



# Report of External Evaluation and Review

A1 First Aid (2009) Ltd trading as A1  
First Aid

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 18 July 2012

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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:	A1 First Aid (2009) Ltd trading as A1 First Aid
Location	9 Waipereira Avenue, Waitakere, Auckland
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	August 2009
Number of students:	Domestic: 4,900 students on one day-courses; approximately 33 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)
Number of staff:	Six full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	Unit standards in first aid and occupational health and safety: 26551, 26552, 6400, 6401, 6402, and 497 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.
Sites:	Waitakere, Henderson, Papatoetoe, Takapuna, Stanmore Bay, Warkworth, Newmarket, Whangaparaoa, Thames, Tauranga, and numerous other sites in the Auckland area, including schools, business locations, and, as required for public courses, motels, hotels, and various conference centres.
Recent significant changes:	Transition from two-day to one-day delivery with the introduction of unit standards 26551 and 26552.
Previous quality assurance	An NZQA audit in March 2010 reported favourably on A1 First Aid. The TEO uses a quality

history:	management system dealing with purpose, policy, development, delivery, assessment processes, internal and external moderation, and review of programmes. The system is reviewed annually.
Other:	A1 First Aid is dedicated to raising safety awareness throughout the community, and achieves this through extensive and ongoing relationships with major industrial and regulatory bodies, with schools and community groups, and with a large cohort of informal students from all parts of the community.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The external evaluation and review (EER) included the following focus areas.

- Governance, management and strategy

This is a mandatory focus area.

- One-day comprehensive course delivering first aid unit standards 26551 *Provide first aid for life threatening conditions* and 26552 *Demonstrate knowledge of common first aid conditions and how to respond to them*

This is a relatively new course, replacing a two-day programme structure based on first aid unit standards 6400 *Manage first aid in emergency situations*, 6401 *Provide first aid*, and 6402 *Provide resuscitation level 2*, and presenting challenges as a result of the compression of two days' learning and assessment into a one-day format, especially in the areas of assessment and practical learning.

- Assessment and moderation

Moderation of course design and assessment is an area of intense internal interest, but external opportunities for moderation could be further developed. A1 First Aid has expressed interest in pursuing moderation and benchmarking opportunities with other TEOs in the sector. External benchmarking is also a matter of interest, and was subsumed in the discussions on assessment and moderation

These focus areas were selected by mutual agreement after discussion of a comprehensive report received from A1 First Aid prior to this 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 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 one lead evaluator and one external evaluator, both contracted to NZQA as external evaluators. Persons interviewed were the joint owner-directors of the company, one of whom is responsible for overall resourcing and governance of the TEO, the other for the management of the educational programme. Also interviewed were the senior trainer, a trainer, the administration manager, the consumables administrator, and a group of students. External stakeholders were the training advisor from the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation and the Gateway coordinator at Kaipara College. One and a half-days were spent on site.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **A1 First Aid**.

A1 First Aid courses are almost exclusively one-day courses. Completion rates are close to 100 per cent. While such an outcome could seem merely to indicate attendance, in this TEO it is achieved with an intensive, iterative training programme, with individual attention to the learning needs and purposes of students, and a rigorous assessment regime. Initial failures to complete are immediately addressed in a variety of ways, and persistent failure is referred to the client organisation for further attention.

The TEO has a vigorous involvement with local and even distant communities, promoting first aid and emergency care to community groups, schools, police, trainee nurses, and others. Good quality learning venues and resources are provided, and the course structure is adapted to the specific contexts of the learners.

The governing body is well informed and committed to the programme, which is managed in a consultative and democratic way, with swift responses to perceived failings or opportunities for improvement. Student evaluation indicates strong satisfaction with the learning, as does feedback from external stakeholders interviewed, indicating an evident level of respect for the TEO in the region. Enrolment numbers have continually increased in the years since accreditation.

In the two years since change of ownership, A1 First Aid has engaged with NZQA for external moderation of assessments, and modifications, some very minor changes have been required. One single case of non-approval involved one of two standards subsequently revised by NZQA, to 'provide further clarity on the assessment requirements for the standards and to ensure assessor decisions for the standards are consistent with the national standard'.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **A1 First Aid**.

Self-assessment within A1 First Aid is painstaking and comprehensive, with student evaluations and comprehensive peer and management review of training sessions. Outcomes are analysed and concerted action taken to address perceived failings or omissions. Plenty of anecdotal self-assessment data is available from many stakeholders. Likewise, Information on postgraduate retention, the utility of learning, and the influence of learning on students' lives and attitudes is also available, but not at present fully utilised. The TEO has expressed interest in pursuing these opportunities.

NZQA provides formal external moderation of assessment, but there is no benchmarking with other providers in the sector. Much is informally known about the training and assessment methods of other providers, but more organised external relationships might provide A1 First Aid with a wider source of self-assessment data. There is a good body of evidence for the excellence of the organisation's performance, but a broader evidence base would enhance self-assessment. Given A1 First Aid's response to information already available, there is little doubt that additional information would be used to good effect.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

With rare exceptions, there is a 100 per cent pass rate in courses. This is not an outcome of mere attendance. Assessment is exacting, and marginal performance is subject to further testing, often with clarification of the questions, or further instruction. Wrong answers are reviewed, and necessary revision given until completion. Failures to complete are immediately taken up with the client organisation for further action. Individual failures are given one-to-one attention.

A1 First Aid's assessments integrate the concepts for unit standards 26551 and 26552 with the best of what remains of the two-day course unit standards 6400/6401/6402, to secure a continued high level of practical skill. As already mentioned National external moderation by NZQA has indicated that some assessment material has required modification over the past two years, and there has been one failure in a unit standard, which after extensive consultation has been revised.

Student evaluations and informal feedback on site strongly affirm the quality of learning. Vigorous approval of the course was expressed by students interviewed at the EER. Similarly, external stakeholders interviewed were enthusiastic about the quality of learning, one affirming that this TEO was the best among providers within their purview, another asserting, 'they stand out among providers of this programme'. This is further affirmed by the strong demand for courses in community groups and schools. Assessment is moderated by NZQA. An already rigorous peer assessment, reviewed by staff and management, would be an excellent vehicle for internal moderation.

Student evaluations apart, self-assessment is mostly unrecorded, but given the prompt response of management, as affirmed by external stakeholders, this does not seriously diminish its value. The quality of the feedback from daily contact with stakeholders gives A1 First Aid confidence that student achievement is well regarded. There is no consistent benchmarking of outcomes with comparative organisations in the sector, but there is periodic informal observation of learning at other TEOs. In a one-day course, with no day-by-day application of learning, postgraduate retention and competency is difficult to ascertain. A pre-course quiz and questionnaire at refresher courses is used for this purpose, but since it takes

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



place at two-yearly intervals and is not attended by all graduates, its value as a self-assessment indicator is doubtful. A brief periodic postgraduate questionnaire, addressed both to students and their employers, might provide more formal information about retention and, where needed, application of learning. A1 First Aid's fastidious examination and response to outcomes within the teaching environment is strongly approved by its client organisations and is clear evidence of the TEO's use of self-assessment to improve its performance. Practical and economic methods for acquiring available postgraduate data would enhance self-assessment in this area.

## 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**.

Evidence of the value of outcomes to stakeholders lies in the positive feedback of students and ex-students, and in long-term relationships with employers and other community agencies. There are long-term business relationships, both in repeated teaching contracts and in consultation on health and safety needs, with a major industry training organisation, a prominent northern power generator, a large local tertiary institution, and a wide variety of employers throughout an area extending from the Far North to the Bay of Plenty.

The TEO also has the formal approval of a number of trades and industry associations, especially those concerned with safety and emergency response. There are ongoing relationships with and demand for courses from numerous smaller client groups, including interested community groups, police, schools in the Waitakere area and beyond, and nurses in training. The administration manager maintains these relationships, assisted informally by a teaching and management group keen to spread first aid awareness in the community. These relationships are an ongoing source of information for self-assessment, and are used as such. Their endurance, and the growth in enrolments despite the change in delivery and assessment conditions, is persuasive evidence of excellent performance, constant attention to the needs and conditions of the clients, and to A1 First Aid's success in meeting them.

External stakeholders interviewed at this evaluation emphatically affirmed the value of the programmes, as did the student group interviewed. Monthly deliveries of the one-day programme are offered at various sites. Despite reservations by A1 First Aid teaching staff about the stress of the shorter course on learning and assessment, there is general approval in the market of the one-day first aid training format, replacing the now almost obsolete two-day delivery. With minor exceptions, the one-day course is now the only marketable option.

A1 First Aid has a self-styled 'do-it' culture. It sees itself as a 'small company shooting big'. The effect is a constant drive for improvement and the use of

feedback from a wide spectrum of clients to achieve this. The steady growth from 4,231 students in 2009 to 4,838 in 2011, and 1,344 in the first quarter of 2012 may be a reflection of this drive for improvement.

### 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**.

A1 First Aid delivers on its own site, and on client sites as required. Courses and delivery approaches are constructed specifically for student environments and contexts, focussing on knowledge and skills needed for each student cohort. Students are interviewed to determine their purpose for enrolling, and courses constructed accordingly. Care is also taken to assign tutors to courses that best fit their abilities. A range of delivery approaches covers various learning styles. Students' learning difficulties and challenges, such as language and literacy, are addressed with translators, rewording of assignments, mentors, companions, and one-to-one tutor attention during or after the class. A good range of teaching resources and equipment is used for practical skills. The student group interviewed by the EER team praised these aspects of the course.

For some students, the very fact of completing a qualification is a major achievement, giving added value to student, family, and community, both in safety awareness and in the sense of achievement in an educational programme. The TEO participates in a wide variety of community and educational events to promote health and safety awareness, an excellent feature that is strongly approved by the stakeholders interviewed. Tutors express some frustration with the market-driven reduction of the programme from a two-day to one-day delivery of unit standards 26551 and 26552, with the time limitations this imposes on practice and assessment, and have adapted their delivery to retain the best features of the discontinued 6400 suite of standards in the new one-day course. Generally, the two-day delivery is no longer a practical option for A1, or its competitors. The growth of enrolments suggests the shift has had no significant negative influence. As mentioned, there is widespread informal approval, in particular of the A1 First Aid delivery format and approach. Students interviewed at the EER indicated a strong preference for the shorter delivery time, some declaring they would not be able to afford the time and cost of the longer delivery. Students attending in-house deliveries sometimes return to attend public courses.

Student evaluations are examined for emerging patterns. These are analysed by the staff group and action taken as agreed. Attendance at two-year refresher courses fluctuates, a pattern which may seem obvious with a two-year interval and a varied and mobile student cohort, but A1 First Aid is seeking ways to determine the causes and remove them if possible. This may be another important benefit

from the creation of a periodic report from students and their employers. Formal external benchmarking is, as one staff member remarked, 'embryonic'.

#### 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 three full-time teachers are all well qualified in first aid and are widely experienced in emergency care. Their teaching is observed in the first month or so after appointment, after which all tutors are periodically observed and appraised. Flaws or inadequacies on the one hand, and opportunities or requirements for improvement on the other, are recorded, discussed, and monitored in action. Following this, teachers monitor and mentor each other and conduct rigorous peer assessments. Reports of these actions are reviewed by management and any remedial action or training promptly initiated. Peer review is potentially an excellent vehicle for formal moderation of course assessment. The reports contain comment on assessment, and recommendations, but have not so far been formally used for moderation. Some issues with national external moderation have already been noted in section 1.1 above.

Professional development for teaching staff is encouraged and supported, especially to ensure their knowledge of new trends and developments.

Tutors occasionally attend courses of 'rival' TEOs to make informal comparisons of delivery methods, and import perceived good practice into their own teaching. This too is an opportunity for cooperation and comparison between TEOs in the sector, but has until now been undertaken in a spirit of tolerant rivalry. A more formal arrangement between TEOs might well bring significant benefits to the sector. Another PTE was on one occasion used for pre-delivery moderation during the change from unit standard 6400 to unit standard 26551. A1 First Aid teaching staff express concern that the compression of a demanding course into one day may risk rushing teaching and assessment, resulting in a lack of retention of learning so soon assessed, especially for the longer term. The problem of useful follow-up in employment has already been noted. A discussion of this concern with other providers might enable some change in the pattern, which at present is standard practice.

Every student is given a course handbook, simply and lucidly written, with an 'order of priority' format, mixing instruction, illustrations, lists, acronyms and other mnemonics, and featuring aspects of unit standard 6400, to maximise practical skills learning. Student evaluations are strongly positive about the quality of teaching.

Assessments integrate unit standard 26551 and 26552 prescriptions and New Zealand Resuscitation Council guidelines, mixing short answer and multi-choice questions (featuring 'model answers' or some degree of consistency) with practical

scenarios. Exceptions are dealt with immediately, with, for instance, clarification or rewording of questions and one-to-one engagement and further instruction. Failure, despite further attention, is reported to the sponsoring employer, and further action negotiated.

Self-assessment is rigorous and clearly supports a regimen of good performance. While excellent within its scope, it is limited in the range of postgraduate data for analysis and improvement. Opportunities already mentioned to extend self-assessment to the postgraduate context might offer a broader evidence base. Post-assessment retention and value of the learning might be tested and enhanced by the use of email, Facebook, Twitter, or by periodic postgraduate reports using a simple written format.

### 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**.

The attention given to students' purposes and needs has already been discussed. For a one-day course delivery, it is exemplary. A1 First Aid is especially attentive to the learning challenges of students to whom the language, spoken or written, or the concepts and activities of first aid present particular difficulty. Friends, family members, translators, and mentors are welcomed, or invited to participate, to ensure the student has full comprehension of the learning tasks and assessments.

A successful outcome of these measures is the capacity of students to participate and learn, fitting them for formal assessment of the designated learning outcomes. The value of this approach was especially noted by an education spokesperson interviewed by the EER team. The approach is assessed and adapted continuously throughout every teaching session, and is a prominent feature of the peer assessment report.

Post-assessment attention given to students with marginal results, or who have failed, may extend well beyond the duration of the course. It addresses both the learning barriers of the student and the quality of the teaching, and is therefore both a learning aid for the student and a self-assessment occasion for the teacher.

Attention is also given to the provision of warm, comfortable, well-lit, well-resourced, and accessible locations for public courses, for example hotels, motels, and conference venues with easy access and good parking. Assessment of these events by student groups is summarised, analysed, and changes made as required. The TEO's success in these ventures is compelling evidence both of careful and comprehensive planning and of the rigorous self-assessment that follows.

## 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**.

The joint owners and directors of A1 First Aid separate governance and management roles. The overall governance of the business is assigned to one director, the educational operation to the other, who reports daily and informally on matters of importance, and formally in quarterly general meetings. The governing director has a passionate interest in the work of the PTE, and while leaving management matters to his co-director, maintains a watchful review of fiscal, legal, and regulatory matters. He also contributes strongly to maintaining and extending community links.

A1 First Aid management is meticulous and practical. It promotes a 'matrix' management style, in which all staff participate equally in self-assessment, discussion, planning, and execution of improvements. The 'do-it' concept requires that opportunities or problems be addressed immediately, rather than minuted for periodic meetings. Within this concept, individual roles and responsibilities are nonetheless clearly defined, with monthly and three-monthly meetings to report, discuss, review, and plan. Overall, the result is a strong focus on quality and improvement, with continuous organisational self-assessment shared throughout the staff group.

The managing director is, as already noted, a hands-on participant in self-assessment, observing teaching sessions, reading peer assessments, determining professional development or other action as required, and maintaining a watchful and proactive approach to all aspects of the programme. The result of this approach is clearly evident in energetic staff involvement in the programme and the emphatic approval of client stakeholders for meticulous planning and execution.

The TEO would no doubt profit by a more proactive approach to formal external relationships, especially for benchmarking of performance. A1 First Aid might also benefit by periodic engagement of an advisory group representing a wide range of interests and expertise.

# 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 **Excellent**.

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

## 2.2 Focus area: One-day comprehensive course

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: Assessment and moderation

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

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

External moderation by NZQA's Tertiary Assessment and Moderation unit has required modification of assessment samples for one unit standard for the two years since the change of ownership. In the most recent external moderation of assessment samples for four unit standards, three required modifications, some very minor, and one was deemed not approved. The non-approval related to the subsequently revised standard already discussed. A1 First Aid has responded urgently to address perceived shortcomings.

# Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those implied or expressed within the 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 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 (ITP Quality) 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](http://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/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>*

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