

Report of External Evaluation and Review

SPELD NZ

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 25 July 2018

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MoE Number: 7670
NZQA Reference: C27707
Date of EER visit: 6 and 7 June 2018

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:	SPELD NZ
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	5 August 2004
Location:	14 Erson Avenue, Royal Oak, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above. SPELD NZ also delivers occasional courses, as required, in regional centres throughout New Zealand.
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 3)• SPELD (NZ) Certificate in Specific Learning Disabilities (Level 5)
Code of Practice signatory:	NA
Number of students:	Domestic: 93 candidates Level 5 – 51 (Pakeha 92 per cent; Māori 6 per cent; British Indian 2 per cent) Level 3 – 42 (Pakeha 91 per cent; Māori 7 per cent; Cook Island Māori 2 per cent) International: nil
Number of staff:	One full-time, six part-time. Part-time course directors are contracted as required to deliver courses.
Scope of active accreditation:	See: <u>SPELD NZ</u>

Distinctive characteristics:	SPELD NZ provides information, assessment, training and tuition to families, schools, businesses and individuals living with specific learning disabilities, which includes dyslexia, dyspraxia and other disorders.
Recent significant changes:	This will be the last year of delivery for the level 5 local course programme (SPELD (NZ) Certificate in Specific Learning Disabilities). SPELD NZ will seek approval to deliver a new level 5 programme (New Zealand Certificate in Teaching Individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities).
Previous quality assurance history:	NZQA was Highly Confident in the educational performance and Highly Confident in the capability in self-assessment of SPELD NZ at the previous external evaluation and review (EER) conducted in May 2014.
Other:	<p>SPELD NZ is not directly government funded so relies on fundraising and the goodwill of a highly committed volunteer workforce to supplement the work of a small core of paid employees.</p> <p>SPELD NZ's intention is to work within the framework established by the Ministry of Education to assist in reducing underachievement in education by students with specific learning disabilities. Its goal is to increase the SPELD NZ teacher numbers to ensure that every learner with specific learning disabilities has 'equitable educational experiences'.</p> <p>The chair of SPELD NZ has been heavily involved in the Targeted Review of Qualifications leading to the new level 5 qualification, the New Zealand Certificate in Teaching Individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities.</p>

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus area selected, Programme Design and Delivery, included both programmes offered: the level 3 Introduction to Specific Learning Disabilities and the level 5 Certificate in Specific Learning Disabilities.

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.

Two NZQA evaluators spent two days at the Royal Oak, Auckland site. Interviews were conducted in person, by video-conferencing and telephone with two board members including the chair, the executive officer, and representatives of the professional standards committee, programme review sub-committee, directors, graduates, stakeholders and students.

Documents reviewed by the evaluators included: SPELD NZ's self-assessment summary and achievement data, policies and procedures, executive officer, professional standards committee, programme review committee and directors' reports, meeting minutes, learners' evaluation results, moderation information, director performance appraisal information, professional development records, candidate handbook and programme information.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>. 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 fraud¹*

¹ 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.

- *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.*

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **SPELD NZ**.

The key reasons for this level of confidence include:

- Learners at SPELD NZ have achieved excellent results consistently for a number of years. Level 5 learners averaged 93 per cent course completion for the last three years (2015-2017) which is consistent with previous years. Māori learners averaged an exemplary 100 per cent course completion rate for the same period; however, enrolment numbers for this group are low. All learners enrolled in the Introduction to Specific Learning Disabilities successfully completed.
- Learners and stakeholders expressed a high level of satisfaction with the organisation and management of all aspects of the programmes. The organisation's professional standards committee meets regularly to review directors' reports that analyse and respond to learner feedback. The high satisfaction shows that the quality of this responsiveness is appreciated by the learners.
- The evaluators were provided with many examples from learners (who are mostly New Zealand-registered teachers, teacher aides, parents and allied professionals) of how SPELD NZ teaching interventions have helped them in their homes and work. They noted the positive difference made for those with learning disabilities, reinforcing the value of and ongoing need for this training.
- The EER team found consistent evidence of excellent teaching and support throughout the organisation, underpinned by professional development, reflection and sharing of good practice.
- SPELD NZ is a highly reflective organisation with self-assessment that is ongoing, authentic and transparent, and leads to worthwhile improvements. The PTE systematically collates feedback from learners and stakeholders which it uses to inform improvements to teaching practice and course delivery.
- The organisation collates and discusses performance information at the different levels of the organisational structure, including directors, professional standards committee, programme review committee, management and board; and effectively uses the analysis to bring about positive improvements to outcomes and processes.

Findings²

1.1 How well do students 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 **Excellent**.

Learners consistently achieve very well on both programmes. Level 5 learners enrolled on the 400-hour programme averaged 93 per cent course completions for the last three years. Māori learners averaged an exemplary 100 per cent course completion rate for the same period, although enrolment numbers for this cohort (fewer than five annually) have been low (see Table 1). Additionally, just under half of these graduates progress to achieve certification as SPELD NZ teachers.

Table 1. SPELD NZ achievement data by %

		2015			2016			2017		
	All	Māori	Pasifika	All	Māori	Pasifika	All	Māori	Pasifika	
L5	92	100*	NA	91	100*	NA	95	100*	NA	
L3	100	-	NA	100	-	NA	100	-	NA	

Source: SPELD NZ; *Small numbers; No Pasifika students enrolled

Level 3 learners enrol for a two-day course and receive a completion certificate on full attendance. There are no assessments for this course. Learners who are unable to attend day two are catered for in a later course; therefore all learners complete.

Management attributes the consistently high achievement results to the effective teaching and support provided by the directors (teaching staff) and administration staff who have been with SPELD NZ long term. Management and staff regularly seek and respond to feedback from learners and stakeholders analysing and discussing how programmes can be improved. The evaluators were provided with examples of how feedback was used to make worthwhile improvements.

SPELD NZ has a robust moderation process to confirm that assessment outcomes validate achievement results. As well as the strong internal moderation processes in place, which are also used as opportunities to share good assessment practice, SPELD NZ has contracted an external moderator, providing an additional layer of quality assurance. This process has worked well to date as the external moderator has both SPELD NZ training and moderation experience and has provided comments to the teaching staff on consistency of assessment marking and providing learner feedback and to the organisation of more general areas for improvement. However, the external moderator has been in the role for a lengthy

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities. Equally

period. SPELD NZ is presently recruiting an equally experienced and appropriate external moderator from the institutes of technology sector to continue external moderation for the current qualification which is in its final year and in anticipation of the new level 5 qualification they are seeking approval to deliver.

Learners appreciate the timely, useful and supportive feedback on their progress. The systems in place to monitor student progress are effective and staff respond quickly to support a student who is not progressing as expected.

Students are able to use newly gained skills immediately. Teachers interviewed spoke of their own confidence and empowerment to identify learners with specific learning disabilities, as well as using successful teaching strategies to meet their learning needs.

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

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**.

Learner feedback analysed from each course confirms that they are satisfied with and value the programmes. In addition, families benefit from parents and caregivers having an increased awareness and understanding of specific learning disabilities and the challenges their children face and how they can support them in their learning. Employers, especially schools, benefit from having staff with increased knowledge and skills to work with children with specific learning disabilities. School special needs staff appreciate having increased numbers of teachers to work alongside and share practice. The education sector benefits from having more teachers in schools who can interpret a specific learning disabilities diagnostic assessment, plan appropriate remedial programmes, and advise and support colleagues.

Previously, specific learning disabilities support was mostly in the primary sector. However, more learners are enrolling from early childcare centres and secondary schools. This increased breadth in enrolments and graduates enables early childhood centres to assess and support children with specific learning disabilities. Testimonials from students with specific learning disabilities indicate the benefit to their wellbeing from the collective support of whānau and SPELD NZ teachers. Even with the increased numbers of graduates, some regions have waiting lists for SPELD NZ teachers.

While the level 3 certificate was designed for parents and associated professionals as an introduction to specific learning disabilities, a growing number of learners on the level 3 course are practising teachers and teacher-aides. Feedback from these learners indicates a strong and positive impact on their understanding of specific learning disabilities.

Many level 5 learners have enrolled on the courses for self-improvement, career enhancement or professional development. These learners are usually classroom teachers, resource teachers in learning and behaviour, school principals, or special needs co-ordinators. Some of the learners are sponsored by their schools while others are self-funded, seeking to address the needs of classroom under-achievers. As the benefits of SPELD NZ training are known, schools are sending groups of teachers who then set up a community of learning and practice with their peers.

SPELD NZ holds conferences every three years featuring international and national keynote speakers. The 2014 conference featured 'working memory'³, and the 2016 conference featured 'dyscalculia'.⁴ A third of delegates were from schools outside of SPELD NZ membership. Again, this shows the importance of raising the awareness and understanding of specific learning disabilities and how effective remedial programmes can be.

Students share their perspective on the value of training through evaluations. As one graduate noted: '[I] am looking forward to approaching new learning opportunities within the education sector with a different lens – one that has a greater understanding of what it's like from the perspectives of those with specific learning disabilities and their families'.

SPELD NZ contributes to the scholarship on specific learning disabilities by engaging and being involved in research. A Dunedin multi-disciplinary longitudinal study has a lot of statistical information on those with specific learning disabilities: their lower likelihood of entering tertiary study, the impact on securing employment opportunities and their earning potential, and the overall personal challenges should they not receive help. The cost of specific learning disabilities to the individual, their whānau, the community and economy of New Zealand is immense. Therefore the graduates' contribution to this research is very important.

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

SPELD NZ is meeting the most important needs of the learners and stakeholders. The needs analysis prepared for the recent NZQA targeted review of the level 5 qualification demonstrated the ongoing need for the qualification. The evaluators

³ Working memory is a cognitive function which enables the brain to briefly hold new information for processing.

⁴ Dyscalculia is a specific learning disability in mathematics.

sighted feedback from schools, teachers, whānau and specific learning disabilities students reinforcing how well SPELD NZ is matching these needs.

SPELD NZ provides research-informed programmes reflective of ongoing self-assessment and improvements. Learner feedback informs developments to programmes such as broadening the types of specific learning disabilities in course material with the emphasis moving from dyslexia to specific learning disabilities, or the introduction of the newer version of the Woodcock-Johnson diagnostic assessment, WJIV.⁵ SPELD NZ assessors are recognised alongside educational and clinical psychologists by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research as able to implement this international assessment tool.

Many level 5 learners are teachers in full-time work, so the move to an updated and strengthened online platform (Moodle) has provided a platform that is more user-friendly and easier to navigate. This mode of delivery and the provision of a three-day workshop held in the July school holidays suits teachers as they manage study around family and work commitments.

Level 5 learners engage in formative testing, working towards three assignments. Students interviewed commented on the thoroughness of feedback which also informs the next set of tasks and assignments, supporting course completion and achievement.

Resource material including DVDs are available on Moodle, as well as notes and discussion platforms and quizzes for all learners to access. These continue to be useful when learners have finished the programme. Learning groups are small, with up to 10 people per class, with some shared facilitation of the face to face portions of the course. This provides good one-to-one support for learners and encourages discussion and reflection post-delivery.

SPELD NZ does not receive government funding to deliver the courses. This makes it more difficult for learners as they cannot access learner loans and allowances. SPELD NZ has actively raised funds to enable them to offer fees scholarships. Unfortunately, this has still not encouraged priority learners such as Māori and Pasifika to enrol, and this remains a challenge to the organisation.

Staff are well qualified and have in-depth knowledge of the subject material and considerable experience working with children with specific learning disability. SPELD NZ directors, assessors and teachers re-register every three years. Re-registration criteria are based on the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand criteria and include professional development activities and the successful outcome of appraisal.

⁵ The Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities is a set of intelligence tests first developed in 1977 by Richard Woodcock and Mary E. Bonner Johnson. It was revised in 1989 and again in 2001, and most recently in 2014; this last version is commonly referred to as the WJIV.

The creation of the new level 5 qualification (New Zealand Certificate in Teaching Individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities) involved a thorough self-review of the current qualification, analysing the continuing need for the qualification, the graduate profile, and learning outcomes. SPELD NZ expects to submit an application for programme approval for the new qualification shortly.

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

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**.

SPELD NZ provides effective support appropriate to the courses delivered. The organisation delivers training that helps individuals with differences and disabilities, and so is well placed to identify and support learners to complete their courses. The course directors have been with SPELD NZ long term, and through their monitoring of progress and achievement identify potentially at-risk learners. They then proactively provide guidance and support on an individual basis to ensure that it directly contributes to student achievement.

SPELD NZ ensures that course requirements are discussed with potential participants so that course time commitments and learning demands are clear. Learners interviewed agreed that course information was clearly communicated on the website and that information was followed up by discussion with SPELD NZ staff providing extensive pre-enrolment guidance.

SPELD NZ has found that many of the support needs of learners, especially level 5 learners, revolve around accommodating the demands of their study and already busy working and family lives. The clear pre-course information, improved online platform and ongoing director support enable learners to effectively monitor their progress and achievement as affirmed by the positive evaluation feedback and high achievement rates. There were only two learner withdrawals in the last four years, which also attests to the effective course requirement discussions.

Learners have access to SPELD NZ teaching staff outside of class hours, either in person, by telephone, or by email. Learners reported that they appreciate this additional support and the helpful responses they receive.

At least 10 per cent of learners on SPELD NZ courses themselves have specific learning disabilities. As expected, SPELD NZ has well-proven strategies and support to ensure that these learners are able to fully participate and achieve. These learners appreciate access to the course which may not otherwise have been available to them.

1.5 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 **Excellent**.

The SPELD NZ board is representative of all aspects of their membership and includes parents of current and past learners, assessor and teacher representatives, the programme standards committee and a current level 5 learner. This board composition also provides another layer of ongoing stakeholder feedback.

The organisation has a clear vision and understanding of its business. The strong leadership communicates its strategy inclusively to management and staff. SPELD NZ effectively uses its sub-committees – including the professional standards committee and programme review sub-committee – for oversight of its activities and improvements to programmes and the organisation. A very good example of this oversight, review and action was the improvement to the third assignment of the level 5 course.

The board reviews its progress in governance using Frances Denz', 'The Director's Chair' framework, surveys and roundtable analysis and discussion which it has found effective. These reviews are also informed by learner and staff feedback. The board uses a range of means to communicate to the membership including its panui (noticeboard), the website, SPELD NZ magazine – The Record – and Facebook. Staff and members found these helped to keep them updated.

SPELD NZ's board and staff are proactively involved in raising awareness and support for specific learning disabilities on a national scale through engagements with key stakeholders such as Parliament's Education and Science Select Committee, the Treasury's Vulnerable Children Inquiry, and the Ministry of Education. SPELD NZ assessors were invited to contribute to the revised WJ1V assessment by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Additionally, the board chair was a key participant in the NZQA review of the level 5 qualification. These activities keep the organisation at the forefront of any developments involving specific learning disabilities, which benefits both the learners and those with specific learning disabilities.

Staff are all experienced and skilled in training, and are supported with regular professional development opportunities individually, as a team and as an organisation hosting conferences. Staff have taken part in professional development with an acknowledged expert looking at 'Language, literacy, identity and culture: Challenges and responses for Indigenous Māori learners'. This development supports the board and staff to be more culturally sensitive and to consciously embed te reo Māori, panui and mihimihi practices as it strives to increase Māori learner enrolments.

Active future proofing and planning succession acknowledge the role that key staff such as the executive officer provide in linking the board, sub-committees and

management to the directors, learners and stakeholders, and the need for ensuring that staff have a manageable life and work balance. Staff interviewed appreciated the leadership provided by the board and management and felt valued by the organisation.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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**.

SPELD NZ has effective processes to manage its compliance responsibilities. These processes have been strengthened by the staff and board attending professional development workshops relating to compliance, and this shared knowledge has led to a collective understanding of compliance matters. An annual planner has proved effective to identify key compliance activities which are then overseen by the professional standards committee and managed and reported by the executive officer. In addition, the efficient review and reporting processes in place at all levels of the organisation ensure that the organisation is meeting its compliance responsibilities.

The professional standards committee and programme review committee are responsible for and ensure total learning hours align to the approved programmes. The recent targeted review of the level 5 qualification has identified that the current programme aligns closely except for additional hours to accommodate a practicum component. This has been allowed for in the proposed course approval application.

All staff have police vetting and SPELD NZ has systems to maintain adherence with the Vulnerable Children's Act, including an interview as part of the enrolment process.

Policies are reviewed by the board on a cyclical basis or as changes (both internal and external) affect the operations of the organisation. For example, the PTE's health and safety policy was revisited before the new Health and Safety at Work legislation came into effect. The executive officer attended several workshops in the lead up to and after the introduction of the legislation. This proactive approach to external policy changes provides the organisation with assurance that it is anticipating and managing perceived risk.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Programme design and delivery

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

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

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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