

**Ōritetanga**

Learner  
Success



# Learner Success Diagnostic Tool (LSDT) Facilitation Guide

Version 1.0





# Introduction

## The tool itself

This facilitation guide supports the use of the **Learner Success Diagnostic Tool (LSDT)**, which you can download from the [LSDT page on the Tertiary Education Commission \(TEC\) website](#).

## The development of the tool

The LSDT forms an integral element of the learner success approach.

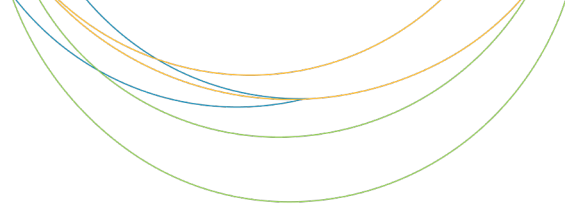
The tool is intended to be used by your organisation to undertake a self-assessment of your level of maturity across a range of capabilities. These capabilities are required for a tertiary education organisation (TEO) to design and implement a whole-of-organisation approach to improving outcomes for all their learners.

The tool was originally designed by the TEC drawing on similar approaches in other jurisdictions and advice from subject matter experts in Aotearoa New Zealand. The tool was trialled as part of the TEC's Learner Success Framework pilot projects, and insights from these projects were used to refine the specific questions and design of the tool.

The tool has been redesigned over the past year (2022), in partnership with New Zealand tertiary education organisations.

## A note on language

Throughout the LSDT the terms student, learner and taura are used interchangeably. This is a conscious decision to reflect the diversity of those who engage in tertiary education and the different ways they identify.



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# Preparation

## Getting buy-in

Implementing a whole-of-organisation approach to learner success requires support from the highest levels of your organisation (eg, Board, council, ELT). This support should come in two forms: sponsoring the project/use of the tool and taking part in the process itself. These are critical to the success of the tool in your organisation.

## Choosing your people

To get the most out of the tool and build momentum towards learner success, you need the right people. This means having a capable facilitator and choosing people from across the organisation to take part in the discussions.

### Facilitator

The facilitator plays a critical role in organising the sessions, keeping discussions focused and keeping the group moving forward. They provide continuity, especially if discussions take place over multiple sessions.

Your facilitator needs:

- > the ability to direct and guide conversations between participants who might have varied opinions and perspectives on the organisation
- > the ability to build awareness and communicate effectively with people across your organisation
- > support from senior leadership – eg, access to key individuals, ability to get time in people’s calendars, etc.

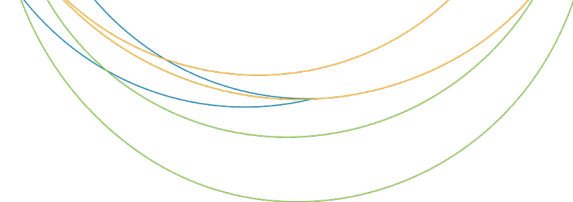
The rest of this guide is written for the benefit and support of your facilitator.

### Participants

These are the people who take part in the discussions guided by the tool.

You need a mix of people from different parts of your organisation. Consider their role (not necessarily their job) in your organisation – are they specialists, activists, end users of your services or decision-makers? Or are they likely to be impacted by any changes? Include a range of perspectives. They should not all be senior leadership – support staff and students will also bring valuable insights.

We recommend a group of five to eight people. This ensures a range of perspectives while keeping the discussions manageable for the facilitator.



## Capturing the sessions

Using the tool is about capturing discussions and turning them into action, so have someone (not the facilitator) take notes. At the very least, they should document the group's responses in the tool – but it can also be useful to capture the entire discussion.

## Defining learner success

An agreed understanding of what learner success looks like in your organisation and how this supports you to achieve equity is critical for setting the scene for your discussions.

### Using an existing definition

If you already have a definition of learner success, share it with your participants and then bring it along to the first session.

### Creating a definition

If your organisation does not have a definition of learner success, devote part of your first session to discussing this. Ask your participants to consider the following questions ahead of time:

- > Where do our learners come from?
- > What do they do outside of tertiary education?
- > What else could be happening in their lives?
- > What do they need to succeed?
- > What do we do that works for them?
- > What do we do that does not?

Answering these questions together will enable you to start thinking about how you might design and implement practices to maximise learner success.

## Planning the sessions

Familiarise yourself with the entire process and the tool itself before you plan your sessions. Depending on how much discussion you anticipate, you may want to break the process into two or three sessions with your participants. We highlight some natural break points in the next chapter.



# Running your session(s)

## Creating a safe space

Begin the session with any rituals or practices your organisation uses to get everyone into the right headspace. This creates a culture of openness that kick-starts deep conversations.

Set a kawa (protocol) for the session. This might include:

- > not talking over one another
- > a method for making decisions if you do not have a consensus, or
- > any other approaches your organisation wants to include.

A group that includes senior leadership, staff and students may have a power imbalance. Take time to level the playing field for all group members.

## Beginning the session

Introduce participants to each other and ensure everyone knows what to expect, eg, how long the session(s) will run for, break times, and the key parts of the session:

- > discussing learner success
- > introducing the seven capabilities
- > using the tool (steps 1, 2, and 3).

It may be necessary to break the use of the tool into multiple sessions. At the end of steps 1 and 2 in the spreadsheet portion of the tool there are natural break points where you could end a session.

## Discussing learner success

If your organisation has a definition of learner success, share it, and discuss what it means to your participants.

If your organisation does not have a definition of learner success, encourage each participant to share their perspective. Ideally, you are looking to agree on what learner success looks like at your organisation, for your students.



## Introducing the seven capabilities

These are the key elements an organisation needs to get right to enable learners to succeed – whatever that looks like for each learner.

Introduce the capabilities so your participants are clear about the topics coming up. This helps focus your discussions.

The capabilities are:

1. **People, culture, and leadership** – the commitment and collaboration of the tertiary education organisation’s (TEO’s) leadership to culturally conscious learner success for all, a clear vision for desired change, and a whole-of-organisation approach
2. **Data and technology** – the ability to ethically collect, assess, analyse and use data to inform decisions, and to use technology to support learner success for all
3. **Guided pathways** – clear and relevant educational pathways, from first engagement to employment, that foster learner success for all
4. **Holistic learner supports** – planning and integrating critical learner, academic and personal supports into a seamless, culturally conscious, timely experience designed with and for every learner
5. **Learner-centric systems** – policies and practices that improve outcomes for learners, and processes for reviewing and aligning policies and practices to remove barriers and enable learner success (including drawing from the evidence base of Māori/Indigenous and diverse learner success practices)
6. **Teaching and learning** – implementation of learner-centric instructional design, meaningful professional development, and learning environments and contexts to be effective and culturally conscious, including kaupapa Māori-designed environments
7. **Partnerships** – the development and support of partnerships between the TEO and relevant employers/industry, learners, family and whānau, hapū, iwi and community groups, social agencies, and education providers.



## Introducing the tool

Using the tool involves three steps. Introduce your participants to these.

### Step 1 – Define your ideal state

Here you will discuss each question with your group, then decide on an “ideal state” as an answer.

### Step 2 – Assess your current state

Here you will determine your organisation’s current progress on a scale defined by your ideal states in Step 1.

### Step 3 – Identify opportunities

Here you will be able to review the summary report with your scores, ideal states, and notes. Discuss this and identify opportunities for your organisation.

## Using the tool

At this point you will move into the tool itself. This is the Excel spreadsheet you may have downloaded at the same time as this guide. If you need to download it again, you can find it on the [Learner Success Diagnostic Tool page](#).

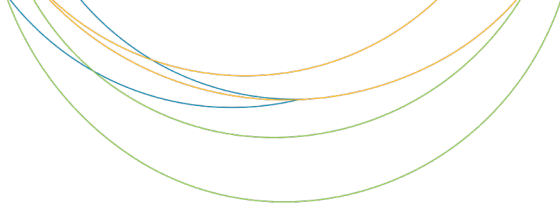
### Facilitation tips: “Step 1 – Define your ideal state”

- > This step takes the greatest amount of time (one to three hours depending on participation).
- > Keep the discussion moving and drive your participants towards creating the ideal state for each question.
- > Make sure the participants can read the question themselves.
- > Use the guidance supplied in the tool as prompts for discussion.
- > Try and get a consensus on what the ideal state looks like.

### Facilitation tips: “Step 2 – Assess your current state”

- > Make sure the participants can read the question themselves.
- > Your ideal state from Step 1 is now visible in the 5/5 score on the scale.
- > You may need to resize rows to see the entire scale.
- > One way of settling on a score might be to average scores from all your participants. If you do this, we recommend rounding down to produce a final score.





## Facilitation tips: “Step 3 – Identify opportunities”

- > This is the summary report portion of the tool. It does not have any interactive elements and works well printed out for discussion.
- > Focus on directing the discussions towards the areas that have the greatest opportunity.
- > It may be useful to prioritise these opportunities together.

# Next steps

## Defining the problem

After completing the use of the tool, your organisation can start to look at defining the problem by asking these questions:

- > What opportunity might you want to tackle first?
- > Where is the potential for the biggest gain?
- > Who needs to be involved in that process?

## Repeat tool usage

When might you want to assess your progress again? If you repeat the process, consider whether you want to define new ideal states or assess your progress against the same ones. Your perception of “ideal” may have changed – this is a good thing, but it is important to consider in repeat usage.

# Feedback

Thank you for using the Learner Success Diagnostic Tool. We plan to continuously improve the tool, so we want to hear your suggestions and about your experiences.

Please email your feedback (with the subject “LSDT feedback”) to: [customerservice@tec.govt.nz](mailto:customerservice@tec.govt.nz).