

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Safety 'n Action

Date of report: 16 February 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: Auckland

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: Approximately 6000 enrolments across 19 short courses.

Sites: Auckland

Safety 'n Action was first registered as a private training establishment with NZQA in 2002, and currently offers 19 short courses that run from one-half to two days. Each course focuses on a specific area of workplace health and safety, such as height safety or working in a confined space. Most courses are based on unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and can lead to the achievement of a national certificate such as the National Certificate in Health and Safety (level 1 or 3). Safety 'n Action offers training primarily to client company employees, and on contract to industry training organisations (ITO). Many students are in the process of completing an industry training agreement with an ITO.

Safety 'n Action also offers the following: training to refresh knowledge and skills for former students; support for companies to design safety policies and procedures; health and safety system auditing; assistance to companies to ensure compliance with policies and procedures; and assistance in achieving Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO)-approved handler compliance.

Safety 'n Action's two previous quality audits with NZQA resulted in all relevant requirements being met.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Safety 'n Action.

- Course completion and achievement is consistently between 99 and 100 per cent on all courses.
- Skills and knowledge gained are highly valued by client companies and students.
- The organisation's professional development and performance monitoring processes for trainers have contributed positively to the quality of the learning.
- There is good evidence of deep learning occurring beyond the minimum requirements set by the unit standards.
- The company takes an holistic approach to training, which incorporates the client company's work culture and policies and procedures into the training.
- Safety 'n Action is experiencing growth and significant ongoing business, including offering refresher courses to existing clients.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Safety 'n Action.

- Safety 'n Action is evaluating all of its programmes, including student completion rates, its surveys of client companies, and the performance of course instructors.
- Some surveys are not well structured or include questions that do not provide sufficiently detailed responses to enable meaningful analysis of the data.
- There is clear evidence to show Safety 'n Action is using some informal and formal processes to review the overall performance of safety training.
- Safety 'n Action has sufficiently robust processes and records to repeat and continue its high educational performance in the absence of key staff.

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

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of Safety 'n Action included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The following focus area is a grouping which represents five of the 19 short courses that are the most commonly offered:

- The five short courses with the highest enrolments: *confined space, hazard identification, permit to work, height safety, and fire extinguisher.*

Part 1: 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 **Excellent**.

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

Context

- The five short courses evaluated are designed to incorporate client company health and safety procedures and safety plans.
- Course assessments are based on the requirements of unit standards on most courses, and student achievement is very high on all courses.
- Courses extend students beyond the minimum unit standard requirements.

- Safety 'n Action regularly reviews course performance.
- The organisation has a flat management structure and involves all staff in regular meetings to review company performance and the effectiveness of its processes.

Explanation

Safety 'n Action is offering courses that are highly relevant to the participants' real work environments, which has resulted in learners being very motivated to pass the course. Pass rates are consistently between 99 and 100 per cent. Assessment material and assessor judgements are checked by Safety 'n Action to ensure they are valid and consistent. Many students are signed into an industry training agreement with their employer and industry training organisation, and this is a strong contributing factor to this high level of achievement.

The organisation tailors each course to each client company so the procedures included are specifically relevant to each workplace. This is a purposeful strategy designed to avoid generic training and has resulted in a very high level of customer satisfaction. Safety 'n Action's self-assessment indicates that client companies are very satisfied, and a typical comment is that Safety 'n Action is the "best provider [they] have used". Training material and practical experience offered on the courses are designed to take the learner beyond what is required by the unit standards. This is a specific strategy to build critical thinking skills and has resulted in safer work cultures within client companies.

The organisation has well-established self-assessment practices to monitor its performance and generally these are working well. However, Safety 'n Action is in the process of further developing its capacity to analyse data for trends and patterns over time.

The small size of the company means the managing director, one of two directors, is able to be fully involved with his staff, and all are involved in the improvement of their work processes, contributing to improving the company performance. The resulting organisational culture includes a high awareness of continual improvement.

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 **Adequate**.

Context

- Student and client company feedback is collected regularly and shows a high level of satisfaction.
- The organisation is experiencing rapid growth in the current year in client contracts and demand for its services, and this is expected to continue at least for the next financial year.
- The organisation has positioned itself to offer added value beyond minimum safety training requirements.

- Safety 'n Action's surveys with client companies show that employers value the raised safety awareness among their staff and significant reductions in lost time due to injuries.
- Some self-assessment data gathering, such as student course surveys, are poorly or too simply worded, and the information gathered is not yet used to its full extent.

Explanation

Safety 'n Action is in daily contact with its client companies. This process, combined with regular surveys, shows that it is providing courses that are relevant to its clients and of benefit to their commercial operations, for example through reduced lost time due to injuries.

Interviews with client companies conducted during this evaluation confirmed Safety 'n Action's assessment that the training is highly valued, with comments such as, “[they are the] top of the bunch”. Companies also valued the fact that Safety 'n Action stayed up to date with current technology and compliance requirements. Safety 'n Action monitors outcomes, such as the fact that some client companies are experiencing considerable reductions in lost time due to injuries on site, and this can in some part be attributed to staff safety training.

The organisation is currently experiencing considerable growth in demand for its safety courses. This growth is being well managed to ensure the focus on adding value to the client companies and their employees is not lost.

The organisation's student surveys indicate a very high level of satisfaction and value placed on the training received.

Some of the organisation's surveys are not well structured, or include questions which do not provide sufficiently detailed responses to enable meaningful analysis of the data.

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

- Safety courses are built around client companies' health and safety policies and procedures, at times incorporating real events such as “permits to work” for specific operational events.
- The organisation investigates client companies' culture to ensure this is factored into each course.
- The organisation has a history of ongoing contracts with many client companies.
- Feedback gathered from students and client companies indicates that their needs are well met.

- The organisation produces a Post Training Site Report to the client company, and conducts surveys to review satisfaction.

Explanation

One of Safety 'n Action's key strategies has been to design its courses using client company health and safety policies and procedures, acknowledging and using aspects of client company culture. The organisation also requests information regarding participants' learning needs prior to each course, and incorporates this information into the course design. These factors have ensured that both the client companies' needs and their employees' needs have been well met. Courses are often run at client company premises and real events in work time. This has ensured that the client companies' specific operational needs, equipment, and personnel are used within the training, ensuring their needs are very well met, so that staff have their site-specific safety knowledge and awareness raised. Developing this approach has been a time-consuming process, but Safety 'n Action views this as a critical factor in its success.

Safety 'n Action has many ongoing contracts and is expanding its client company base. This fact, combined with high student and client company satisfaction, indicates that it has delivered training courses that meet client company needs, and has built a good reputation in the industry. Staff commented that their continual improvement practices are based on asking themselves: "What does this person need to know to do their work safely?"; "We seek to create a safety awareness in the person".

The organisation has recently introduced a Post Training Site Report for its client companies. The purpose of this report is to provide companies with a review of the training delivered in terms of tutors' observations of the participants' engagement with the learning, and comments on the depth of their understanding and knowledge gained. This appears to be having a very positive impact in adding value to client companies and contributing to Safety 'n Action's internal self-assessment practices.

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**.

Context

- The organisation has a rigorous tutor recruitment process and a very thorough induction spanning up to nine months.
- New tutors are paired with a more experienced tutor for a period of time and have peer observations of their teaching practice.
- The director of Safety 'n Action conducts tutor performance reviews and tutors carry out their own self-assessment on their performance.
- One day per week is planned for tutors' course preparation and administration, so they can be well prepared for subsequent courses.

- Courses are designed to meet the requirements of unit standards, and assessment material and assessor judgements are meeting the national standard as designed by the relevant standard-setting bodies: New Zealand Industry Training Organisation (NZITO), Extractives Industry Training Organisation (EXITO), and NZQA.
- Courses are designed to teach the theory of health and safety, and to provide sufficient time to put that theory into practice in real workplace environments.
- Safety 'n Action's course reviews include Post Training Site Reports, and feedback from learners and client companies indicates there is a high quality of teaching and learning occurring.

Explanation

All teaching staff are specialists in at least one aspect of workplace health and safety, as well as having significant industry experience. Safety 'n Action has developed a thorough recruitment and induction process which has ensured tutors are well prepared for their roles. Newly appointed teaching staff progress through a three to nine-month induction process. This includes being paired with an experienced trainer, delivering the first sessions with an experienced trainer, and delivering an entire course with an experienced trainer. The effect of this has been high programme achievement and very high satisfaction ratings from students and companies.

All teaching staff are involved in checking the validity and consistency of the assessment material and assessors' judgements. This has ensured that all staff are aware of emerging issues and are meeting the required national standard, which has added to the credibility of the programmes. The organisation's self-assessment practices show that it is aware of the very high quality of teaching and learning, and is continuing to build on this strength. This view is supported by the client companies' confidence in repurchasing refresher and new courses.

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 **Adequate**.

Context

- Issues arising on courses regarding students or client companies are discussed by the management team and resolved.
- Teaching staff and courses are very well resourced with up-to-date technology and health and safety equipment.
- Management is developing a new, interactive programme, "Virtual program" to further enhance students' preparedness for training.
- Management is currently investing in new software for the call centre to provide improved student and client company support.

- Course numbers are small and students get one-to-one help.
- Students' learning needs are self-identified prior to attending and during the course.
- Student surveys provide poor data for the organisation to review how well they are meeting students' learning needs.

Explanation

The management team is directly involved in the delivery and reviewing of the effectiveness of training including how well students are supported. This review process by management also includes guidance to client companies in regards to health and safety policies and procedures, and the future training needs of staff. The organisation continually monitors the resourcing requirements for courses and uses client company material and equipment where appropriate.

In an effort to better support future students, management is investing in a Virtual program. This new program is planned to provide an interactive, computer-based training programme to help prepare students prior to attending a course. Another recent investment in resourcing is call centre software to provide a more responsive service to student and client company training queries.

Students' specific literacy and numeracy learning needs are currently self-identified or identified by the client company prior to attending a course. This process has depended on the self-confidence of the students to acknowledge their lack of skills, and has proved a challenge at times to tutors in providing appropriate support. The student surveys, as already noted earlier in this report, provide poor data for Safety 'n Action to review the effectiveness of how well it is supporting these students. However, the organisation has developed some effective strategies for addressing literacy issues, such as accepting oral answers to test questions.

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

- The recent appointment of a general manager to cater for current and expected growth as well as to maintain and build on quality.
- Flat management structure allows all staff to be involved and aware of issues and improvements.
- Client company feedback indicates that Safety 'n Action is the "top of the bunch" in its field of workplace health and safety training.
- Long-term company contracts are currently expanding due to satisfied clients, and new client companies are taking out contracts with Safety 'n Action.

- Safety 'n Action has adopted a new approach to business planning and strategic planning to accommodate growth.

Explanation

Safety 'n Action is a small company with two directors, one of whom is the managing director. Governance is provided by a management team, and the organisation has recently created a new position of general manager. Safety 'n Action is experiencing rapid growth due to increasing demand for its services, and the owners have responded to this demand by appointing a general manager approximately two months prior to this evaluation. The purpose of this appointment is to increase the capacity of the management team to assure that the quality of course design and delivery is not compromised by the company's growth. The new manager is currently in the process of developing a new business plan and strategic plan for this purpose, although they have not yet been finalised and implemented. The management team is currently monitoring these processes, but staff indicated that this new appointment is welcomed by existing staff, and is likely to contribute well to support quality learning.

The organisation has a flat management structure, in that all staff are involved and have access to full information. Safety 'n Action's analysis of its business to date shows that the style of management is a key contributor to maintaining and growing the client company contracts. The growth in company contracts and the maintenance of long-term client company contracts is seen by the organisation as an indicator of the educational success of its courses, and is also a clear indication that Safety 'n Action is providing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that its clients' employees need.

The management team is in daily contact with client companies and tutors around the country. Management's analysis is that this dual focus is one of the strong contributing factors to the very high course success rates. Client company feedback such as, "[they are] top of the bunch in their field" confirms management's view.

Overall, Safety 'n Action's self-assessment practices are providing a good framework for the collection of data to determine how well the company is performing. Safety 'n Action is aware that it is addressing most of the important learning needs of its learners and the training needs of its client companies, and is achieving a very high level of achievement on its courses, sustained over time. The weakness within the organisation's self-assessment process identified by this evaluation is with the collation of the results of learner surveys and the analysis of the data in order to make improvements.

Part 2: Performance in focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: The five short courses with most enrolments: *Confined space, hazard identification, permit to work, height safety, and fire extinguisher.*

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

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

Context

- Courses are customised to client company needs.
- Student learning needs are being met.
- Industry training organisations' requirements for national external moderation of assessment material, and assessor's judgements, are complied with.
- Student achievement rates are consistently very high.
- Some self-assessment of data is weak or not well used.

Explanation

The five short courses chosen for this focus area are adjusted for each specific client company; they are not run as generic courses. This has ensured that individual client company's specific needs, and their employees' learning needs, are catered for individually.

The organisation has maintained close relationships with the three industry training organisations, NZITO, EXITO, and NZQA to ensure the course assessments are valid and the assessors' judgements meet the national standard. This has provided a further confirmation of the value of these courses to the client companies and their employees.

Across the five sampled courses achievement rates are consistently 99 to 100 per cent, providing a high level of success for the learners and meeting the compliance requirements of clients companies very well.

While the organisation has well-established processes to monitor its performance, some tools such as satisfaction surveys provide poor data, which has restricted the organisation's ability to fully monitor for emerging trends and patterns.

Mandatory focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The overall rating for performance in governance, management, and strategy is **Excellent**.

The overall rating for capability in self-assessment in governance, management, and strategy is **Good**.

Context

- Safety 'n Action is well established and well managed.
- Management has ensured that it has appointed qualified and industry-experienced personnel to its staff.
- The organisation is being well prepared for current and future growth.
- Resourcing is exemplary.

Explanation

Management has a well-established history in the industry and is well accepted as providing quality workplace health and safety training by its client companies. This is confirmed by the ongoing and expanding client base, repeat business, and current growth in demand for courses.

As well as appointing industry-experienced specialists, management has purposefully appointed staff who they see as having “the right personality” to be good trainers in their industry. The management team see this as a successful strategy for the growth of the business, and the satisfaction of its clients supports this view. The achievement rates across all courses to date indicate that the management team’s planning strategies are highly effective. The organisation maintains a wide range of specialist resources for workplace health and safety training, and client company feedback indicates that the resourcing of its courses is highly valued.

The organisation is in the process of establishing a strategic plan to build on its current strengths and to expand its place in the market.

The current self-assessment data overall is comprehensive and well used. However, the organisation's self-assessment practices are currently under a degree of change after the recent appointment of a general manager, and the success of some aspects of this is yet to be measured.

Statements of Confidence

The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Safety 'n Action.

- Educational outcomes are consistently very high for all courses reviewed.
- Learning is highly valued by the client companies and their employees.
- There was clear evidence of effective processes contributing to deep learning and critical thinking skills including tutor training and performance monitoring, and incorporating client company health and safety practices into the courses.
- Deep learning is also evidenced through extending the program outcomes beyond the minimum requirements of the unit standards.
- There is current and anticipated growth in client company contracts, while demand for training indicates that the needs of the client companies and students are being well meet.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Safety 'n Action.

- The organisation reviews the performance of all programmes, and gains feedback from client companies, their employees, and their tutors.
- There are some gaps in the usefulness of this information to make improvements, but they are not sufficient to reduce the overall value of the self-assessment.
- There was clear evidence that the company uses quantitative and qualitative processes to review its overall performance as an education and training provider.
- Safety 'n Action has sufficiently robust business procedures and self-assessment practices to continue its high performance in the absence of key 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 recommendation arising from the external evaluation and review.

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