



Report of External Evaluation and Review

QED Associates Limited

Date of report: 15 June 2010

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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.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Birkenhead, Auckland

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: Approximately 100 learners per year

Sites: No permanent site

QED Associates (QED) comprises a group of directors and associates who offer a mix of consultancy services to adult training organisations and training in adult education. The training comprises about 30 per cent of the business and includes a mix of public workshops and in-house training, customised to the client organisation.

QED offers training through workshops, where a number of unit standards are delivered which, when put together, meet the requirements for the Certificate in Adult Education and Training (Level 4). Some learners and organisations choose just a small number of unit standards while others aim to complete the qualification.

The previous quality assurance visit by NZQA was in 2007 and QED substantially met the requirements for ongoing registration.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **QED Associates Limited**.

Learners who have studied with QED attest to achieving greater competency in their ability to teach adults. Sixty to sixty-five percent of all trainees who attend the workshops complete the assessments and achieve the unit standards within six months.

Where possible, QED tailors training to the context of the contracting organisation and trainees and this ability to be flexible and adapt means trainees' needs are effectively met. Programme managers and most trainees have found the learning relevant to their employment and believe that the training has improved their work and therefore the experience of their learners.

The training is engaging and relevant, and a strong philosophy of best practice in adult education underpins the delivery. There is a high level of learner satisfaction across the courses run by QED. However, on occasions, there are issues with the timeliness of feedback on assessments to learners. This has been identified by QED and is being addressed.

The flat management structure ensures that the expertise of all staff is brought to the decision-making process. Good governance is evident in the operation of the advisory board.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **QED Associates Limited**.

End-of-course and follow-up surveys provide good evidence of learner satisfaction and application of knowledge to the workplace. Information from these surveys is collated and analysed and informs programme and resource reviews. Aggregated achievement data is analysed over time and informally benchmarked with other, similar providers.

Clear evidence is used to evaluate performance regularly and issues are monitored by the whole team. There has been no systematic attempt to analyse why a significant number of trainees do not attempt assessments, although anecdotal evidence suggests it may often be factors beyond QED's control. QED effectively maintains links with key stakeholders to ensure it has a good understanding of the changing needs of the sector.

The organisation has clear direction and purpose and uses self-assessment to review and refine goals and objectives.

TEO response

QED Associates confirms the accuracy of this report.

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 Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and 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).

Findings

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

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/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

For this review two focus areas were chosen. The one full qualification offered by QED is:

- National Certificate in Adult Education and Training (Level 4).

The second focus area was mandatory:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

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**.

Context

Some learners who participate in the workshops delivered by QED are enrolled by their employers and the training is delivered at their place of work and tailored to their context. Other learners enrol in the public workshops. The workshops are delivered in one or two-day blocks; learners are then required to complete the assessments necessary to achieve the unit standards. Learners have up to a year to complete the assessments.

Explanation

Sixty to sixty-five per cent of all trainees who attend the workshops complete the assessments and achieve the unit standards within six months. This rate has been fairly consistent over the years and is reasonable given the fact that learners are required to work independently on their assessments, post-workshop. The organisation facilitates this by

following up with trainees and encouraging them to complete their assessments. Aggregated achievement data has been analysed and informally benchmarked over time against other providers.

The organisation does not have clear evidence of why 35-40 per cent of trainees do not attempt their assessments. Anecdotal evidence suggests that for many the reasons are lack of time to complete the assessments and lack of support from employers. Others change their place of employment and the training becomes no longer relevant.

QED has a high rate of qualification achievement with many in-house clients. Some organisations have a success rate of 80-90 per cent of trainees completing either the unit standards or the whole qualification. Some of these successes are celebrated in the QED newsletter which is circulated to clients and relevant organisations.

Learners are satisfied with what they have achieved through their training with QED. Post-course surveys, follow-up surveys, and learners spoken to by the evaluation team suggested that the training had extended their understanding and improved their ability to work with adult learners.

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 **Excellent**.

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

Context

Organisations that deliver training need to ensure that the staff they employ have the appropriate qualifications and experience.

Explanation

Follow-up surveys conducted by the organisation confirm that learners have found considerable value in the training offered by QED. Programme managers and trainees have found the learning relevant to their employment and believe that the training has improved their work and therefore the experience of their learners. This evidence was confirmed by trainees spoken to by the evaluation team. One manager described his teaching approach as moving from “just a brain dump” to an active learning programme which took longer but ensured learning had occurred.

There is an added value to the training offered by QED. Trainees noted that not only did they learn according to the stated objectives of the workshop but they also gained valuable learning from the training methods modelled during the delivery.

Furthermore, there was evidence that the tailored delivery of the in-house training is particularly valuable to the client organisations and the trainees, because it is particularly relevant to different contexts. Eighty per cent of managers and trainees who undertook in-house training and were surveyed by QED reported a direct application of skills and knowledge to their workplace.

QED has a number of long-standing clients who continue to choose to use the organisation for their training needs. An active programme of engaging with these clients ensures that successes are shared and new developments in the industry are signalled. QED is aiming to improve and extend the data collected on post-course application of knowledge and skills.

The organisation actively engages with the wider adult education community. The directors are involved in adult learning across the sector including participation in conferences and forums. In addition, the online newsletter highlights current issues in adult education.

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 **Excellent**.

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

Context

QED maintains networks with the adult education sector which enables it to understand and respond to change. The different training packages offered are tailored to cater to different clients.

Explanation

QED's ability to tailor in-house training to the context of the client's organisation is a key strength. This ability to be flexible and adapt means trainees' needs are effectively met. The relationship with the academic managers is crucial and enables QED to build a profile of the needs of the trainees before the workshops begin.

For those who enrol in the public courses, icebreakers and formative assessment are used to gauge needs and skills. Information given to trainees before enrolment clearly describes what the training is about and what prerequisite knowledge is required.

QED maintains links with key stakeholders to ensure it has a good understanding of their changing needs. Feedback gathered by the organisation shows that trainees are largely satisfied with the content of courses and the resources. This feedback informs regular reviews of courses and resources, which in turn determine whether changes are needed. For example, although a commitment to face-to-face delivery remains, online materials are being developed to supplement the printed resources.

End-of-course evaluations indicate that the training is meeting the needs of the trainees, although a small number participating in the publicly delivered courses were unsure how relevant the learning was to their context.

The organisation has an effective advisory group which represents key stakeholders, including the private training sector, adult education, and business. This group has input into every part of the business and is a useful tool for understanding stakeholder needs. The group meets annually. A recent review has resulted in a shift so that individual members of the advisory group will also be called upon on an ad hoc basis when the need for their expertise arises.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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 **Good**.

Context

The teaching is delivered in one or two-day workshops. Trainers follow up with the trainees and provide support with assessments if required.

Explanation

Highly qualified staff deliver training that is engaging and relevant for the trainees. A strong philosophy of best practice in adult education underpins the delivery modelled by QED. Trainers have the ability to adapt the training to meet different cultural needs of students and to adjust the content to make it relevant for context.

Activities modelled by trainers are particularly effective in demonstrating to trainees techniques that can be transferred to their own practice. Trainees reported being positively engaged throughout the two days of the workshop.

Feedback gathered by the organisation shows that trainees are highly satisfied with the teaching. In particular, trainees value the expertise of the instructors. Trainees spoken to by the evaluation team confirmed this.

There are good opportunities for trainees to apply their learning. The assessments are designed to encourage trainees to use their own contexts to demonstrate competency. This work often involves the development of teaching materials and assessments within the trainees' organisation.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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**.

Context

Trainees are only face to face with QED staff for relatively short periods of time. Training is often conducted in hired premises or at the trainees' place of work.

Explanation

The information given to students before they begin their course and at the beginning of the training is clear and informative, outlining course objectives and assessment requirements. An issue was identified with the level of difficulty for one of the workshops, so QED developed a self-paced online assessment for learners to assess whether they are ready to participate.

For learners who participate in in-house training, QED can build up a profile of the learners who will be participating. This profile is used to plan the delivery of training.

Tutors are experienced at working across the sector with a range of styles and abilities and with the diverse cultural needs of learners. Active learning is encouraged and facilitators are comfortable adapting to different learning styles. If the numbers attending the workshop make it possible, QED team-teaches the workshops to ensure that the different needs are attended to.

There is a difficulty inherent in learners leaving the workshops and at a later date completing the assessments. While tutors follow up with trainees and encourage them to complete the tasks, for some the motivation and support is lacking. A few trainees noted their confusion as to what the assessment items required of them. Others reported dissatisfaction with the time taken to receive feedback on their assessments. The evaluation team noted that on occasion long periods of time elapsed before assessments were marked. The organisation's own review process acknowledged this as an issue and QED has established performance criteria around the timely return of assessments, to be reviewed at regular management meetings.

1.6 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 **Good**.

Context

QED has a very flat organisational structure, with directors and associates participating in monthly management meetings. An advisory board provides governance, meeting formally once a year and individually on an ad hoc basis as required.

Explanation

The democratic leadership model ensures that the expertise of all staff is brought to the decision-making process. This style of leadership is supported by an effective administration support which ensures that important information is communicated and distributed.

There is good evidence of strategic planning and development and ongoing meaningful reviews of policies and procedures. An example is the adaptation of QED's goals, objectives, and performance indicators to better align with the tertiary evaluation indicators.

Clear evidence is used to evaluate performance regularly. The management team meets on a regular basis and key performance indicators are a set agenda item. For example, the need to improve the turnaround of assessments is being closely monitored and is a worthwhile new initiative. A closer analysis of course completion data would improve evaluations.

The advisory board supports governance and there was evidence that this board has regular input into policy and planning decisions. For example, QED considered and decided not to participate in adult literacy and numeracy training, recognising that it did not align with the competencies of its team and that other providers were meeting the needs of the sector.

The small team appreciates the need to remain current with developments in the sector and to actively participate in relevant conferences and forums. A review of development needs has identified key areas for professional development of staff.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Recommendations

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

NZQA

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