Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

Horizon Education Limited

Date of report: 15 August 2025

About Horizon Education Limited

Horizon Education provides foundation skills training for students who exit the mainstream schooling system early. The PTE also provides training to students seeking entry into support worker employment.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Level 1, 312-320 Church Street, Palmerston North
Eligible to enrol international students:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 7.7 equivalent full-time students – 20 Youth Guarantee students, five Māori, two Pasifika, 12 students with a self-identified disability International: nil
Number of staff:	5.7 full-time equivalents – five full-time, one part-time
TEO profile:	Link to Horizon Education provider page
Last EER outcome:	At the previous EER, conducted on 30 September to 1 October 2020, NZQA was Highly Confident in Horizon Education Limited's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	Future Directions Youth Guarantee which leads to: New Zealand Certificate in Foundation Skills (Level 1) with a concurrent programme leading to NCEA Level 2 in the Social and Community Skills Vocational Pathway
MoE number:	8824
NZQA reference:	C61262
Dates of EER visit:	14 and 15 May 2025

Summary of results

Horizon Education is delivering highly valued, individualised training to students with high learning needs. The training helps them to achieve significant personal growth and overcome learning challenges. While the PTE's self-assessment offers useful insights, its effectiveness could be improved through more formal processes to better evaluate student progress and outcomes.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Horizon Education's students are highly engaged in their learning and well supported to gain knowledge, improve their skills, and achieve unit standard credits and qualifications. In the process, students overcome personal challenges and develop important life skills and personal attributes such as confidence and perseverance. The outcomes for these students are highly significant to becoming independent, confident and productive members of their communities.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Achievement is strong for all students, including Māori and Pasifika who achieve at a similar, and sometimes higher rate than other student groups.
- Individual goals inform learning plans and are well aligned to the student context. Targeted learning support by highly experienced and knowledgeable tutors helps reduce barriers to learning. Students are encouraged and highly engaged to achieve their learning objectives. Ongoing supportive and encouraging feedback gives students confidence and enhances student wellbeing.
- Although programme review has been variable across the reporting period, a comprehensive programme review is underway, and all materials are being refreshed. Teaching staff are contributing to the review process which provides opportunities for growth and consistency of practice across the academic team. Peer moderation processes are evolving

as the tutors develop new ideas for improving their own practices in teaching and assessment.

- Governance and management are well connected to the community, businesses and government agencies to ensure stakeholders' and students' needs are being addressed.
- Compliances are mostly managed well. Some areas in assessment practice are improving with new systems and processes recently implemented. External moderation validates most assessor decisions. Where issues have been raised, Horizon Education is comprehensively reviewing and making improvements.
- Overall self-assessment processes could be strengthened to support proactive identification of problems.

Key evaluation question findings[1]

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Horizon Education's training is highly valued as it is meeting a high demand for pathways for early school leavers. The training addresses the needs of vulnerable young people who have not been able to achieve in the mainstream schooling system. Despite personal challenges, students develop confidence, strengthen their personal and cultural identity (mana), and achieve personal and learning goals while gaining practical skills. The PTE provides students with an opportunity to complete their schooling as well as offering a highly individualised and student-centric environment with wraparound supports. This helps students develop effective mental health coping skills, life skills and social networks which they did not have previously. The training is highly beneficial to students and their parents who gain a sense of relief and optimism as their children discover a renewed sense of purpose and direction. Between 2021 and 2024, qualification completion rates varied for Future Directions Youth Guarantee (includes NCEA Level 2). The PTE recorded strong performance in 2022 (21 of 24 students, 88 per cent) and 2023 (28 of 36 students, 78 per cent), followed by a decline in 2024 (23 of 41, 56 per cent).[2] This drop is attributed to typical student rollovers and a high proportion of students with mental health or learning disabilities, who may take longer to complete their studies. A similar trend can be seen in the qualification completions in the Skills for Industry

[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] Refer Appendix 1 for achievement results.

	programme, with many students overcoming long-term personal challenges to succeed. Horizon Education consistently performs above the sector average of 60 per cent in annual qualification completions. Māori make up 51 per cent, and Pasifika 12 per cent of the 2024 cohort. These priority group students achieve at par or at higher rates compared with other students. Graduates gain access to career and further education opportunities that were previously unavailable, along with personal growth and improved daily life skills. Horizon Education gathers feedback from students and community stakeholders, and this data shows that many students are well prepared to make informed career choices and successfully transition to further education or employment. Horizon Education maintains strong networks with schools, government agencies, mental and social health services, and has long-standing connections in the Manawatu region. These connections mean the organisation is at the forefront for referrals from communities. Some systems and processes require further development to better track educational performance and students' needs over time, with a focus on identifying trends and measuring student progress beyond achievement results.
Conclusion:	Students achieve and gain valuable skills and knowledge which is life changing. A systematic and regular analysis of student gains, achievement and feedback each year will help the organisation to better understand student needs and the value of outcomes.

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:	Programme review is ongoing, and a more formal review throughout 2024 and 2025 is occurring. The academic manager collaborates regularly with tutors to ensure the programmes are appropriately refreshed. Horizon Education uses student feedback and tutors' understanding of student needs to make improvements and create structured learning plans and well-defined programme resources. Horizon Education engages regularly with education support organisations to develop appropriate learning tools that are specific to diverse learning challenges. Universal Design for Learning is a framework used to adapt training to provide multiple means of representation, engagement and expression to ensure all students can access and participate in meaningful learning. This allows the PTE to maintain current and relevant teaching practices and to offer supportive and engaging learning activities. Students learn at their own relaxed pace, and flexible learning solutions cater to different students' sensory needs to avoid stressful environments. Assessments were pre-assessment moderated over prior periods. Internal post-assessment moderation has been informally conducted among the tutors over the reporting period. Some formal internal moderation is occurring for the unit standards delivered. Most national external moderation requirements have been met. However, NZQA external moderation results in 2021, 2022 and 2024 identified some issues related to the numeracy system. Horizon Education has prioritised review of these assessments to address the numeracy issues. A blind moderation process[3] is being developed and will be adopted as a more regular moderation method. It would be

[3] A process where a second marker reviews a piece of work without the original marker's marks or comments to minimise bias and ensure objective, fair assessment.

	beneficial for Horizon Education to conduct more formal internal post-assessment moderation of samples of unit standards delivered over a cycle to ensure that all assessments in use are reviewed over the delivery period.
Conclusion:	Programmes are well aligned with student needs, and programme review is mostly effective. Existing processes have been revised to support self-assessment.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Students are selected through a rigorous interview process that identifies their learning needs, including any disabilities. Many arrive with low confidence, and structured support is provided to help those experiencing mental health challenges and anxiety. This support enables students to gradually transition from isolation to active classroom participation, with notable progress often seen within a few months. Social interaction is encouraged as part of the learning journey. Students are highly engaged in their courses, and their progress is carefully tracked through milestones that help motivate success. Attendance and work submissions are monitored by support staff, who ensure that any additional help is planned and delivered effectively. A student portal using Google Classroom provides access to resources and allows students to catch up when absent, while also facilitating remote engagement with coursework. Learning materials are comprehensive, regularly reviewed, and designed to encourage active participation. Additional support is available for neurodiverse students and those with low literacy or oral communication needs. Assessments are recognised as challenging, so students receive thorough preparation and regular feedback to build their confidence. The programme promotes independent learning and encourages students to take ownership of their educational journey.

	While cultural diversity is not a major focus, normalising difference is embedded in everyday practice, contributing to an inclusive environment. Tutors are approachable and responsive to student needs. Horizon Education collects regular student feedback, which informs ongoing programme improvements and supports student achievement.
Conclusion:	Strong processes support the PTE's understanding of student needs, and support is tailored to the individual student. Comprehensive self-assessment is resulting in well-informed decisions being made with students' diverse needs always in mind.

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

Performance:	**Excellent**
Self-assessment:	**Excellent**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Horizon Education has a clear focus on strategy, values, purpose and direction. The organisation's key objective is not to expand but to continue doing what it does well, serving those who need its services, particularly previously disadvantaged students. During 2023–24, the organisation experienced a brief period of reduced staffing due to changes in staff circumstances. Despite this, staff retention remains strong, with most employees staying long-term. Weekly staff meetings are held for planning and reflection, and monthly meetings foster collaboration. The employment of an academic manager is a positive development. Staff work closely with senior management, addressing student challenges and resource needs. Governance is supported by an advisory board that provides objective insights and acts as a sounding board, contributing to governance discussions held four times a year. The managing director has extensive experience and values external input, often drawing on her connections with business networks and education stakeholders. The organisation is well connected to the community, schools and local businesses, which supports student referrals and engagement.

	Staff are recruited for their ability to relate to students. Professional development opportunities include seminars and training on student-centred support such as trauma response, and certifications such as NCALNE[4], unit standard 4098 for tutors, and first aid. Staff wellbeing is prioritised through meaningful appreciation gestures contributing to a positive work culture. Reporting is formalised and focused on student outcomes, leading to programme reviews. Data is actively collected and analysed to inform improvements, with insights flowing directly into the student experience.
Conclusion:	Horizon Education's governance and management teams are highly knowledgeable and dedicated, driving a committed staff toward strong educational outcomes for the students. The PTE's comprehensive self-assessment processes effectively inform decisions that lead to continuous improvement in educational performance.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	**Good**
Self-assessment:	**Good**
Findings and supporting evidence:	Horizon Education demonstrates broad compliance across key regulatory areas, with most requirements being met. The managing director maintains oversight of compliance and reporting, addressing minor issues such as those related to national external moderation. The comprehensive quality management system is reviewed annually, with policy and procedure updates occurring monthly. The organisation meets credit reporting compliance, and all relevant attestations have been submitted on time to NZQA. Toitū Te Waiora Workforce Development Council and Careerforce external moderation has generally supported assessor decisions. However, NZQA's moderation of literacy and numeracy identified inconsistencies in two different years, indicating ongoing issues with numeracy assessment. These issues were being resolved with some

[4] New Zealand Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

	external academic guidance, but the ongoing effectiveness of this response is yet to be determined. A one-off lapse in 2022 occurred when Legal Studies assessment materials were not submitted to NZQA due to an oversight by the director. Ministry of Social Development reporting requirements are met through regular document submissions and weekly staff engagement with their representative. As Horizon Education enrols students under 18 years of age, all staff are police-vetted and staff records are updated every three years to meet requirements under the Children's Act 2014 and the Education and Training Act 2020. The Code of Practice self-review is comprehensive and involves all staff. The self-review report includes incident and complaint reporting and is made publicly available on the PTE's website.
Conclusion:	Horizon Education understands its compliance accountabilities, and management systems and processes are being improved to meet them.

Focus areas

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

2.1 Vocational Pathway (NCEA Levels 1 and 2)

Performance:	**Excellent**
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 Horizon Education Limited:

- Consider analysis of student gains data at course level and the best way to capture and measure key indicators of success for all students.
- Consider how best to capture stakeholder evidence of outcomes for both programmes, in a way that is useful and informs future delivery of each programme.

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

Table 1. Achievement data for the Skills for Industry programme: Introduction to Care and Support Work (Level 2) which leads to the New Zealand Certificate in Health and Wellbeing (Foundation Skills) (Level 2)

Skills for Industry	2021	2022	2023
Enrolments	35	20	16
Qualification completions	28	14	9
% completions	80%	70%	56%
Incompletes	7	6	7
% incompletes	20%	30%	31%

Data supplied by Horizon Education Limited

Table 2. Achievement data for Future Directions Youth Guarantee programme which leads to the New Zealand Certificate in Foundation Skills (Level 1) with a concurrent programme leading to NCEA Level 2 in the Social and Community Skills Vocational Pathway

Youth Guarantee	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Enrolments	32	24	36	41	13
Qualification completions	18	21	28	23	7
% completions	56%	88%	78%	56%	54%
Incompletes	14	3	8	18	24 yet to complete
% incompletes	44%	13%	22%	44%	46% yet to complete
Rollovers	-	-	-	-	18
Youth Guarantee average		57%			
Benchmark		60%			
Horizon Education average rate 2021-25		66%			

Data supplied by Horizon Education Limited

Table 3. Programme data by priority groups 2021-24

Future Directions NCEA Level 1				
Overall	2021	2022	2023	2024
Enrolments	29	16	26	35
Qual completions	14	12	20	19
Qual completions %	48%	75%	77%	54%
Course completions	71.70%	93.50%	78%	63.70%
Māori				
Enrolments	16	1	11	18
Completions	6	1	9	5
Qual completions %	38%	100%	82%	28%
Course completions	61.40%	85.6%	71%	54.80%
Pasifika				
Enrolments	3	0	3	4
Completions	2	0	3	2
Qual completions %	67%	0%	100%	50%
Course completions	79.80%	41.90%	100%	39.80%
Non-Māori/non-Pasifika				
Enrolments	12	15	14	16
Completions	8	11	10	14
Qual completions %	67%	73%	71%	88%
Course completions	82.2	97%	81.70%	82.90%
Vocational Pathway (NCEA Level 2) in the Social and Community Skills				
Overall	2021	2022	2023	2024
Enrolments	32	24	36	41
Completions	16	20	28	23
Qual completions %	50%	83%	78%	56%
Course completions	76.8	91.80%	84%	70.10%
Māori				
Enrolments	17	6	13	20
Completions	7	5	11	6
Qual completions %	41%	83%	85%	30%
Course completions	72.2	83.0%	82.3%	59.40%
Pasifika				
Enrolments	3	1	4	5
Completions	2	1	4	3
Qual completions %	67%	100%	100%	60%

Course completions	70.40%	81.6%	100%	47%
Non-Māori/non-Pasifika				
Enrolments	14	17	21	19
Completions	9	14	15	16
Qual completions %	64%	82%	71%	84%
Course completions	84.50%	96%	82%	87.40%

Table 4. Youth Guarantee overall data

Overall	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Total average**
Enrolments	61	40	62	76	59.75
Qual completions	30	32	48	42	38
Qual completions %	49%	80%	77%	55%	65%
Course completions	74.25%	92.65%	81.00%	66.90%	78.70%
Māori	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Average**
Enrolments	33	7	24	38	25.5
Qual completions	13	6	20	11	12.5
Qual completions %	39%	86%	83%	29%	59%
Course completions	66.80%	84.30%	76.65%	57.10%	71.21%
Pasifika	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Average**
Enrolments	6	1	7	9	5.75
Completions	4	1	7	5	4.25
Qual completions %	67%	100%	100%	56%	81%
Course completions	75.10%	61.75%	100.00%	43.40%	70.06%
Non-Māori/non-Pasifika	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Average**
Enrolments	26	32	35	35	32
Completions	17	25	25	30	24.25
Qual completions %	65%	78%	71%	86%	75%
Course completions	83.25%	96.50%	81.85%	85.15%	85.90%

Data supplied by Horizon Education

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 fraud*[5]
- *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.*

[5] 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 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

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 excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, micro-credentials 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 2022. 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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