Report of External Evaluation and Review

Avatar Institute of Learning

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

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Contents

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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

Name of TEO:	Avatar Institute of Learning (Avatar)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	20 Pohutakawa Place, Bell Block, New Plymouth
Delivery site:	Maida Vale Retirement Village
First registered:	9 February 2005
Courses currently delivered:	- National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support (Foundation Skills) (Level 2) - National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3) - National Certificate in Community Support Services (Residential) (Level 3)
Number of students:	Domestic: three (enrolled in the National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Care Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3)) International: nil
Number of staff:	1.6 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	- Civil Defence Emergency Management Response (to level 2) - Civil Defence Operation (to level 2) - Community Support Services (to level 4) - Community Support Services (to level 4)

- Core Health (to level 3)

- Core Health (to level 3)

- First Aid (to level 3)

- Health and Disability Principles in Practice (to level 4)

- Interpersonal Communications (to level 2)

- Occupational Health and Safety Practice (to level 2)

- Older Persons' Health and Wellbeing (to level 4)

- Personal Financial Management (to level 3)

- Supporting People with Disabilities (to level 3)

- Workplace Emergency Risk Management (to level 2)

- Workplace Fire and Emergency Response (to level 3)

- Other standard consents to assess

Distinctive characteristics:	All learners at Avatar Institute of Learning are employees of Avatar Management; the companies have directors in common. Avatar Management is contracted to provide services to Maida Vale Retirement Village, where the institute is located. Any staff member who does not have a qualification is required to gain a level 3 core competencies and residential qualification. They may do this at Avatar or another trainer of their choice. The executive director of Avatar Institute of Learning is also the executive director of Avatar Management Limited and Maida Vale Retirement Village.
Recent significant changes:	Since the last external evaluation and review (EER) in 2013, Avatar has engaged an external consultant to redesign systems and programmes. This consultant now works one day a week for Avatar as a quality systems coordinator. Avatar has also engaged a new full-time tutor and one part-time tutor.

Previous quality assurance history:	NZQA conducted a first EER of Avatar in 2010. NZQA was Not Confident in both the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of Avatar at that time. NZQA conducted a second EER of Avatar in 2011. NZQA was Confident in Avatar's educational performance and Not Yet Confident in its capability in self-assessment. NZQA conducted a third EER of Avatar in 2013. NZQA was Not Yet Confident in Avatar's educational performance and Not Yet Confident in its capability in self-assessment.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The agreed scope of the EER was the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy and the only programme with enrolments, the National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3).

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.

The evaluation team comprised two evaluators. During the two-day visit the evaluation team met with the Avatar executive director, the quality systems coordinator, both tutors, all three students currently enrolled and two clinical services managers and a charge nurse at Maida Vale, who were able to comment on the skills development of students/employees. The evaluation team also visited the Maida Vale complex and was able to briefly view the learning/working conditions of students.

The team also received and reviewed Avatar's key documentation, including quality management documents, strategic planning documentation, course delivery information (including 2014 planning), student records, student and staff evaluations, student assessments and other learning materials. These materials were in addition to the summary of self-assessment provided by Avatar prior to the site visit.

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Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Avatar Institute of Learning.**

- The industry has high levels of staff turnover, and student numbers are relatively small. Between March 2013 and April 2014, two out of nine students successfully completed the National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Support (Core Competencies). However, three of these students were granted extensions. All three students are expected to complete their qualification successfully, which is a good outcome for them personally and for the care levels at Maida Vale.

- Learning is valued by current students and by the staff and management the students work with at Maida Vale Retirement Village. It has contributed to more confident and capable staff, greater work satisfaction and increased levels of care for residents.

- At the 2013 EER, the statement of confidence on educational performance stated that: 'A significant educational performance gap exists in relation to programme design and development. In sum, planning on how delivery is to occur, when assessments should occur, and ensuring the optimal mix of learning approaches (class, practical, self-directed, etc) is missing. The gaps in planning extend to delivery gaps, and it is unclear how elements such as self-directed learning are fulfilled, which undermines teaching effectiveness. Management has the responsibility to address these matters and ensure there is appropriate resourcing (staffing and other) to provide a quality educational offer'.

- The management of Avatar has closed the gaps identified in all three previous EER reports by acknowledging the usefulness of these reports, accepting the judgments in them, and taking full responsibility for addressing the issues identified in them.

- The outcomes include employing a full-time tutor and a part-time assistant tutor. Avatar has also employed an experienced consultant who has led a gap analysis of the previous three EERs with the tutorial staff, reviewing all the processes and procedures outlined in the quality management system, and resourcing the development of a range of learning and teaching resources. This has increased satisfaction with the students' work skills and behaviours, evidenced by feedback from the students themselves and clinical and tutorial staff.

- Avatar understands that there are still a reasonably high number of non-completions. The organisation has also identified that some new employees need to be engaged in training. Improvements in these two areas are required to have increased confidence in Avatar's educational performance.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Avatar Institute of Learning.**

- Avatar's self-assessment is sufficiently comprehensive to address priority areas. Avatar, with the assistance of an external consultant, has identified, prioritised and acted on a range of shortcomings that were evident at the previous EERs.

- This process has led to a demonstrable improvement in the understanding of the principles of self-assessment by both management and staff. To ensure this understanding matures, Avatar has established a new in-house part-time role of quality systems coordinator (currently filled by the external consultant) and appointed a full-time training manager and a support tutor.

- The owner has given autonomy to the training manager and supported the training unit financially.

- This autonomy is balanced by Avatar's governors taking responsibility for monitoring ongoing improvement processes and for ensuring that key issues are addressed in order to fulfil the organisation's strategic plan and its responsibilities to learners.

- Avatar has the key personnel, commitment from management, sufficient understanding of self-assessment, and evidence that self-assessment has led to some improvements for NZQA to be confident in Avatar's capability in self-assessment. However, it is too soon to know whether self-assessment is sufficiently robust and embedded across the organisation, or has led to consistently improved performance over time, in order to be highly confident.

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Findings[1]

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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 **Good.**

Learners at Avatar successfully complete formal qualifications and acquire industry-specific information and knowledge. Student numbers are relatively small. Between March 2013 and April 2014, two out of nine students successfully completed the National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Support (Core Competencies). However, three of these students were granted extensions due to an outbreak of a virus that resulted in a lockdown for four weeks and prevented them completing their assessments. These three students were interviewed by the evaluation team and at least two are expected to complete the qualification by 30 May 2014, with the third having some class absences that were being actively followed up. Four other students completed the National Certificate in Community Support Services (Residential) by October 2013.

There was good evidence that Avatar understood the reasons why students did not complete the National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Support (Core Competencies). These reasons included students being new to caregiving, not having undertaken any training or study since high school, and having difficulty balancing family life with employment and training. The training manager works with these learners to assist them academically (one-to-one sessions) and to help them to find ways to better manage their time.

Changes to staffing have raised the quality of the learning experience for students. It has also engendered a renewed focus on developing resources and information for learners that clarify study expectations and assessment requirements and timelines. A more proactive approach to self-assessment has resulted in greater analysis of learner achievement and the factors that contribute to this achievement.

However, Avatar understands that there are still a reasonably high number of non-completions. The organisation has also identified that there are some new employees who need to be engaged in training programmes. Improvements in these two areas are required to have greater confidence in learner achievement.

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

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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.**

Avatar's key stakeholders are the learners and Maida Vale rest home staff and its residents. The institute was established to upskill staff to improve Maida Vale's services and to ensure better care for residents, an issue about which the director is passionate. The clinical services staff noted that employees' confidence and initiative improved as a result of the training. They gave several examples of employees who were shy and reserved initially and became increasingly confident as training progressed to the point where they were mentoring other staff.

Students are all employees of the rest home. They participate in an ongoing cycle of training and practical application of this training on the ward. This process has led to outcomes such as increased confidence with managing residents, becoming faster at procedures, becoming more effective communicators, recognising what they did and did not know, and having the confidence to ask questions more readily. Students also said that success in the programme had increased their personal self-esteem and ability to do the job. Several students plan to advance to registered nurse status, indicating that their study has been positive and motivating for them. Perhaps the greatest value of the training is that learners come to appreciate the importance to residents of their independence. They learn to see the world from the residents' perspective, leading to more individualised and sensitive care. It is too early to know the full value of recent training initiatives. However, the quality of the professional relationships between stakeholders has created an environment where self-assessment is valued and understood and is beginning to show benefits across all employee groups.

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.**

Avatar Management has invested resources and employed staff to match learners' needs. For example, in 2014 Avatar purchased seven laptops, enabling students to search databases in class and gain access to a greater range of information than previously. Students also have access to fast broadband to assist with this process. Programme design is regularly reviewed and updated, to ensure content and resourcing is appropriate. Teaching schedules are provided to students, a range of teaching styles is used, and students are given due dates for assignments. As well as attending class once a week for four to five hours, students undertake

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self-directed learning at home and are assessed in the workplace. External speakers contribute to the programme by covering specialist areas such as Māori protocol and the rights of patients. Every two years, first aid training is offered on site, with the company paying for half a day for participants. Residents' needs are also matched through training. For example, most female students had never shaved a man. Two male residents volunteered their time to explain and show the students the best process for shaving an older man. Avatar management has recently purchased additional lifting equipment in the form of ceiling hoists to complement the normal manual hoists.

Programme content aligns well with workplace requirements. Registered nurses rely on carers (who come under their scope of practice – they monitor them) to observe, document and report changes in patients. This reporting is vital to maintaining a high standard of care. Avatar's survey of charge nurses showed that trainees' report writing skills and ability to complete legal documentation required attention. Clinical staff appreciated being able to identify a training need and for the need to be responded to quickly by being included in the training.

The open and professional communication between training and clinical staff, the range of meetings where these staff formally interact, and the shared goal of improving the care for the residents provide a firm base for future training initiatives.

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 **Good.**

The Avatar trainers are registered nurses with experience in the aged care sector. They are both currently involved in higher-level study, one completing an adult education qualification. Their skill levels, work ethic and responsiveness are highly valued by staff. The theory/practice paradigm within which they work is a very effective way for students and tutors to learn. The theoretical principles learnt in class can be applied in the real work situation. Students can bring their reflections on 'what worked and what did not' to the next class for discussion, including ways they might adapt their practice accordingly, in a cycle of ongoing review. Processes that contribute to improved teaching include verbal appraisals of teachers at three months, written appraisals at six months, and written appraisals once every year after that. Students evaluate teaching and course materials regularly and student focus groups have been used to gain feedback.

Trainers maintain currency through peer observations, attending professional development, updates from Careerforce, information from industry sources such as the New Zealand Aged Care Association, and by attending industry-specific conferences like the National Disability Conference. Avatar has developed its own

assessment material that is pre-moderated by Careerforce prior to being used in the core competency programme. Careerforce booklets and assessment resources are used in the residential programme and for one unit standard. External moderation occurred with Careerforce in November 2013 and May 2014. Avatar assessments met Careerforce requirements at both these moderation meetings.

Avatar trainers conduct in-house training for all clinical staff. There is a yearly calendar with four compulsory and four optional topics. The training takes about 1.5 hours and staff are paid to attend. Topics covered include infection control, skincare and informed choice. The in-house training is highly valued by staff who commented that the new training team: 'has taken this training to a new level; it's interactive (uses participants' scenarios to assist with learning), uses PowerPoint effectively and the trainers are well prepared and well informed'.

The ongoing interaction between Avatar trainers, clinical staff and the learners enables early identification of gaps in work performance. Residents and student groups can also have input into training. Identified gaps can be addressed promptly through training, either individually or with the class group. Trainer reports are generated every week and important items are entered into a notice book that all staff read. The shared physical site and face-to-face daily interactions between stakeholders contributes significantly to the relevance and timeliness of the training.

Students interviewed by the evaluators noted that the teaching was varied and included lectures, PowerPoint presentations, videos, demonstrations and notes. Students commented that the trainers' skill levels were very high, and that they were also approachable and knowledgeable. However, more effective ways to combat low rates of completion need to be identified and addressed. The ability to add value to the training experience is a function of the trainers' personal styles, years of experience in aged care, and the mutual respect developed between the clinical and training staff as they work together to upskill trainees to improve residents' care.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

The difficulties encountered at the last evaluation have been resolved by the appointment of a full-time trainer as well as a part-time trainer, who is available if the full-time tutor is absent or unwell. Pastoral care for students is very good, across both training and clinical staff. They work well together to support the students to improve their caregiving skills.

Access to training is part of the employment contract and students choose between a number of options to meet training costs. These include paying course fees on

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enrolment, a bond arrangement (where a proportion of a student's fee is retired each month they are employed), StudyLink and, in some cases, scholarships. A key initiative of the training manager was to lower fees for 2014, as they were identified as a barrier to learning for low-paid workers. It is too early to know whether this initiative will grow student numbers.

Prior to employment, prospective learners are given a multi-choice questionnaire and must answer a certain number of questions correctly to proceed. If successful, they are added to the casual employment pool. If this arrangement is working well after 90 days, they become permanent staff. There is high turnover in the industry due to poor pay, difficult hours (especially for people with young families) and heavy lifting. Guidance and support is appropriate for the mix of learning and work environments at Avatar.

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 Avatar executive director has over 40 years' experience in the field of aged care. The board is a family affair involving a partner and several children who meet monthly. The board is supported by a management team who meet weekly. The director provides a clear strategic plan for the PTE, and the evaluation team was able to view quality management documents used to support delivery. Suggested recommendations from the last evaluation, including reviewing the documentation around bonding (to make the documents easier for students to understand), undertaking more comprehensive moderation (both internal and external), and capability-building for the training unit have all occurred. Avatar has used a combination of expertise from external contractors in aged care and the tertiary education sector. This includes NZQA representatives, local, national and international colleagues.

There are several ways to grow the profile of Avatar, including by outsourcing the trainers or training carers from other providers of aged care. The local polytechnic no longer offers the National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Support (Core Competencies). This provides an opportunity for Avatar to offer training to external aged care providers who might have previously used this training option. To this end, the training manager developed and distributed several questionnaires for distribution to similar industry providers asking what caregivers wanted in their training. She also sent a questionnaire to local managers of aged care homes asking about their needs in carers. Although the response rate was low, some small local providers have asked Avatar for help with their in-service training (the local hospital used to provide in-service programmes for registered nurses but has stopped doing so; registered nurses require a certain number of training hours to

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maintain registration). Avatar currently has small numbers, but aims to grow to 10-18 students. The organisation has actively sought more students by advertising in the local paper and putting notices in business windows and a local magazine, but this has not been successful.

The owner has allowed the training school to be autonomous and proactive, has provided resources when required, and has supported professional development of the trainers. Governance and management has supported educational achievement by taking full ownership of the educational issues raised at previous evaluations, including employing new training staff and resourcing them to address these issues. The owner now appreciates what is involved in self-assessment, the importance of including all staff, and the benefits of robust ongoing self-assessment to understanding and making changes in the business. The next challenges are to find ways to encourage more staff to undertake training, to increase completion rates for those already in training, and to develop external training options.

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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: National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Care Support (Core Competencies) (Level 3)

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

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

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Avatar Institute of Learning:

- Continue to gather and analyse feedback to better understand the reasons staff do not take up training or do not complete training.

- Continue to strengthen the relationship between the clinical and training teams by responding to feedback from each other about gaps in theory or practical skills, and as a result improve the training programme to match the need for the quality of care of residents.

- Continue to investigate, develop and diversify the internal and external training options already identified by Avatar training staff to make best use of training resources and personnel.

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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