range of staff through "peer observation, group and inter-campus moderation," and Industry Training Solutions Limited has moved towards moderators "working in clusters rather than individually" to help ensure credible achievement rates.

6. Organisational motivation and processes to support continuous change

Providers need to respond to ongoing changes, such as legislation, industry and community needs, and learner interests and outcomes if their programmes are to stay relevant, equitable and sustainable.

Whilst periodic change, through annual programme review and feedback gathering processes, is useful, the 'scheduled' nature of these processes can mean that desirable changes do not happen outside these planned periods. Small adjustments to programme delivery, content, and learning and assessment activities through the year pass on benefits to learners immediately.

Developing a new programme requires more organisational effort than adjustments to an existing programme but can be a more effective response to external change in some circumstances.

Real-world examples: What can this look like in practice?

Air New Zealand Academy of Learning have robust processes to review delivery in real time on an ongoing basis, which result in immediate updates as necessary, within the boundaries of established procedures and programme requirements.

IPU New Zealand actively create new and retire dated programmes to maintain an up-to-date offering. This strong commitment to change can be more arduous, however it ensures offerings closely meet current needs, which is not always possible through adjustments to existing programmes. Solomon Group have entirely replaced what was their largest programme at their previous EER. The group commits

to change through continuous programme review, refresh and retirement.

AGI Education Ltd immediately address concerns they identify through moderation, to ensure that content is amended, or new systems are introduced, to address the gap in the very next assessment round. Similarly, following internal and external moderation of unit standard assessments,

7. Feedback collection includes formal and informal approaches

Most providers collect feedback periodically from their learners and stakeholders to understand how programmes and practices can be improved, but exemplary providers take a more thorough approach. They frequently collect ongoing feedback through a combination of collection methods to gather more nuanced feedback which can be used to ensure that their programmes match needs.

Real-world examples: What can this look like in practice?

First Aid Consultants Limited has sound systems to gather feedback from trainees and client organisations. They take a systematic approach to gathering feedback through an online surveying platform, and pair this with less formal collection methods, such as asking trainees every day: 'How is it going?'; 'Did you understand that?'; 'Did you enjoy that session?'. This dual approach is useful for both identifying improvement and engaging trainees.

EIT have similarly enhanced their feedback collection methods through the introduction of targeted focus groups, which can yield richer and more specific information for improvement purposes. They combine the feedback obtained from these groups with that gathered through the more traditional generic feedback-survey approach to inform decision-making.

Horizon Education Limited have introduced monthly lunchtime sessions with the managing director for students to directly provide feedback and suggestions. SAE Institute has implemented an ideas wall, Sues Computer Training Company combines formal end-of-course evaluations with informal feedback through

email or forum discussions, and Language Studies International (NZ) Limited have reflective student journals which are completed weekly by students online to express goals or concerns.

8. Data-led programme development and review

Creating programmes that match needs requires an organisational culture focused on data-based change. Providers make use of different types of data, including enrolment data, attendance data, achievement data, graduate outcomes data, and learner, tutor and stakeholder feedback. Proper use and analysis of data from a range of sources gives providers insight into existing patterns, gaps, and emerging needs to inform programme review, programme development and organisational practice.

Real-world examples: What can this look like in practice?

ETCO Training's use of student survey data has led to programme changes which better meet learner needs, such as adjusting the topic teaching order. Similarly, Target Education's analysis of student feedback demonstrated a demand for online delivery. This led to Target Education retaining the online delivery for one day per week post-Covid lockdown, and a "revised delivery sequence for the modules."

The Institute of Professional Legal Studies conducted a focused analysis of "not yet competent" results, which led to the redevelopment of a challenging module to better support learning. The analysis also informed their decision to introduce an assessment resubmission process, which has improved learning outcomes.

Bethlehem Tertiary Institute are adaptive in their feedback processes. Recent revisions to their student surveys have demonstrably increased not only the response rates, but also the usefulness of the feedback gathered. Seafield School of English Limited have strengthened their feedback collection methods, to ensure currency of survey design methodology. The school retrained their staff on survey use, which has rebuilt staff confidence in feedback collection, and in turn, "created a better measure for students and ensured validity of data for analysis."

Drawing it together

In practice, high quality providers ensure that their programmes match needs through implementing a combination of the practices outlined above. The stories below show how two providers have put multiple elements into practice, with both self-assessment and educational performance practices working hand-in-hand in their tales of reflecting upon and responding to their changing contexts and community need.

'Programmes match needs' in action: Mining emergency services training provider (Provider A)

Provider A is a private training establishment supporting the mining industry which was established following the Pike River mine disaster.

Provider A works to ensure that everyone working underground meets a minimum set of competencies, and that those entering underground environments have sound knowledge of risks, operating procedures, hazard monitoring and escape and self-rescue processes.

Just three years after their establishment, Provider A were faced with a major challenge: the 2016 closure of the Roaa Mine saw the end of operational underground mining in New Zealand. Thanks to the responsive leadership team, Provider A quickly adapted.

The Mines Act requires that every person working underground is appropriately trained and inducted. Whilst there were no longer any underground mines, there are tunnels – lots of them. Provider A quickly shifted focus from mines to tunnels, and were once again offering programmes that matched industry and learner need.

They have employed a variety of mechanisms to help ensure this, including ongoing contact with clients and trainees, embedding staff, trainee satisfaction surveys, client surveys, end-of-training discussions, and participation in several industry fora. Trainers work with client organisations to develop and continually enhance teaching and learning scenarios contextualised to the workplace. When Provider A contracts to a new client, teaching staff will always visit the site and review operational documentation to familiarise themselves with the site, plant, and work style. On bigger projects, Provider A staff are "embedded" in the project, meaning they are permanently based on the project site.

Provider A's client focus is typified in the way the PTE schedules the training around the needs of clients and delivers training where and when it is needed. Of note was the significant response by Provider A to the needs of clients to continue to operate essential services and critical projects during the various phases of COVID-19 restrictions.

The increasing number and proportion of migrant workers in the industry and on courses has amplified the importance of student support practices. Course material is designed so that it is uncomplicated and easy to understand, and speakers of other languages are occasionally available to assist if required. Provider A requires all assessments to be completed in English as this is the language of the workplace.

Provider A has also raised the bar in terms of supporting learners on short courses. Despite only working with trainees for short periods of time, Provider A staff has identified that being independent often places them in a position to recognise signs of stress or mental health issues in trainees. Provider A has gone above and beyond expectation by networking with the "Mates In Construction" organisation and several trainers have completed Mates training to assist in recognition of pastoral needs and referral to appropriate support services.

Provider A illustrates how a provider can ensure that programmes match needs, responding quickly to the changing needs of their industry.

'Programmes match needs' in action: Emergency response training provider (Provider B)

Provider B provides training to local councils, government departments, private companies, and the public. They work to meet the training needs of civil defence volunteers and managers in the Canterbury region to increase the capacity and capability of the territorial authorities, including their staff and volunteers, to respond to emergencies. Provider B's short courses include rescue, medical, welfare and core skills. The focus has remained on training delivery in Canterbury, with a limited number of courses delivered

in other regions, including Wellington.

Following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, and numerous floods, Provider B's work has been of vital importance to the region. Provider B has focused on building capability in the region to ensure its learners are equipped to respond appropriately to the numerous disasters they have been faced with in recent years.

Provider B has proven ability in effectively meeting the needs of their stakeholders. They employ trainers who work in the civil defence and emergency response fields, and who have extensive understanding of disaster management and trauma in emergency situations. This helps to ensure that the programme delivery is relevant to the real-world and allows trainers to draw on their personal experiences to contextualise the programme content.

Much of Provider B's success can be attributed to engagement with key stakeholders. They meet regularly with councils and community leaders to keep abreast of the needs of each region, and to gain an understanding of what training is required of existing and new volunteers. Provider B's training is customised to ensure that learners have the appropriate tools for an emergency. Programme planning is a collaborative effort between Provider B staff and territorial councils, with a focus on community needs, and Provider B hold debriefing sessions following emergencies which inform course development and review.

Through the frequent engagement with community and council leaders, the organisation has developed new ways of working and new programmes. Their psychological first aid course was developed to address the demand for more support and wellbeing for people in the community.

This dedication to meeting community needs extends across all levels of the organisation, from the trainers to the governance and management levels. They listen, learn, and respond to the voices of the community, which enables a small organisation with limited staff and resources to provide important and impactful services to the region.

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The *Insights* series draws on NZQA's data and expertise to provide insights into qualification, assessment, and quality assurance matters. *Insights* papers have a particular focus on equity issues, good practice and bringing to life administrative data that will support education system improvement.

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