



Report of External Evaluation and Review

AsureQuality Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 5 April 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:	141 Cambridge Terrace, Christchurch
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	AsureQuality Ltd 2007 (previously AgriQuality 1993)
Number of students:	Domestic: 2,625 trainees on short courses International: Nil
Number of staff:	86 part-time workplace trainers and/or workplace assessors
Scope of active accreditation:	Food safety, particularly for primary industries
Sites:	AsureQuality training (AQ) has its headquarters in Christchurch and hires appropriate sites for training throughout New Zealand.
Distinctive characteristics:	AsureQuality is the state owned enterprise (SOE) that provides food safety and biosecurity services to the food and primary production sectors. It was re-formed by a merger between ASURE NZ Ltd and AgriQuality in October 2007. This included the merging of their PTE registrations. The training arm uses the experienced and qualified staff of AsureQuality to train company or customers' staff. The company has about 1700 employees, so about 5 per cent are part-time trainers/assessors.
Previous quality assurance history:	At audit, in 2009, AQ did not meet eight requirements of QA Standard One, the standard in force at the time. However, the requirements not met were low risk and impacts were negligible and within existing

organisational controls.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected were:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- National Certificate in Animal Product Examination Services (Level 4)
- Introductory hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) training for the meat industry.

Governance, management, and strategy is a mandatory focus area and the National Certificate in Animal Product Examination Services is the training course for meat inspectors joining AsureQuality. The company employs about 900 meat inspectors and trains around 50 every year. The introductory HACCP course is delivered to meat company staff and for many is a start to building a career in the industry.

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 EER team comprised a lead evaluator and an external evaluator. The team met with the training support services manager, the technical manager, training coordinators, and trainer/assessors. The senior trainer/assessor and stakeholders were contacted by telephone.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

Learners at AQ complete formal qualifications. There is good evidence that the vast majority of learners on staff training and customer courses complete the courses and achieve qualifications. Successful course completion enables learners to be useful and productive contributors to the food processing industry.

Learners improve their well-being and enhance their abilities and attributes. Many experience personal growth in confidence, self-management, and a sense of belonging as they acquire the knowledge and skills needed for their jobs. These improvements support and enhance their learning and their job performance.

AQ training ensures that there are staff qualified to assure that compliance requirements are met for New Zealand foodstuffs. The long-term value is that New Zealand's reputation for quality food products is maintained and overseas market access requirements are met. This is critical to New Zealand's economy.

Graduates of AQ programmes improve their employment situation, engage with further study, and contribute positively to their local and wider communities. There was evidence that employees improved their position in the industry by undertaking AQ courses. These outcomes contribute to the economic and social well-being of individuals, communities, and the nation.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **AsureQuality Limited**.

AQ has an excellent self-assessment capability and a "Rolls-Royce" quality management system. The training administration group utilises the company's proprietary, process improvement computer software to clearly plan, implement, and improve all training processes in a disciplined manner. This enables all staff to easily access procedures and resources and to operate consistently and to a high standard. Through this system, AQ delivers high quality training services to both staff and customers and ensures it "practices what it preaches".

There was evidence that AQ shares the feedback from stakeholders well with staff and looks for worthwhile improvements. One example is the introduction of a reporting system to highlight learners who are not completing courses or who are progressing more slowly than expected. Administration staff and other trainers will then give these people closer attention. Self-assessment is the primary means of improving AQ's training performance.

TEO response

AQ Limited 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.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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**.

Learners at AQ complete formal qualifications. There is good evidence that most learners on staff training and customer courses complete the courses and achieve qualifications. There are few withdrawals. Some learners are slow to complete because of the difficulties of arranging timely assessments in smaller rural workplaces. AQ is adding a notification element to the learners' management system to enhance the tracking of these learners' progress. Successful course completion enables learners to be useful and productive contributors to the food processing industry.

The learners acquire useful skills and knowledge. Primary production is an important part of the New Zealand economy and the quality of food exported must be assured. Learners trained by AQ become part of the team that ensure the quality of New Zealand's food exports.

Learners improve their well-being and enhance their abilities and attributes. There is evidence that many join the meat inspectors' course to improve their prospects in life. Many experience personal growth in confidence and self-management and a sense of belonging as they acquire the knowledge and skills needed for their jobs. These improvements support and enhance learning and job performance.

Self-assessment at AQ is ongoing, comprehensive, authentic, and robust. There was evidence that AQ shares feedback from stakeholders well with staff and looks for worthwhile improvements. Improving the system to monitor more closely the rate at which learners progress and complete courses is an example of this improvement. Self-assessment is the primary means of improving AQ's training performance.

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

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**.

A short-term value of AQ training is that there are qualified staff to ensure that compliance requirements are met for foodstuffs. This translates into a long-term value: meeting overseas market access requirements and maintaining New Zealand's reputation for quality food products. This is critical to New Zealand's economy.

Graduates of AQ programmes improve their employment situation, engage with further study, and contribute positively to their local and wider communities. There was evidence that employees improved their position in the industry by undertaking AQ courses. The courses provide pathways for building skills and adding extra strands to qualifications. Much of AQ's training work is in rural communities and also involves training farmers in areas such as biosecurity, movement control, and on-farm practices. These outcomes contribute to the economic and social well-being of individuals, communities, and the nation.

While there is good anecdotal evidence of the value of outcomes, more formal evidence would be needed for a rating of excellent in self-assessment in this area. AQ could strengthen this area by considering what information about the value of outcomes would enhance its training performance.

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 **Excellent**.

There is good evidence from the course evaluations that the programmes match the needs of learners. Manuals have been updated using feedback from learners so that they are attractive, accurate, and easy to use. Instructors use videos and DVDs to illustrate teaching points, and their experience in day-to-day work in food safety issues enables them to provide up-to-date and interesting examples and activities. These activities and resources enhance learning by making it interesting and relevant.

AQ has a network of managers who consult with their meat company colleagues monthly to give reports on factory performance. Staff training is always on the agenda at these consultations. Along with annual summaries, consultation ensures that the training is meeting the needs of client companies. Stakeholders are able to participate effectively because they are informed of developments in the industry and in training.

Compliance training must meet the needs of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA). NZFSA recently audited AQ and found that the AQ training system is "effective in delivering the requirements of Meat Manual 16 and the relative NZFSA Notices".

AQ works closely with the New Zealand Industry Training Organisation principally by membership of the ITO's Meat Advisory Group. This group also includes key training managers from major players in the meat industry and has a major role in ensuring qualifications meet industry needs and are practical.

Again, comprehensive information from student evaluations and company feedback is gathered and analysed and reflected on to ensure that stakeholders' needs are being met and improvements are agreed and implemented.

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 **Excellent**.

Assessments are relevant, fair, and support learning. The training administration team has an excellent moderation and assessment system and has introduced a new internal audit system which has been in place since being trialled in September 2010. Under this system, an experienced trainer observes selected training sessions and provides feedback for improvement purposes. The training manager noted that trainers have been responsive to this practice, and the approach is important for consistency in teaching practices, given that AQ training is dispersed nationwide.

Learning is practical and practice-based. In the meat industry course, students are able to practise their skills on the chain directly and maintain an effective balance between learning theory and practice. In the HACCP course, learners focus on the documentation from their own workplaces. This practice-based teaching promotes integrated and context-relevant learning.

AQ training has excellent systems for identifying potential assessors and developing them into effective trainers. The manager maintains a training personnel competency matrix which tracks trainers and enables the staff to identify which trainers have the knowledge and expertise to undertake assessments or deliver training. AQ also takes a tiered approach to trainer development. Potential assessors first qualify by becoming competent in the assessment unit standard 4098. If suitable and willing, they then progress to qualifications in adult education and deliver the higher-level training. Further training is given to the senior trainers who develop and design assessments, training materials, and courses. Trainers spoke of the value they got from undertaking the adult teaching qualification.

The instructors have a passion for their industry, the people in it, and for imparting their knowledge and skills. The evaluations show good learner-teacher interaction and learner engagement. This engagement shows the positive relationships between the teaching staff and the learners as well as among learners.

Again, AQ gathers comprehensive data on the effectiveness of the teaching and this is analysed and improvements made. Trainers mentor each other, sitting in on each other's training sessions and providing feedback. There was evidence that manuals were updated and improved and that training staff quickly communicated learner feedback to the tutors.

In a constantly changing environment, programmes and delivery methods must be kept up to date.

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**.

AQ provides comprehensive and timely study information and advice. This is clear from the information on the website and from the course materials issued to learners. There was evidence of clear pathways for meat inspectors to acquire their first qualification and then add further strands. As with the HACCP courses, learners can progress from understanding and implementation of existing HACCP plans, to acquiring the skills needed to produce plans for new procedures. This timely advice and the availability of pathways improve learners' chances of completing qualifications.

Learners are given continuing support to pursue their chosen pathways. As all learners are already employed, their well-being is managed by their employers' human resources staff. AQ training administration works closely with human resources staff as AQ training supports employment and promotion paths within the organisation itself as well as the related industries it serves. This ongoing support means that learners are more likely to achieve qualifications.

AQ trainers maintain an inclusive learning environment. Classes are small and instructors work with individuals and deliver the information using examples from the learners' work experience. Previous experience is recognised and AQ's assessment data shows that learners with previous experience complete their qualifications more quickly. These inclusive learning environments and use of the learners' experience enhance achievement.

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 **Excellent**.

AQ training has a clear purpose and direction, nested within the overall vision of AQ to be "a world class provider of food safety and biosecurity services". Training staff have prepared a training strategy document agreed by senior management which focuses AQ training on restricting its scope to training staff and only training customers in areas where AQ staff have experience and expert knowledge. This clear purpose and direction increases the effectiveness of the unit.

Senior management supports training initiatives. An example is approval of the acquisition of a new student management system based on a business case developed by AQ training. The system should facilitate better reports and monitoring and direct electronic

communication with NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission. This should increase effectiveness and efficiency in AQ training.

Leadership is effective in AQ training. There was clear evidence that leadership is shared; staff collaborate and communicate well with each other and the stakeholders. Training staff hold weekly meetings and keep effective minutes that ensure that responsibilities for actions are clear. Staff felt supported in their roles.

AQ recruits and develops staff effectively. The evaluation team was impressed by the enthusiasm and professionalism of the teaching and administration staff of AQ. AQ has an effective performance management and professional development system. Teaching staff were working towards qualifications in adult teaching and all spoke enthusiastically about their annual training personnel meeting where they could carry out moderation work and professional development and develop training strategies. This developmental work ensures that staff stay up to date and effective in their training roles.

AQ training has an excellent self-assessment and quality management system. The training administration group utilises the company's proprietary, process improvement computer software to clearly plan, implement, and improve all training processes in a disciplined manner. This enables all staff to easily access procedures and resources, and to operate consistently and to a high standard. Through this system, AQ delivers high quality training services to both staff and customers and ensures it “practices what it preaches”.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and training

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: National Certificate in Animal Product Examination Services (Level 4)

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

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

Staff recruited to become meat inspectors must complete this certificate to qualify. Completion rates are high as the recruitment process is thorough and the training takes place at meat companies where the trainees are in small groups, are well supervised, and can balance theory and practice according to their own individual needs. AsureQuality regards training as an investment and supports the learners well.

2.3 Focus area: Introductory HACCP for the meat industry

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

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

Trainees bring their own company documentation to this course and learn how to apply their company's plan. All trainees complete their training; the instructors work with individuals to ensure understanding. Course evaluations show evidence of very good learner-tutor interaction. Training administrators share the evaluation feedback with the tutors and make changes to keep the course accurate and engaging.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations other than those implicit in the report arising from the external evaluation and review.

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this 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 all non-university 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).

*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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