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TAI POUTINI RECOGNISED AS WINNER BY TERTIARY INDUSTRY

An innovative training and standard assessment model developed by Tai Poutini Polytechnic's Mining Department took away the top award for 'Quality Improvement' at last night's Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand (ITP) Awards.

The judges congratulated the West Coast polytechnic on its commitment to "quality assurance processes that demonstrably improve student success", and commended Tai Poutini's Mining Department on their development of a model which enables the extractive industry to recognise overseas miners' competencies without retraining.

The Awards ceremony took place last night in Wellington, during ITP New Zealand's 2009 conference, which focused on *Skilling New Zealand's Recovery*.

West Coast mining company Pike River Coal approached Tai Poutini for help in recognising the skills of overseas workers when it was unable to find enough skilled workers locally for its new mine. "The company felt there had to be an improved streamlined approach to the process and asked us to help come up with one," says Peter Fairhall, Head of Department - Mining at Tai Poutini Polytechnic.

"Foreign employees often hold Certificates of Competency from their own countries but to gain the New Zealand equivalent, they had to undertake many months of training and assessment," explains Fairhall.

Fairhall approached well-known educator, Liz Bowen-Clewley, with the idea of using a technique she had pioneered known as 'Professional Conversation'. This is where the candidate presents their knowledge of the required subject matter to a panel and discusses their work history in relation to the job for which they are applying.

"A group of industry experts and educationists assess this knowledge and decide whether the candidate should receive the unit standards required for a New Zealand Certificate of Competency - all within one day," says Fairhall.

Hailed as "a huge success", this pioneering model has been made available to the whole extractive industry. "It equates to huge savings in time and money for companies and applicants and has been embraced with open arms by the mining industry," says Fairhall, who believes the model could be

used by other industries as well. "I can see no reason why other industry training organisations couldn't pick up this model and progress with it."

Fairhall says, "To have our peers recognise the innovation of this model is a huge honour."

ITP New Zealand is the national association for the country's institutes' of technology and polytechnics. The annual ITP Awards recognise and celebrate excellence and innovation in these institutions.

"The awards show why polytechnics and institutes of technology are the most popular place for Kiwi adults to learn," says Dave Guerin, Executive Director of ITP New Zealand.

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About Tai Poutini Polytechnic:

Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) offers a range of exciting programmes including outdoor education, ski patrol, ecotourism, jade and hard stone carving, professional chef and civil construction. Tai Poutini Polytechnic has campuses in Auckland, Matamata, Christchurch, Wanaka, Invercargill, Westport, Greymouth, Reefton and Hokitika. In 2009 TPP offers programmes at Greymouth, Reefton, Westport and Hokitika Campuses with no tuition fees (conditions apply).