

Report of External Evaluation and Review

ACT Safety Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 11 July 2012

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report (EER) 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:	ACT Safety Limited (ACT)
Location:	Otahuhu, Auckland
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	August 2010
Number of students:	Domestic: approximately 1,700 in 2011 International: nil
Number of staff:	Two full-time equivalents, one part-time and two contractors
Scope of active accreditation:	ACT has accreditation in a number of domains some of which include: extractive industries, occupational health and safety, workplace fire and emergency response, hazardous and special waste management.
Sites:	As above
Distinctive characteristics:	ACT delivers New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) unit standard and non-unit standard based courses in the areas of health and safety, fire and emergency training, focused on mainly extractive industries. All courses are short courses and delivered at the worksites of trainees.
Recent significant changes:	None; at the time of the external evaluation and review (EER), ACT has been registered for 20 months, although it has delivered training for four years, conducting some training prior to gaining

registration as a PTE.

Previous quality assurance history: This is ACT's first quality evaluation since registration.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Scoping discussions were held between the directors and the NZQA lead evaluator and the following focus areas were identified for inclusion in the external evaluation and review:

- Governance, management, and strategy

In accordance with NZQA policy this is a mandatory focus area.

- National Certificate for Quarrymen

Designed and delivered on behalf of the Extractives Industry Training Organisation (EXITO) to two large companies. This is the longest and highest-level course offered by ACT, delivered to more than 100 trainees in their workplace.

- All short programmes

ACT offers unit standard and non-unit standard short courses, of usually a few hours or one-day duration. The majority of students attend these courses.

These focus areas encompass the whole of the PTE.

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.*

A team of two evaluators visited ACT Safety Limited over two days. Interviews were held with the directors and a variety of stakeholders, including industry training organisation (ITO) representatives and employers. Students were interviewed in person and via telephone. Contract trainers were also interviewed via phone. A range of documents was sighted during the EER.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

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

A clear set of values guides ACT and these are reflected throughout its policies and processes; the consistent application of these values in practice is validated further in the experience of trainees and stakeholders.

ACT delivers unit standard and non-unit standard custom-designed courses, over a few hours or across a full day. Overall, 97 per cent of all trainees achieve the qualification or unit standard course they attend, and for non-unit standard courses most trainees choose and achieve a Certificate of Achievement.

Trainees value being upskilled and improving their knowledge in a way that is relevant, interesting and linked to safety in their own lives. Stakeholders highly value the level of communication they have with ACT prior to, during and following training. Stakeholders identify the high level of communication, the established relationship that results from it, and the impact of the training on their workplaces as contributing to their high trust in the quality of training ACT delivers. Employers and trainees provided a variety of specific examples where individual and site improvements have occurred as a direct result of ACT training. There is also some evidence of trainee interest in seeking further training, as a consequence of the successful completion of ACT-delivered courses.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **ACT Safety Limited**.

There are a number of effective and reliable self-assessment processes that are used to inform course delivery and development. Many opportunities exist both internally and externally for the PTE to receive feedback on its performance in key areas.

For this small PTE the number of policies and processes it has are in some cases excessive and require a level of attention that is onerous in the daily operation of the business. As a new PTE, ACT faces the challenge of becoming more confident in its understanding of what is required for compliance, what is best practice in the sector and to incorporate these requirements with the high standards the directors set for themselves.

Processes are robust and the information collected from stakeholders is, in the main, authentic, relevant and useful. The results of self-assessment are used to monitor and continuously improve ACT's performance. These are also used to improve the quality of educational experience for trainees and their employers.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

The National Certificate for Quarrymen programme was delivered twice in 2011 to 104 trainees in two companies over a period of several months. All except five trainees completed this qualification. Of the five who did not complete, one completed a final unit standard at a later date, two moved to Australia and another two were involved in car accidents and did not complete the qualification.

Unit standard achievement is reported by ACT at 97 percent, a result that is validated by ITO and stakeholders. Where a trainee has not achieved a unit standard there is clear rationale for this. Some benchmarking occurs and indicates that this outcome is consistent with other providers delivering the same or similar training.

For non-unit standard courses, trainees can gain either a Certificate of Awareness (requiring attendance) or a Certificate of Achievement. A Certificate of Achievement recognises the trainees' learning through the successful completion of an assessment, usually a quiz, to demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge. Anecdotally, the Certificate of Achievement is preferred by learners, most of whom choose to complete the quiz as they believe that this is more valuable.

Evidence of achievement was verified by stakeholders: company employers and the ITO, EXITO, who tracked closely the achievement of trainees in the National Certificate. Company managers stated that trainee achievement met and sometimes exceeded their expectations as employers. ACT's own achievement tracking mechanism is sufficient to capture and record the most important fundamental information and provides accurate reporting of results. Reflection on achievement outcomes occurs reliably and in detail. Attempts by ACT to develop its capacity to use this achievement data more extensively have produced some inaccuracies in the way information is compiled. This has limited more comprehensive use of the data collected.

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

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

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

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

Achieving the National Certificate for Quarrymen was identified as important for a number of one company's employees who, in 2011, were facing redundancy. The workers saw that the successful completion of this qualification meant a likely increase in their ability to gain future employment. Almost every trainee achieved the certificate and most workers were re-employed in the sector within New Zealand and in Australia.

Trainees gained important knowledge and useful practical skills from the training and identified that the training elements had an immediate impact in their workplace. Improved self-confidence was identified by all stakeholders as a primary accomplishment. Experienced trainees reported a renewed interest in their day-to-day work as an outcome of the training, for they were able to apply training scenarios to their realities; a consequence they felt refreshed their memory and reinforced safe practice. For example, a trainee noted that, following a hazard identification training segment, there was a stream of reports from employees about newly-identified hazards that had actually been present over a period of time but had not been previously identified or reported.

Company managers valued having a skilled and engaged workforce that understood, complied with, and maintained safe practices in their workplace on a daily basis. The managers further identified that the improved skill levels of the workforce, and examples of increased engagement with expected workplace practices, led to a reduction in risk. For example, on one company's hazard board, the same hazards had been identified for an extended period of time but had not been resolved. Following ACT training the identified hazards were appropriately minimised, isolated or removed and the hazard board cleared.

In addition ACT provides an objective onsite assessment of current health and safety practices. Stakeholders provided the evaluators with examples where an improved workplace practice was instituted as a consequence of ACT input, thus enhancing the level of the business' safety in that area. Although ACT offers health and safety audits as a contracted service, the examples the evaluators were given occurred as a direct result of ACT training delivery, not consultancy work. Further, if a health and safety incident was to occur at a work place involving an ACT trainee, there was an understanding that ACT would be involved in the subsequent review, having been responsible for the education of that individual. This level of commitment to the company, staff and training is valued by stakeholders.

Company managers received a report indicating who attended and the level of achievement for all training that occurs. Any feedback from trainee evaluations or observations about the company's workplace practice or of trainees appeared on

the report to the company and was also relayed in the follow-up phone call after the training. These feedback processes are useful for both ACT and the company in terms of providing an opportunity for improvement in workplace practice and employees' outcomes.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

All courses are designed specifically for the company and its workforce. The key value of the betterment of workers through specific targeted training is evidenced in the pre-course planning and discussions with company managers to ensure that the most appropriate course and content is selected. Relevant company policies and procedures are incorporated into the training. Wherever possible, training scenarios and practical components relevant to the actual work of the trainees and the onsite workplace resources are utilised, ensuring an authentic experience. In some instances this integration of companies systems and processes requires ACT to sign confidentiality agreements to ensure the level of access to company's information is not used inappropriately.

Delivery of programmes onsite allows more trainees to attend and reduces time away from work. ACT is amenable to organising courses around workplace needs; for example, there have been several occasions when training has ceased mid-course for trainees to return to work to keep production going. ACT has subsequently returned at another time, revised and then completed the training. The inclusion of a major practical component in almost all training increases the interest of trainees and provides the opportunity to practise skills.

Feedback about course content and delivery is formally, proactively and consistently sought from the ITO, the company and trainees, then responded to through improvements in design and delivery, teaching resources, workbook and assessments.

The National Certificate for Quarrymen programme was delivered over a seven-day week and made available for 18 hours a day to ensure accessibility for all trainees. Discussions were held throughout the delivery of the course to identify and rectify any access issues, such as planned wet weather day training.

ACT is considered by all stakeholders contacted to be a very professional PTE where the focus on outcomes and the engagement with all trainees are superior to that offered by other training providers. Companies reported that they continue to engage ACT for training at a time when most are experiencing cutbacks. Of note was one international company that is reducing its number of internal trainers and training programmes but continues to contract ACT nationwide without reservation.

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 **Good**.

The director and contractors have extensive personal experience and significant expertise in the industry and courses ACT offer, thus giving credibility to delivery and enhancing ACT's ability to design courses, understand each company's context and relate to trainees.

There is a variety of good teaching processes and different modes of delivery are utilised to keep trainees engaged. Pre-course work occurs in some courses and trainee work is required to be signed-off by the manager prior to the training commencing. An outcome in these instances is the early identification of any trainee learning barriers and the creation of strategies to reduce them. Training management plans ensure that training objectives are identified and a repetition of key facts is addressed during workshops. Opportunities for practical applications of learning occur in almost every course. A pattern has been established of theory work, followed by an ACT hands-on trial run, then heading onto the worksite and continuing the practical component of the training.

Teaching resources are of a high quality, relevant and modern. ACT has secured and utilises an effective and practical tool for fire training that allows for repeated and realistic practical experience for all trainees during training.

Peer review and teaching observations occur reliably. Contracted trainers, director and company managers complete this, with the focus on effectiveness of the delivery for the trainee. ACT keeps abreast of changes in the sector and adjusts its programmes to meet new requirements. One such example is the mining industry awareness of hazards caused by new technology; these are currently being factored into training programmes for the future.

Trainee evaluations are carried out after every unit standard course and analysis indicates consistently highly-satisfied trainees. Providing an opportunity for non-unit standard participants to also evaluate the training content and delivery would further validate the existing results and ensure that the consistency of ACT's own standards is maintained.

Internal moderation processes are robust. Other than the directors, ACT contracts moderation expertise to provide an objective opinion on assessments and workbooks. In addition to participating in external moderation as required by ITOs, ACT has a process where all assessments are sent to the ITO for pre-moderation as part of internal process when any change is made to an assessment following a review. The ITO report ACT is designing assessments and assessing at the required national standard.

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**.

Within the context of delivering short courses of one day or less in duration, the support and guidance provided by ACT is very good. Trainees report ACT trainers make learning clear and easy to understand, work individually with people and encourage 'old hands' to help those who need more support during the training. The empathy of the trainers is a significant aspect of engagement; all trainees are treated with respect. ACT is aware of the need to consider ongoing different approaches and support as changes in trainees occur. For example, staff changes in an area previously dominated by males that now includes females, changes in ethnicity and changes in the English language capabilities of trainees all need to be identified and accommodated. To mitigate this, when a company identifies such trainee requirements a second trainer also attends the course to assist with delivery and assessments, providing one-on-one support during the course as required.

Informally trainers talk to trainees at the end of course where issues of support may come up. In pre and post-training discussions with managers, ACT directors ask about any trainees who might require support, check any feedback heard from trainees who attended training and respond appropriately. Workplace managers are often requested to attend training sessions with their workers and to give direct feedback to ACT at the end of sessions.

Company managers reported previous difficulty in getting staff to attend training and stated that high absence rates led to workers being directed to attend. When companies have shifted to contracting ACT training attendance rates rise dramatically, workers look forward to training and courses are filled quickly. All stakeholders interviewed recommended and sought to attend training delivered by ACT.

For the national certificate trainees, good information was provided about support and course requirements. The director sat with all 104 trainees and explained the information to ensure that it was understood. To encourage trainees and reinforce the individual's success, the achievement of each unit standard was updated and displayed on a matrix on the staff notice board indicating the progression of each trainee toward achieving the qualification.

Language, literacy and numeracy issues for trainees were identified by the company managers and ACT worked hard with each trainee to complete and achieve the national certificate. To refine this process, ACT might consider utilising a recognised language, literacy and numeracy electronic pre-assessment tool prior to the course being offered. Such a tool can provide more accurate data on trainee needs, the type of support required to ensure success, and allow for efficient use of ACT resources. Data gathered can also identify required training time and identify where additional skills or training for trainers might be required.

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**.

Experience of work in the extractive industries, an awareness of the shortfalls in the calibre of training provided and first-hand knowledge of workplace fatalities, motivated the directors to establish a training institute four years ago. Following encouragement from the sector, ACT Safety Limited became a PTE in 2010. Every ACT training course reflects and upholds clear safety values based on sector experience. These are communicated to: companies who contract ACT services, contract trainers and are further evident throughout the business in ACT's policies, practice, and validation of the trainees' experience.

ACT has a range of self-assessment tools and processes it uses extensively internally and externally to gather and triangulate feedback. There is clear evidence that ACT reacts to findings quickly, and engages in a subsequent review of any improvements or actions.

The directors are new to running a PTE and as such the organisation is compliance driven, which guides practice. Therefore, some systems and processes exist that are cumbersome for the size and function of the PTE. Although processes do ensure the very good operation of the organisation, the required day-to-day attention to some activities may also be inhibiting effectiveness. Upskilling in this area may provide the expertise the directors do not yet have and provide opportunities to streamline processes that better reflect the actual nature and operation of this PTE. For example, ACT has established an advisory group. The advisory group is not utilised and attempts to meet have not come to fruition, there appears to be no real understanding of its purpose. Effective use and engagement with stakeholders has, however, fulfilled the role of an advisory group.

Database summaries and indicators are still in development. Although ACT takes good deal of care to ensure the accurate entry of learner achievement and course data into its database, it is not yet certain of what it wants from its database and currently uses duplicate Excel data to identify trends and graph results. While this provides an acceptable level of information synthesis, the Excel data displays inaccuracies. ACT may find it more effective to programme its database to report against specified indicators identifying trends in student achievement and course completion levels.

Contracted trainers are limited to a very small number who are selected and monitored to meet ACT's high standard of delivery. There are processes to support this expectation and clear evidence from a variety of sources that this occurs reliably; changes in contracted trainers have occurred as a result of these processes. Contracted trainees report appreciating the professional and honest relationship with ACT, its transparent processes, and positive reinforcement of

teaching practice and skills. The opportunity to have input into course design and materials is appreciated. Trainers believe ACT is genuinely interested in them as people beyond the business, which is also reflected in the relationship with companies and trainees.

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 for Quarrymen

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

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

2.3 Focus area: All programmes

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

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those expressed or implied within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.

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 programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.

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 EER process approved by the NZQA Board.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>

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