



# Report of External Evaluation and Review

New Zealand Welding School

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 27 September 2011

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# 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

Location:	1263 Hinemaru St, Rotorua
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1999
Number of students:	Domestic: 323 equivalent full-time students International: one student
Number of staff:	24
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Certificate in Welding and Fabrication Skills (Level 3)</li><li>• Certificate in Advanced Welding (Level 4)</li><li>• Certificate in Computer Aided Design (CAD) Drafting and Design (Level 4)</li><li>• Certificate in CAD Drafting (Level 3)</li></ul>
Sites:	49 Sala St, Rotorua 54 Hunua Rd, Papakura, South Auckland
Distinctive characteristics:	New Zealand Welding School (NZWS) offers useable and in-demand skills and workplace disciplines for predominantly second-chance learners unlikely to be accepted for apprenticeships or other tertiary qualifications. A high proportion of these learners have significant literacy, numeracy, and other personal and social barriers to learning.
Recent significant changes:	Appointment of two operational managers to implement improvements in course design and delivery, in consultation with local employers and other

stakeholders.

Previous quality assurance history: At the last quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in 2007, six requirements of the quality standard then in force were not met relating to governance and management, learner information and support, and assessment and moderation.

Other: Around 45 per cent of students are Māori, 15 per cent Pasifika, and 40 per cent from other cultures.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the external evaluation and review included the mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The following training programmes were also included as focus areas:

- Certificates in drafting and design.

NZWS is undergoing a qualification review to re-introduce a full-time option for drafting courses and, in the process, to compare its own course structures and processes with other providers in the sector.

- Certificates in welding and fabrication skills

NZWS is concerned with the challenges and needs of a disadvantaged learner population in two distinct urban communities, and with providing training which may equip them both for useful employment and for better management of their lives and well-being.

## 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 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 three-day EER was conducted by a lead evaluator and two external evaluators. The evaluation team interviewed one director, the general manager, operations managers, student services staff, site manager, tutors, and groups of students. The team also contacted city councillors, a Competenz moderator, 12 employers, and three advisors.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of the **New Zealand Welding School**.

New Zealand Welding School (NZWS) delivers programmes and qualifications for two distinct disciplines: computer aided design (CAD) at levels 3 and 4, and welding and fabrication skills (CWFS), also at levels 3 and 4. The CAD is a highly organised, 26-week distance programme, with a sequence of detailed handbooks delivered at monthly face-to-face tutorials. There is ongoing project work and one-to-one distance communication in the weeks between. The CWFS is a 14-week, full-time programme of closely supervised theoretical and mainly practical learning in welding and fabrication skills. Both programmes provide supplementary learning in literacy, numeracy, and design, and in the case of CWFS especially, in personal management and life skills, a major focus for this TEO.

In 2009, NZWS achieved a course completion rate of 68 per cent and a qualification completion rate of 66 per cent, comparing well with completion rates for all PTEs delivering level 3 and 4 courses, of 69 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. The learning outcomes of the CAD programme are seen as relevant and comprehensive for employment or, for some, self-employment. CWFS outcomes are seen as relevant by many students, and by Competenz (the Engineering, Food and Manufacturing Industry Training Organisation), and by HERA (Heavy Engineering Research Association). HERA licenses NZWS to use its welding learning modules, updates welding and engineering content, and offers staff training opportunities.

The CWFS qualification is seen by some employers as having limited value for immediate employment in the workplace. This is known to NZWS. The need to close the gap with potential employers of this group of students is clear, and a strategy is in place to address this issue. While there are grounds for confidence that the strategy is sound, it is too soon yet to see any results.

Important outcomes for both programmes are “life-changing” learning for many students, enhancement of confidence and well-being, and inculcating discipline into otherwise disordered lives. Both programmes are highly successful in achieving these outcomes.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of the **New Zealand Welding School**.

Self-assessment in the CAD is meticulous and exhaustive. An advisory committee meets annually to discuss course design and direction. There is ongoing consultation with industry, student feedback is ongoing, and the two tutors continually revise course material and presentation in the learning handbooks. Students and external stakeholders note the organisation’s receptivity to feedback.

Student evaluation of the CWFS is provided formally and informally, and student progress is tracked and discussed at weekly staff meetings. There is internal moderation of every course delivery, and performance indicators and employment and training outcomes are collected for each intake. The results are discussed among tutors and further discussed at a weekly senior management group meeting. NZWS's response to feedback is generally commended by students, with some exceptions concerning equipment and facilities. Course design, delivery, and assessment are internally moderated, and monitored by Competenz. An outstanding concern for CWFS is the feedback from some local employers that the qualifications do not prepare learners for employment. The school is aware of this, and has moved to clarify the expectations employers might reasonably have of a student from the programme.

Self-assessment of an equally important aspect of the NZWS kaupapa, to increase student well-being and personal lifestyles, is comprehensive and continuous and enthusiastically endorsed by external stakeholders.

NZWS has undergone important changes to improve both performance and self-assessment. New managerial appointments are generating solid strategies for improvements in course design and delivery and for closer relations with employers. Areas already showing valuable results are improvements to enrolments and induction, tutor development, and improvements to learning materials. It is too soon to ascertain their effect, but interviews with the director, with all managers and tutors, with students from every course, and with a good range of stakeholders give NZWS reason for confidence in a good outcome.

## TEO response

New Zealand Welding School has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Provisional information for course and qualification completion in 2010 records improvement in NZWS course completion from 68 to 76 per cent, and in completed qualifications from 66 to 68 per cent. This is confirmation of continued improvement and, given the learning challenges that many of NZWS's students face on entry, is significant in comparison with other PTEs delivering at the same level. A policy of consistent regional benchmarking with local providers, working in similar environments, may provide opportunities for a more meaningful assessment of achievement outcomes.

Feedback from students, graduates, and external stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team affirmed the quality of the learning in the CAD programme, the continual drive for improvement by the teaching staff, and the high standards of assessment. Some students are already employed or self-employed in related work, and statistics for all CAD students from 2008 show that, overall, 41 per cent achieved employment and 23 per cent went on to further training.

Between February 2009 and March 2011, 80 per cent of Rotorua graduates and 70 per cent of Papakura graduates from the level 3 Certificate in Welding and Fabrication Skills went into employment or further training. The principal, although not exclusive, training target is the level 4 Certificate in Advanced Welding. The duration of employment is unknown and may be influenced by many factors, but the intention to work is clearly evidenced in this group, as it is in the course and exit evaluations, notwithstanding some indifferent responses of employers interviewed by the EER team about the value of the qualification. Although sceptical about its structure and content, employers generally agreed that the quality of learning in basic welding skills is good. Much of the discussion between employers and NZWS on quality is anecdotal, and a more rigorous approach to industry liaison and follow-up is planned, with the possible introduction of placement opportunities to enhance workplace skills and experience.

Increases in personal well-being and willingness to learn are important outcomes for this group of learners, and a variety of external stakeholders, including local body councillors and community workers, were unanimous that NZWS makes an outstanding contribution to youth and community health. This view was strongly endorsed by students interviewed at the EER, and was present again in course evaluations and exit interviews.

Student evaluations, and external stakeholders and students interviewed by the EER team, gave evidence of very good learning from the level 3 and 4 certificates in welding,

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<sup>1</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

especially in the area of personal well-being and development. Differences in the perceived quality of outcomes for employment are to be addressed by recent management appointments specifically targeting these factors. External stakeholders and ex-students interviewed by the evaluation team reported excellent learning in CAD.

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

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Competenz moderates NZWS programmes and records satisfaction with internal moderation reports. HERA licenses NZWS to deliver its welding training modules, conforming to best-practice industry procedures and to the requirements of NZQA unit standards. Work and Income NZ (WINZ) refers clients and has contracted NZWS to deliver training to a group of ten redundant welders in pipe-welding techniques in preparation for pipeline construction in the geothermal power construction industry. This is one instance of industry-specific short courses that NZWS is periodically asked to deliver.

Comparative data from other local providers on employment outcomes is not available, but relationships with industry, government agencies, and statutory bodies assure NZWS of its good reputation in the delivery of training. Equally important are positive outcomes for second-chance learners, the most challenging group of stakeholders for NZWS. The guiding kaupapa of the TEO is to create an environment enabling its students to achieve a qualification and to see its value, both as a prerequisite for employment and as a route to self-confidence and general well-being. This second outcome is affirmed by student evaluations and, as already noted, by external stakeholders contacted by the EER team. On a least one occasion, a young offender has been offered the choice of a prison sentence or enrolment in the NZWS programme.

An exception to this high regard is a group of employers requiring a programme more suited to their particular sphere of activity, focussed on a model of apprenticeships, trade certificates, and sound training in “workplace etiquette”. NZWS is aware of this demand, and the recent management appointments already mentioned are specifically aimed at resolving the gap between expectations and outcomes. Initiatives discussed with industry include a closer and more consultative relationship, a contribution from employers to programme construction and delivery, unpaid work placements for students, and the establishment of an ongoing, up-to-date local advisory committee meeting regularly to discuss outcomes, opportunities, and emerging problems. These developments would enhance understanding of the issues involved and provide a forum for an agreed way forward.



### 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Eighty-five per cent of the course is practical and 15 per cent theoretical, an effective ratio for this group of students. A policy of open selection gives access to students initially unprepared and sometimes unwilling to participate in a structured learning programme. Compromised personal and educational histories and low levels of literacy and numeracy are common, and in a 14-week programme planning and delivery must be adapted to create achievable learning goals.

Health and safety are of vital importance in a programme involving volatile gases and a range of potentially dangerous tools. Assessment for fitness begins with an enrolment questionnaire, effectively a test of literacy and numeracy. Literacy and numeracy are embedded in course delivery, with step-by-step progressions of simple, repetitive practice instructions, diagrams, and explanations. The theoretical content of assessments is adapted to the literacy level of students, and may be conducted orally if required.

These approaches have proven a successful response to literacy issues, resulting, according to students interviewed, in a new self-respect and confidence to continue learning. Students are given explicit help with literacy and numeracy where required.

The CAD programme is presently delivered over 26 weeks to distance students, with monthly in-house tutorials. For many students, this is effectively a progression from manual drafting to computer aided design. Literacy and numeracy concerns, although not uncommon, are less frequent than for the CWFS programme, and the CAD team uses similar methods to CWFS to address them.

Student evaluations overwhelmingly approve the delivery and assessment approaches of NZWS, affirming that the learning is achievable, enjoyable, and worthwhile. While approval of the CAD programme is unanimous among all stakeholders interviewed, it is qualified in the welding programme by a perception among some employers that, while basic welding skills have been achieved by students, the versatility and initiative required in the workplace is lacking.

### 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Teaching staff are practising designers and welders with industry experience and expertise. All are engaged in, or have completed, an adult teaching certificate. Progress in the welding certificates is tracked by the operations manager and one of the directors. Tutors are appointed by the director responsible for human resources and quality assurance. The intention is to employ teachers who are both expert in their field and able to relate well to a student group, many of whom have a distrust of authority and dislike classroom learning.

In both aspects, the CAD teachers are seen by students to excel through attention to detail, an interactive teaching approach, excellent up-to-date written material, good preparation for assessment, and great enthusiasm both for the face-to-face tutorial sessions and for ongoing distance support. Students provide their own computers, and software for the course is loaded at the first tutorial.

The learning required for each unit standard is presented in a tutorial handbook, with a lesson plan, a day-by-day succession of steps, and a target date for completion and submission. Drawing units, including practice standards and simple cumulative processes, are presented in explicit detail. There is some concern about space and about the condition of some equipment. Management is aware of this concern and, while receptive to the students' comments, is reluctant to make hasty changes, arguing that the situations referred to represent typical workplace conditions.

The welding teachers are generally skilled and effective, as completion rates and student evaluations affirm, and are similarly meticulous in preparing students for assessment projects. Some have long experience of youth work, while others have histories similar to the students and enjoy the challenge of teaching and guiding them in the family atmosphere of the TEO. Teaching is shared on the shop floor, and tutors discuss and mentor each other and "buddy" beginning colleagues. One-to-one teaching and structured activities for individual students are common practice to address individual learning needs. A periodic newsletter is a source of advice on teaching skills and initiatives, and may highlight current concerns and projects, such as an "Improving Grinder Safety" campaign.

Three courses, of three or four modules, are internally moderated annually, using samples of work and descriptions of delivery methods and assessments. Welding and Engineering units are moderated externally by Competenz, Design and CAD by InfraTrain, and Maths and Drawing by NZQA.

Competenz has expressed satisfaction with the teaching and its outcomes. Tertiary Education Commission reports on requirements for course and qualification completion, and on student progressions, are used for benchmarking against other TEOs.

Tutors are appraised annually by head tutors, who are given guidance in induction and supervision using AKO Aotearoa material. The effectiveness of some tutors was questioned by students interviewed by the EER team, and management is aware that, while performance is generally good, further professional development in teaching, including in literacy and numeracy and welding, is needed to bring a more analytical approach to the work and to align it better with workplace needs and practices. This is also a theme of employers interviewed by the EER team. This concern is tempered by the recognition that the student cohort of NZWS presents challenges that educational and other interventions have until now failed to address, and expectations need to be adapted accordingly. NZWS is successful in working effectively with young people who have not succeeded in other educational environments. This success was confirmed by community stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team.

## 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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**.

Guidance and support for students, including the one international student, are important features of the kaupapa of the TEO and are exemplary. The majority of NZWS students have backgrounds and a history where conventional learning has not been useful to them. NZWS has a policy of open entry to its programmes. Student services coordinators assist and guide with enrolments, loan applications, accommodation, and personal situations and needs. These may include learning disabilities, especially with literacy and numeracy, and a variety of extramural situations impacting on time and availability, for example court appearances, parole conditions, and home detention.

Students are followed up as necessary and helped with preparing CVs, job search, and writing job applications. Graduates are tracked where possible, and there is ongoing contact with employers in early employment. A more formal approach to this, with records of progress and employer evaluation, would help NZWS to understand and address the variations in employer opinions of the value of the qualifications.

The teacher's role is essential as they need to have an ability to empathise with young people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds, and to promote step-by-step progress to encourage focused learning. This approach encourages a group learning environment, often involving peer assessment and mentoring among students. Students are assessed for aptitude and capability and placed accordingly, with a continual watch on progress and a switch to another group or tutor where appropriate. The progress of individuals is reported weekly to management, discussed and recorded, and interventions made as required.

Teachers interviewed by the EER team spoke enthusiastically about strategies to develop and improve students' practice skills, literacy and numeracy, and design work, and to encourage concentration on a task. Some teachers refer to their students as "family" or "workmates", while others share stories of similar backgrounds and histories. Student evaluations and the students interviewed by the evaluation team were similarly positive about the influence of the family atmosphere which provided reassurance, watchfulness, and a sense of well-being and encouragement, and resulted in learning outcomes sometimes beyond expectation.

External stakeholders, whānau, and local community groups and agencies concerned with the welfare of young people in Rotorua and South Auckland strongly endorse the work of NZWS in their communities. This is further evidenced by the enthusiastic participation of family members at graduations and other NZWS occasions. One prominent local body observer stated that among many such organisations in the area, NZWS was without doubt the best.

## 1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The vision of NZWS is to offer young people at risk an educational programme with the prospect of employment, while introducing a range of social and personal management skills. The guiding motto for this vision is the statement: “We teach you to be all that you can be”. It is supported by the recruitment of tutors who are experienced in their field and able to relate spontaneously and warmly to their students to provide accessible role models for their development. The director of the TEO, in her management roles, is intimately involved with this process, and her kaupapa is clearly evident throughout the TEO.

There is a strong focus on improvement of the quality and relevance of the qualifications, and their delivery. Facilities have been upgraded in the Rotorua and Papakura sites, and special project work experience opportunities have been created for graduate students, in order to address some employer concerns about student work readiness.

A significant step has been the appointment of an operations manager who has undertaken a broad spectrum evaluation of the TEO, focussing on compliance and reporting, strategic and professional development, and assessment and moderation. More recently, two new managerial appointments have been made, each with a mandate to make changes in course construction, delivery, and assessment to align programmes more closely with international practice and local industry expectations. These are promising developments and reflect well on the self-assessment that has taken place over the last two years.

Internal moderation between the two welding sites is sound and could be extended to engage other TEOs with similar student populations. The general manager is aware of this potential and is eager to pursue the possibility of an understanding with Māori TEOs in the two delivery locations. These contacts, the closer contact planned with local industry, and the formation of a local advisory committee, could enhance self-assessment and lead to a closer match between learning outcomes and industry needs.

The CAD programme leader meets annually with an industry advisory group to record and consider directions for the following year, and frequently contacts individual members to discuss matters of immediate concern. This group also has processes to advise on course design and delivery, and in self-assessment, that might well be useful models for the welding units.

The governing body has acted strategically and thoughtfully to address perceived limitations and to protect its important role in youth rehabilitation in its two areas of operation. Further professional development for tutors, the establishment of a local advisory committee, and closer relationships with other TEOs to provide mentoring, moderation, and benchmarking opportunities would be useful initiatives to further support learner achievement.

## Focus Areas

### 2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

### 2.2 Focus area: Certificates in drafting and design

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

### 2.2 Focus area: Certificates in welding and fabrication skills

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

# Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those implied or expressed within the report.

# Appendix

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.*

*In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses 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 policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.*

*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](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)).*

*Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication *Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review*, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>*

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