



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
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Report of External Evaluation and Review

AMS Group Training

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 August 2017

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Final Report

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:	AMS Group Training
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	29 May 1998
Location:	71 Te Kowhai East Road, Hamilton
Delivery sites:	7a Earl Richardson Ave, Wiri, Auckland 12 Aerodrome Road, Mt Maunganui (to be approved) 36 Railway Road, Palmerston North 12 Centrum Lane, Rolleston, Christchurch (to be approved) 227 Port Road, Whangarei 104 Austin Street, Napier 38 Bouverie Street, Petone, Wellington
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate in Transport (Re-entry) (Level 3)• New Zealand Certificate in Crane Operation, with strands in Remote Controlled Overhead Crane, and Truck Loader Crane (Level 3) <p>AMS Group also offer a wide range of short courses that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health and Safety, Adult Education, Driver

Licensing, Cranes, Scaffolding, Agricultural Vehicles and Machinery, Cargo Operations

Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 220 students in the Student Achievement Component-funded programmes, making an equivalent of 91 EFTS (equivalent full-time students) – 52 per cent Māori and 12 per cent Pasifika; 14 per cent are under 25 years. A total of 775 EFTS were enrolled in short full-fee paying courses. International: nil
Number of staff:	46 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	The organisation's full accreditation and consent to assess can be found here: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/details.do?providerId=725285001
Distinctive characteristics:	AMS Group is one of the largest providers of training and assessment of driver training and crane and elevating work platforms training. The PTE also offers a significant number of health and safety courses and some adult education courses.
Recent significant changes:	The organisation has experienced significant growth since the previous external evaluation and review (EER), and consequently staffing levels have increased from 18 full-time equivalents in 2013 to 46 in 2016. New positions include a training manager, an administration manager, a learning and development manager, and a human resources and quality manager.
Previous quality assurance history:	The previous EER in 2013 was Confident in AMS Group's educational performance and Confident in the organisation's capability in self-assessment. Two unit standards moderated by the Motor Industry Training Organisation in 2016 met requirements. Three unit standards moderated by The Skills Organisation required some modification before further use. NZQA external moderation resulted in AMS Group not meeting

the standard for two numeracy unit standards.

Other:

At the time of the EER AMS Group had two subcontracting agreements, one with Natural Instincts and one with Elite Training. During the EER some non-compliance was identified. In one instance, advertising materials (including web-based) incorrectly presented AMS as having approval and accreditation to deliver certain national certificate programmes (although they do have consent to assess approval for the relevant standards), breaching the Education Act 1989 and guidance provided by NZQA in late 2016.^[1] It was also noted that AMS had not yet gained site approval for the new Christchurch or Tauranga campuses. An application for site approval for the Christchurch campus was lodged during the drafting of this report.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The EER examined the following focus areas:

- Certificate in Transport (Re-entry) (Level 3). This is a flagship programme for the organisation and is funded through the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Student Achievement Component funding. The programme was offered across a number of regions in 2016.
- Cranes and Elevating Work Platforms short courses. This is a significant quantity of work delivered by AMS Group and together represent over 200 EFTS.
- Progress on the previous EER recommendations. The organisation wanted to demonstrate its progress in implementing recommendations from the previous EER.

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.

AMS Group supplied the evaluation team with a self-assessment document and a range of other relevant documentation in the lead-up to the EER. For the on-site phase of the EER, the evaluation team of two spent a day at the Christchurch site and two days on site in Hamilton. The evaluation team met with key staff, including the owner/managing director, the learning and development manager, the quality, human resources and health and safety manager, the training manager, trainers and trainees. Phone interviews were held with five stakeholder companies, two industry training organisation contacts, a New Zealand Transport Agency representative and an advisory board member. A range of key documentation was also viewed including improvement plans, customer and trainee feedback, graduate destination data, internal performance reports and moderation reports.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **AMS Group Training**.

AMS Group is delivering training that is relevant, tailored and meeting the needs of the trainees and customers. AMS Group systematically collects feedback from both trainees and clients, and this feedback demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with the training. Clients routinely indicate that they are satisfied with the outcomes of the training and are likely to recommend AMS Group to a friend or colleague. For the students on the Certificate in Transport programme, there is value in the gaining of licences and useful knowledge and skills that prepare them well for employment. Of those that could be contacted (69 per cent), 84 per cent of graduates had found employment.

Achievement in the Certificate in Transport is strong and compares well with other TEOs delivering similar training. Course completion rates since 2012 have sat within a band of between 81 and 86 per cent, and cohort qualification achievement rates for the 2014 and 2015 starting cohorts were 86 and 87 per cent, with achievement for Māori on par.

The organisation ensures that trainers have significant industry expertise and are supported to develop and deliver materials tailored to the customer. The appointment of an instructional designer to develop engaging resources supports the learning. The Certificate in Transport has a good mix of theory and practical driving experience. The programme's activities are being revised to ensure less downtime for students when the trainer is supervising practical instruction. Moderation processes are systematic and improvement focused and ensure academic integrity.

The entry processes to enrol students into the certificate programme have been strengthened so that students' strengths and needs are well understood. Training is tailored to the individual's experience and needs. The adult literacy and numeracy snapshot assessment provides useful information for trainers. The programme team aims to build whanaungatanga (collaborative relationships) among the cohorts, and this was clearly evident for the student group interviewed in Hamilton.

The organisation has experienced significant growth since the previous EER. This has presented some challenges, including ensuring systems were in place to maintain consistent quality. A positive development is the establishment of an advisory board which has a governance role and provides useful feedback and support to the owner. In the past year there has also been work done to strengthen the administration, communication and human resource systems, and a training

manager role has been established to provide better support for trainers. Trainers noted that these changes have had a positive impact on their ability to do their job well.

AMS Group takes its compliance responsibilities seriously and responds to identified issues in a timely and meaningful way. A review of the quality management system has resulted in the implementation of a systems mapping tool which tracks policy, processes and issues identified for improvement. A new student management system has strengthened the reporting capabilities of the organisation. This development and other evidence demonstrates that AMS Group has made changes for improvement and to address the recommendations from the previous EER. However, during the review examples of incorrect advertising and the failure to apply for site approval for new sites reflect a breakdown in systems to ensure compliance with NZQA rules.

NZQA is confident in the AMS Group educational performance because evidence demonstrates that the PTE is delivering relevant training tailored to customer and trainee needs. Industry-experienced trainers are a strength of the organisation, and they are being better supported to enable them to train effectively. In addition, the organisation has managed growth by implementing systems to ensure that the consistency of quality and integrity of the training are maintained.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **AMS Group Training**.

The organisation has a range of mechanisms to enable it to reflect on performance. For example, achievement in the Certificate in Transport programme is carefully tracked and benchmarked and there is evidence of analysis leading to enhancements. Trainee feedback is gathered from both the short course and the 12-week programme, and this is collated and reported and responded to. In addition, from mid-2016 customers and/or employers have been contacted monthly for feedback. This feedback is collated and analysed and any issues are followed up and tracked through the process mapping tool. Other initiatives include a review of the quality management system and an in-depth staff survey which has provided some useful benchmarking data for the organisation. There is good evidence that this information is being used for self-assessment purposes and that improvement initiatives have resulted.

The EER team could see some gaps in self-assessment. For example, stronger links could be made between the data being collected and reported and the organisation's strategy and performance targets. While useful trainee achievement data is collected and reported, more analysis could be done to gain a deeper understanding of, for example, Māori achievement. While useful data is collected on the destinations of graduates from the certificate programme, a deeper understanding of value could be gathered. A cycle of internal audit could give the

organisation greater understanding of its compliance with various regulatory frameworks, especially in regard to compliance with NZQA PTE registration rules and requirements.

However, improvements to both educational performance and approaches to self-assessment are noted. Examples include the better analysis and reporting of moderation results and client feedback, and the implementation of new systems and tools to better manage student information and reporting processes. Improvements resulting from the use of data include upgraded equipment and the development of more engaging learning activities. Therefore, NZQA is confident in AMS Group's capability in self-assessment.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do students 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**.

Students in the Certificate in Transport achieve well. TEC data shows that course completion rates since 2012 have sat within a band of between 81 and 86 per cent. Qualification achievement rates for the 2014 and 2015 starting cohorts were 86 and 87 per cent. Achievement for Māori was on a par with or higher than all learners for 2012-2013, while 2014 and 2015 saw a small gap open of 2-3 percentage points. Analysis conducted by AMS Group benchmarked achievement with other similar providers and noted strong comparative performance.

Learners are positive about their achievement, particularly with respect to the range of licences they achieve, including the next class of truck licence, the wheels, tracks and rollers and dangerous goods endorsements, and the forklift licence and occupational health and safety operator's certificate. AMS Group tracks achievement for this group of trainees closely, and the PTE has a good understanding of why some have not succeeded. For example, an analysis of literacy assessments has identified that learners at Step 1 of the literacy progressions struggle to succeed, and this has resulted in a change to entry information and advice.

Students on the short course cranes and elevating work platforms courses also achieve well. Successful completion rates are between 95 and 99 per cent. However, not all students meet the competency standard on their first assessment and often require further training and support and/or more evidence to demonstrate their ability. Trainers noted that, as per the recommendations from the Crane Association of New Zealand, trainees must be able to demonstrate and validate their on-job experience. The organisation has worked to strengthen its approach to validation and communicating expectations to employers. The organisation has a systematic improvement approach to moderation, and this ensures the validity of achievement. Finer analysis of short course achievement may provide the organisation with useful information to understand how well it supports learner achievement, including analysing first-time achievement of assessments compared with those requiring more evidence, and when looking at Māori achievement to compare the achievement with non-Māori rather than all trainees.

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 students?

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**.

There is strong evidence of value for trainees and customers of AMS Group. For example, short course customer and trainee feedback shows a high level of satisfaction and willingness to recommend the training to others. The value of the industry experience of the trainers and the consistency in quality and delivery across the country are noted by employers. There is also value in the tailored courses offered to clients, with the resources and training being tailored to the context of the employer. Where issues have been raised, the organisation has invested in a robust system for responding, tracking an investigation, and undertaking any required improvements.

For the students who complete the Certificate in Transport there is value in the employment opportunities the training opens up. Equipped with the licences and additional knowledge, trainees spoken to by the evaluation team said they felt that the programme was good value for money and they had confidence they would find work or get a pay rise following completion of the qualification. Of the graduates contacted by AMS Group (69 per cent) three months after graduation, 84 per cent had found employment. Data shows that a significant percentage of this employment is relevant to the training. An employer spoken to by the evaluation team noted the value of the training delivered by AMS Group, saying it went beyond the licensing to knowledge and understanding of the industry and how to work successfully as a driver, including, for example, pre-checks and monitoring loads. AMS Group could do more to understand the value by talking with graduates and employers to understand how well graduate outcomes are met.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant 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**.

AMS Group has strong systems in place to engage with stakeholders. For example, industry engagement occurs formally and informally, through association memberships, participation in NZQA's qualification reviews, and ongoing direct client engagement by the senior leadership team. Processes have improved to

ensure that feedback from customers and trainees is collated and used effectively to inform improvements.

The organisation has a focus on ensuring trainers have good industry experience, and this is key to ensuring training is relevant. In addition, trainers are supported to develop their skills. Annual training days focus on moderation and delivery, and professional development plans support progress through adult education training. The appointment of a training manager has enhanced the support and guidance of trainers.

Many courses are tailored to meet the needs of different workplaces, with meetings held before the training to ascertain needs and the prior learning and experience of the trainees. In some cases, resources are tailor-made for the business. The appointment of an instructional designer has been important in sharpening the quality of resources to ensure they maximise learning.

Moderation is systematic and focused on improving the quality of assessment. Trainers noted regular moderation of assessments and support that had been put in place when improvements needed to be made. Results from internal moderation are reported monthly to the senior management team. External moderation results are largely positive, but where improvements are required AMS Group is proactive at trying to ensure standards are met. Industry stakeholders spoken to by the evaluation team noted the robustness of the assessment process, giving them confidence in the quality of training and the competency of those who successfully complete. To further strengthen the validity of achievement, AMS Group has worked to strengthen the attestation process whereby employers are now better informed about the necessity of work experience for the trainee in order for the unit standards to be awarded.

Trainees and their employers are encouraged to give feedback about the course and the training, and there are a number of examples where the feedback has been used for enhancement. For example, trainees in the certificate course noted that some equipment was aging and that there was too much downtime when the trainer was supervising practical exercises. New equipment has been leased and the education support team is working on ensuring there are more structured learning activities available to trainers. Generally, however, feedback is positive about the trainers and the delivery. For example, for 2016, 95 per cent of trainees rated the course as excellent, scoring the training an average of 9.2 out of 10. For short courses, average trainee feedback was at 9.3. Client feedback across the months generally scored AMS Group 9 out of 10 to the question, 'how satisfied were you with the outcome of the training/assessment activities?'. This indicates that the needs of most trainees are met. These results were validated by the evaluators through stakeholder interviews.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

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**.

AMS Group works to ensure that trainees are engaged in their learning and are supported to succeed. For both the short courses and the certificate programme, the evaluation team heard examples of improvements being made to the enrolment and course preparation processes, to give trainees better information about the course, the content, the style of delivery and expectations. Students are supported to apply to StudyLink, and during the course they are supported to write their CV and apply for jobs. All students sit the TEC literacy and numeracy assessment, and this is used to identify those who may need more support. An analysis of achievement and literacy scores led to a shift in practice when it was discovered that half the learners who tested at Step 1 of the progressions did not achieve the qualification. There is still room to develop teaching approaches to further embed literacy and numeracy into programme delivery.

Students report that the trainers are good at breaking things down so they can be understood. They also noted that the trainer will only assess them when they feel ready. The organisation has equipment and training facilities that allow students to practise their driving skills. Students interviewed told the evaluation team they were clear about where they had achieved and where they needed to improve to progress. Learners who require additional support are given one-to-one time with the trainers including extra practical time.

Following a review by the training manager into how well AMS Group matches the needs of Māori learners, some changes were made to the enrolment and interview process to properly welcome and meet students and their whānau, and recommendations were made to trainers for how to build whanaungatanga in the classroom. The cohort interviewed by the evaluators certainly expressed their sense of community and family, and other feedback collected by AMS Group showed that some trainers are good at developing that atmosphere. It was not clear that this was consistent across the regions. Reflections by trainers on processes, practices and areas to improve at the end of each cohort could be included in a more formal programme review.

1.5 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**.

AMS Group has grown significantly since the previous EER, and to support this growth there has been considerable change in terms of systems and processes and personnel. For example, an advisory board has been established that meets two-monthly to support the owner/director with business advice and support. In addition, a management restructure has established some key roles, including a training manager, whose role it is to support and advocate for the trainers. The evaluation team understands that this role has made a significant difference to the work of the trainers. Staff turnover was high in 2015, but this appears to have stabilised in 2016. A staff survey conducted in 2016 indicated that staff felt they were working for a successful organisation with a strong customer focus but would like clearer performance management and role descriptions, and for channels of communication to improve. There is evidence that this feedback is being responded to with new mechanisms for communication, support for professional development, and systems and processes being more clearly outlined.

The vision and strategy of the organisation were not clearly expressed in the self-assessment documents. The organisation's key performance indicators are currently under revision to ensure they have an outcomes focus and align with the strategic direction of the organisation. However, systems have been strengthened to ensure that better information from key stakeholders is being collected and reported in a way that is helpful to inform decision-making processes. The PTE has bought new student management system and process mapping software to support the quality, consistency and transparency of data and information.

As noted above, the senior leadership team has strong engagement with key industry stakeholders and works hard to ensure that AMS Group has products that match their needs. It was evident from the new advisory board minutes and interviews with stakeholders that the organisation has managed significant change and continues to plan for the future. The organisation has made progress towards implementing the recommendations from the previous EER, including the new student management system, the establishment of the advisory board, the use of the literacy and numeracy assessment tool, and a review of the Certificate in Transport. AMS Group supported the establishment of an internal cultural advisory group in response to the previous EER recommendations. However, it will require strong leadership to make traction in ways useful to both the organisation, the teaching staff, and Māori learners and stakeholders.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

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

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

AMS Group is improving processes to manage important compliance accountabilities. For example, following a review of the quality management system, it was decided to implement a process mapping tool that could link to improvements and risks. This system is being rolled out and is currently linked to important processes, for example health and safety, student enrolment, moderation, and the gathering of stakeholder feedback. This new tool is bringing consistency to the fast-growing organisation. A risk register has been set up to support the management of these processes.

The organisation takes a proactive approach to its compliance responsibilities. In particular, it has a strong focus on health and safety. Most staff noted their clear understanding of their obligations with respect to health and safety. The training manager and learning and development manager established that the organisation is meeting requirements with respect to the learning hours delivered, particularly with respect to the certificate programme.

Audits conducted by the New Zealand Transport Agency and the TEC in 2015 and 2016 identified issues with AMS Group's systems and processes. In both instances, the organisation has proactively worked to ensure they are meeting requirements. This proactive approach can also be seen in the response to NZQA's moderation findings. The New Zealand Transport Agency is now expressing confidence in the robustness of the systems of AMS Group. There is evidence of tutor observations and internal and external moderation to monitor sub-contracted delivery. While one sub-contractor was not advertising their delivery correctly, this has now been rectified.

However, systems could be strengthened and there was no evidence of a systematic audit process that could highlight and identify gaps in compliance with regulatory authorities' rules and regulations. Three non-compliances with NZQA's regulations were identified during the EER. Two involved programme advertising and the other delays in gaining site approvals. A systematic process of review could have self-identified these in advance of the EER.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Certificate in Transport (Re-entry) (Level 3)

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: Progress against previous EER recommendations

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

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

2.3 Focus area: Cranes and Elevating Work Platform short courses

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA requires that AMS Group:

- Ensure that approval is gained for all training sites
- Programmes advertised to students are only those for which AMS Group has approval.

NZQA recommends that AMS Group:

- Develop stronger processes to monitor, review and respond to important compliance requirements.
- Look at how closer analysis of achievement data, for example analysing the number of re-sits and Māori achievement compared with non-Māori, could provide useful information for improvement.
- Consider end-of-cohort reviews by trainers for the Certificate in Transport to gain useful feedback on how the programme ran and opportunities for improvement.
- Continue to look for value from the cultural advisory group and continue the development of resources and delivery methods to match the needs of Māori.

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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