

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Allied Trades Institute Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 2 September 2015

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review.....	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results	6
Findings	8
Recommendations	15
Appendix.....	16

MoE Number: 7184
NZQA Reference: C18590
Date of EER visit: 19 and 20 May 2015

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:	Allied Trades Institute Limited (Allied Trades)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Unit 12, 99 Sawyers Road, Papanui, Christchurch.
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	3 November 2013 ¹
Courses currently delivered:	Flooring Fundamentals (training scheme at level 3) Flooring Apprentice Block courses
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	167 individual learners 20 per cent Māori 8 per cent Pasifika
Number of staff:	Three full-time and one part-time staff
Scope of consent to assess:	N/A
Distinctive characteristics:	Allied Trades offers apprentice block courses (five to eight days in length each year for three years), for Flooring Apprentices training towards the National Certificate in Flooring (Level 4). Courses are provided under contract to the Building and

¹ Originally registered as National Flooring School. The PTE changed ownership in 2013, but the personnel largely remained the same.

Construction Industry Training Organisation (BCITO).

They also offer distance learning and optional one-day face-to-face courses, under contract to BCITO, to support trainees towards completion of the National Certificate in Flooring (Level 4), or the National Certificate in Flooring (Trade Supply) (Level 3).

Allied Trades also offers the Flooring Fundamentals course, a knowledge and awareness-raising course for flooring product wholesalers and retailers.

The organisation also provides a flooring product or installation complaints investigation service, which includes inspection, advice and a resolution service.

Recent significant changes: Before November 2013 Allied Trades had different ownership, and was known as the National Flooring School. It was aligned with the Flooring Industry Training Organisation (Flooring ITO), which is now part of BCITO.

Allied Trades has recently appointed a chief executive officer who was previously contracted to manage quality assurance in the organisation.

Previous quality assurance history: This is Allied Trade's first external evaluation and review (EER) after the change of ownership in 2013.

The organisation is not required to engage with any standard setting bodies for the moderation of its assessments, as it currently has no consent to assess against unit standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards. Allied Trades assesses the competency of learners to complete flooring tasks. This data is part of the evidence BCITO uses to make judgments about whether or not a learner achieves a unit standard.

However, Allied Trades does not currently carry out any summative assessments of its learners; that is BCITO's responsibility.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This evaluation included the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy, which provides an overview of the strategic and operational levels of the organisation.

The other focus area was flooring training, which incorporated all the training currently offered by the organisation.

In effect, this was an evaluation of the whole organisation.

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.

A team of two evaluators and one observer visited the organisation's only delivery site in Christchurch for two days. The evaluators interviewed members of the board, the recently appointed chief executive officer, the two tutors and a group of seven learners present on the day.

The evaluators also spoke with and received an email from Allied Trades' main stakeholder, BCITO, and reviewed a wide range of the organisation's documents, records and database.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Allied Trades Institute Limited**.

The following factors contribute to this level of confidence:

Most learners gain competency in the knowledge and skills covered in the short courses (90 per cent plus² complete and achieve).

Māori and Pasifika achieve at a similar rate as all other learners, indicating that their learning needs are met.

The organisation assesses learners' literacy and numeracy needs, and provides support as needed. Short course success rates indicate this support is effective.

The organisation has close connections with the flooring industry established over many years. Staff have served in the organisation for a long time, have a depth of knowledge of the flooring industry, and stay up-to-date with current trends and technology.

Industry and learner surveys conducted by Allied Trades indicate the organisation is respected by its industry, and learners gain significant value from the training and advance their knowledge and skills in flooring installation techniques, the industry and associated trends and technology.

The organisation provides added value to its industry sector through its complaints investigation and resolution services.

The board members have long-standing and close connections with industry, and have been involved in the organisation under its previous ownership and name. This provides continuity of strategic oversight for the organisation.

² This figure may not have been accurate at the time of this evaluation. There were differences between the number of learners directed to attend block courses and the number who actually turned up, which made the accuracy of the percentage unclear. It is likely that the achievement rate is higher than 90 per cent as some learners do not show up due to factors beyond the control of Allied Trades, such as workplace priorities.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Allied Trades Institute Limited**.

The following factors contribute to this level of confidence:

The organisation tracks the achievement rates of all learners, including ensuring equity of outcomes for Māori and Pasifika learners (as measured through formative assessment processes).

The achievement data is collated and regularly reported to BCITO, which reports NZQF credit achievement to NZQA.

Allied Trades conducts regular surveys of its learners and industry members. Analysis of survey results indicates learners are highly satisfied with their training and gain new and valuable skills. Employers' feedback is similarly positive. However, the industry survey response rate was unclear at the time of this evaluation, so the extent of industry satisfaction is also unclear.

Tutors have extensive experience in the industry and some training in adult learning and assessment. The evaluators observed a good level of engagement and respect between learners and tutors.

The organisation has a performance appraisal process for tutors, although this is not applied consistently among staff. Allied Trades plans to strengthen aspects of the process, such as tutor observations, formal feedback and linking this to professional development.

The organisation's close connection with its industry base allows Allied Trades to develop and deliver bespoke short courses for retail and wholesale staff that closely match their needs for training in product and floor finishing trends.

The board has extensive experience in the industry, and provides sound strategic oversight. However, there is currently no structured process or practice to review the board's effectiveness.

This is a small organisation and there was clear evidence of open, free and frank discussion among all personnel. This provided a level of assurance that self-assessment knowledge and information was being shared across all personnel.

Findings³

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**.

The block courses are five to eight days long. They cover aspects of flooring not covered by all apprentices in the workplace. Learners' achievement⁴ rates are high in this context, with all but a few learners achieving competence in the learning outcomes (more than 90 per cent). Māori and Pasifika learners are achieving at a similar rate to all other learners. This indicates that the organisation is satisfactorily addressing their needs.

There are some factors affecting the accuracy of the achievement rate. At the time of this evaluation the organisation had some difficulty defining the actual number of learners used to calculate the 90 per cent achievement rate. For example, BCITO enrolls apprentices and book them into courses with Allied Trades, but not all apprentices actually attend the courses due to workplace requirements or sickness. Therefore it is likely that the actual achievement rate of those attending is higher than 90 per cent rather than lower.

The evaluators consider the relatively high achievement rate to be strong rather than exemplary because short course achievement rates are commonly high.

Beyond achieving the course, learners gain the added value of awareness of new trends in the flooring industry through a number of visiting speakers and demonstrations (for example, new timber floor sanding techniques and finishes).

The one-day Flooring Fundamentals courses train retail and wholesale staff in knowledge and installation of particular products. While these do not lead to a qualification, participants do undertake assignments, assessments and workplace verification of the knowledge and skills gained. Success rates are similar to those for the apprentice block courses.

The organisation maintains a database of all learner attendance, and reports completions of the block course assessments to BCITO. This data is analysed and the results reported to management and the board, primarily to look at learner numbers for business viability rather than as an analysis of how well learners are achieving.

³ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

⁴ Achievement is defined here as the results of Allied Trades formative assessment. BCITO makes the final determination of learners' achievement against the unit standards in the National Certificate in Flooring.

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**.

Allied Trades is the only flooring school in the country. It provides theory and practical training to apprentices, as well as contributing to a greater awareness and knowledge of products and flooring processes for wholesale and retail staff.

Learners are exposed to flooring products and installation techniques, some of which learners are not using in their workplace, and this learning contributes to their certification. The organisation's learner surveys indicate the vast majority of learners are highly satisfied with the training and the value of the learning outcomes. This was confirmed in learner interviews during this evaluation.

There was an example of this wider knowledge and understanding during this evaluation. This involved the learners practising the latest techniques in floor sanding to produce a smoother finish and therefore a better quality product, as well as experimenting with a range of timber floor colours and finishes. Learners interviewed during this evaluation rated this experience highly.

Learners also gain a greater awareness of health and safety, with tutors noting that, across the industry, people are still reluctant to wear personal protective equipment (PPE). However, tutors noted that at the end of the block courses most learners indicated they had a greater understanding of the health and safety risks and that learners were more willing to wear PPE. This outcome is of potentially high value in terms of the learners' long-term health and safety, assuming graduates do apply this knowledge in their workplaces.

Allied Trades management noted that they have a strong demand for the Flooring Fundamentals courses, indicating that these are meeting industry needs and adding value across the flooring industry. The organisation's industry surveys showed this.

The organisation has a very good level of knowledge and understanding of how well it is meeting the training needs and providing valued outcomes. This knowledge and understanding comes from industry and learner surveys, some data about consumer concerns gained through the organisation's complaints and resolution service, its broader networks within New Zealand and some links with the international flooring industry.

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**.

The block courses for apprentices are well structured and planned, with course schedules, timetables, learner workbooks and formative assessments which match the unit standards in the National Certificate in Flooring (Level 4) and the National Certificate in Flooring (Trade Supply) (Level 3).

The organisation's learner surveys indicate that the learners are satisfied with the learning materials and how well the block courses match their needs. Allied Trades conducts a literacy and numeracy assessment at the beginning of the block course and the achievement rates indicate that any identified needs are well managed, with the vast majority of learners achieving the course.

Comments from some learners interviewed during this evaluation indicated that the block courses did not always address individual learners' needs directly. For example, not all learners working in the timber flooring area thought the courses directly addressed their training needs. This may indicate a need for more individualised or sub-group learning plans. However, the evaluators note that the courses are delivered as contracted with BCITO, and Allied Trades is unable to make unilateral changes.

The Flooring Fundamentals courses are tailored to provide knowledge about specific products and its installation. This course adaptation closely matched the needs of the retail and wholesale staff, as indicated by satisfaction levels and ongoing demand for these courses.

Allied Trades is a member of the National Flooring Association, providing ongoing links with current issues, events and trends in the flooring industry. This further helps the organisation match its courses to current industry needs.

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 **Adequate**.

Teaching is effective, as shown by high achievement rates, courses being well planned to match industry's current needs, and a high level of satisfaction in the learners' and industry surveys. Both tutors have extensive industry experience; and the longer serving tutor has appropriate adult teaching and literacy qualifications. The recently appointed tutor has completed some unit standards in adult assessment and is yet to complete adult teaching training.

The organisation's performance appraisal processes and practices for tutors are a work-in-progress, with current practices being more informal than well-structured and planned. The more experienced tutor regularly observes the newer tutor and takes quizzes with learners to ensure they are gaining the required knowledge. However, the evaluators did not identify any particular issues with tutor performance appraisal or the organisation's self-assessment.

The organisation has plans to strengthen professional development. Staff interviewed identified areas where professional development has been occurring: for example, new tutors completing unit standards in adult teaching and assessment. This is arguably at the minimum end of good practice in an adult teaching environment.

The learning environment is purpose-built, and very well resourced for practical and theory exercises.

The evaluators noted a good level of rapport between learners and staff, as well as good learner engagement in practical activities and theory classes.

BCITO moderated Allied Trades' assessment materials in 2015 and 11 of the 15 samples reviewed required minor changes to be fit for purpose. It should be noted that Allied Trades currently has no consent to assess against unit standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards, so does not have to submit assessment samples for external moderation by BCITO, or report any learner results to NZQA. All assessments conducted by the organisation are formative only, contributing to confirmation of learning, not summative assessments. However, the assessment at apprenticeship block courses is a BCITO-contracted requirement.

The evaluators noted that while assessment materials are written to match the unit standards in the national certificates, not all assessment materials produce sufficient evidence to show competency. Some material indicates that the assessor has judged, for example, practical skills as satisfactorily demonstrated, and these are then ticked off as complete. There is no description of the learner's performance in some assessment records, and no way to determine their competence. This is no longer seen as best practice.

However, as noted, Allied Trades does not report unit standard credit results to NZQA. This is the responsibility of BCITO, following their confirmation of an apprentice's competence.

There is room for Allied Trades to strengthen its self-assessment of the effectiveness of training; for example by developing more robust internal checks of assessment materials.

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 **Good**.

In the context of the short block courses, Allied Trades supports its learners very well. Before the block courses learners receive a workbook. This workbook is checked by the BCITO training advisors, who are responsible for ensuring that learners are ready for the block course. Allied Trades assists with arranging accommodation during the block courses as requested, and during this evaluation no issues or concerns were identified.

Learner surveys indicated a high level of satisfaction with the support received during block courses as well as the information supplied before the course. Learners' comments in the surveys noted the tutors were 'good people' and 'top blokes'. The organisation also provided lunches during the block courses.

As noted, Allied Trades places a very high focus on health and safety during the block courses and on raising learners' awareness of health and safety issues in their workplaces. Tutors commented that learners leaving block courses showed a far higher awareness of safety and willingness to wear protective equipment than when they arrived. This indicates that learners are likely to take more care of themselves in the workplace as a result of the training.

The organisation's learner surveys perhaps rely too much on a tick box approach and a generalised focus on courses, content and materials. The quality and value of the feedback gained using this approach is potentially less than optimal.

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 board and management maintains a focus on learner achievement through looking at monthly reports, although a review of board minutes suggested a higher focus was placed on the number of learners in courses than monitoring or reviewing the quality of the training.

The board currently has no formal processes to review its own performance; this is an area that could potentially make the governance role more robust.

All personnel have long-term involvement in the flooring industry, including through the earlier iteration of the organisation, the National Flooring School. The small size of the organisation (three full-time staff) and evidence of open communication between staff and the board ensures that all staff are aware of learner achievement rates. However, as noted in Findings 1.1, there are some gaps in the analysis of learner achievement.

Final Report

The board has an appropriate focus on ensuring compliance with all relevant regulations. The evaluators did not identify any issues or concerns and none were brought to the evaluators' attention. All of the board members are employers in the flooring industry and have apprentices that attend the training.

Allied Trades has recently appointed a part-time chief executive. During the evaluation there was evidence of recent changes to improve quality processes and self-assessment activity. This is part of the organisation's wider plan to grow and develop new courses and to seek direct funding as well as offering block courses to flooring apprentices.

The organisation is also currently applying to NZQA for a change of ownership. This change will maintain current personnel but change the organisation from a limited liability company to a trust. The organisation describes this as the completion of the process of change from the previous National Flooring School to a training provider with a wide focus and a stronger ownership and governance structure.

Allied Trades has a clear purpose and role: to continue to meet the needs of the flooring industry for competent staff. The organisation does this through its block courses for apprentices and others who need relevant knowledge and skills in the flooring industry.

The evaluation team considers that the recent changes are likely to strengthen the organisation and therefore NZQA can have confidence in its future performance.

Focus Areas

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

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: Flooring training

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

NZQA recommends that Allied Trades Institute:

1. Further develop its processes to collate all learner participation and achievement data to ensure accurate monitoring of learner achievement
2. Establish the value of outcomes of the block course training by developing an understanding of how well trainees have applied their learning in the workplace
3. Review its assessment practices in terms of current best practice in the industry training environment. (The evaluators acknowledge that currently Allied Trades' assessments are formative, but they contribute to BCITO's confirmation of learning)
4. Ensure its plans for strengthening tutor performance appraisals and ongoing professional development are put into place
5. Consider ways to get better quality feedback from learners
6. Explore options for governance self-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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