

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Mara Marketing Limited

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 23 January 2013

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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:	Mara Marketing Limited (Mara)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	391 Rangitikei St, Palmerston North
Delivery sites:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head office and training centre as above• Wilson St, Wanganui• Levin campus currently in recess but will be operational again in 2013
First registered:	17 December 1997
Courses currently delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate in Automotive Engineering (Level 3)• National Certificate in Automotive Trades (Level 2)
Code of Practice signatory?	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: 65 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Māori 24 per cent• Pasifika 12 per cent• Asian 4 per cent• Age range is 16-48, with most students in the range of 18-20 years• Five female students at present International: nil
Number of staff:	Nine full-time equivalents

Scope of active accreditation:	Mara holds consent to assess in a variety of domains and unit standards in the areas of engineering and automotive engineering, up to level 4.
Distinctive characteristics:	N/A
Recent significant changes:	Mara has recently been approved as a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (Code of Practice), with the intention of enrolling international students in 2013.
Previous quality assurance history:	No history of non-compliance. At the last quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in 2006, the provider was fully compliant.
Other:	The PTE works in association with the Manawatu Ford dealership, Courtesy Ford Ltd.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of the external evaluation and review (EER) consisted of the mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support including international students.

In addition, the following focus area was selected:

- Programme design and delivery (across all programmes).

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 EER was conducted in November 2012. Prior to the EER visit, the lead evaluator communicated by telephone and email with the head tutor. The evaluation team consisted of the lead evaluator and one other evaluator. A one and a half-day EER visit was made to the Mara site in Palmerston North, where the evaluation team reviewed a range of documentation and met with the general

manager, office administrator, all teaching staff, and 15 level 2 and 3 students. The evaluation team also met with representatives of Mara's stakeholder group, an affiliated provider, and four graduate students. A telephone interview was held with the group manager industry standards for the Motor Industry Training Organisation (MITO).

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Mara Marketing Limited**.

Student achievement on Mara courses is good. In 2011, the course completion rate was 67 per cent. Mara expects this pass rate to increase progressively. Mara has sound assessment tools and robust moderation processes to confirm that assessment outcomes are valid. Both the organisation and its staff have a strong focus on student achievement and are well supported by management and governance.

Feedback from students and external stakeholders indicates that courses have an appropriate mix of theory and practice and are delivered in a manner that enables learners to understand and acquire useful skills and knowledge. Graduates report that the skills and knowledge gained are immediately applicable to the workplace and are valued by both the employee and employer.

Mara has student support structures appropriate to the needs of the students and which minimise barriers to learning.

Discussion with stakeholders indicated that Mara employs trainers who have sound skills and experience; it engages well with its clients and industry and is valued for the positive contribution it makes. Mara is committed to providing quality training to the automotive industry and is valued for the work it does by both learners and employers.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Mara Marketing Limited**.

Mara has established a reflective organisation and a 'no blame' culture which encourages staff and stakeholders to put forward ideas for improvement. The PTE is expansive in its thinking and closely attuned to the needs of its students and the automotive industry. Student achievement on every course is examined individually and Mara has a strong focus on individual student achievement. Development of the formal analysis of achievement statistics to form an organisational view of student performance would help identify ways to bring about further improvement.

Staff members also have plenty of opportunities for reflection on their role, which benefits students through improved teaching techniques. Mara has systems to gather and collate feedback from learners and client organisations, but analysis and subsequent action have tended to be more intuitive than systematic.

The evaluation team believes that as self-assessment processes continue to be implemented at Mara, and staff engage with the key evaluation questions, significant and meaningful ongoing improvements will result. Mara is aware that

self-assessment processes need to be organised into a planned and coordinated approach across the organisation, including at regional campuses.

Findings¹

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**.

Students at Mara are achieving well. Course completion rates average 67 per cent across both of the qualifications delivered and are increasing steadily. This completion rate is particularly good given that Mara is delivering to predominantly second-chance learners, many of whom reported that they had an adverse experience at secondary school. The organisation acknowledges that it could improve its retention and completion rate by being more selective with entry into the programmes, but instead chooses to 'take a risk' with some students in the belief that with high levels of support these students will have a reasonable chance of success.

Both the organisation and its staff have a strong focus on learner achievement, and they set targets and benchmarks for student success. They expect that every learner who attends a Mara course can succeed, and staff work hard to keep all students focused on completion. Staff at Mara demonstrated a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement, and regularly analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. Staff have a formal minuted meeting every two weeks. At these meetings, ideas for improving course delivery and learner achievement are discussed and agreed.

Students reported that they received timely, accurate, and supportive feedback on their progress from Mara staff. All students meet with a staff member at least once every month for one-to-one discussion around progression, achievement, and goal-setting. Students are focussed on the national qualification and highly motivated to achieve it. Staff and employers reported that students are learning useful skills and staff see positive changes in students as they progress.

Mara has sound assessment tools and a robust moderation process to confirm that assessment outcomes are valid. The representative from the standard-setting body, MITO, spoke positively about Mara's response to moderation.

Mara has good systems to monitor student progress on an individual level. However, there is little formal analysis of overall data, and any resulting improvement action therefore tends to be intuitive rather than evidence-based. The organisation could improve the way it analyses the 'bigger picture' of its completion data.

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 **Good**.

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

Students gain worthwhile skills in the programmes that Mara delivers. Graduates report that the skills and knowledge gained are immediately applicable to the workplace and are valued by both the employee and employer. Additionally, students gain valuable life skills such as confidence, self-esteem, and numeracy and literacy skills. Mara also puts significant emphasis on employment-related disciplines such as punctuality, attendance, and work experience.

Mara has established and maintained good relationships with many of its graduates, but does not systematically canvass these graduates for feedback and ideas for improvement. The PTE has, however, recently started a Facebook site for existing and past students and is experimenting with how this could be used to inform improvements to the programmes.

Students appreciated the fact that they could bring their own vehicles into the Mara workshops and work on them during self-study time. This was regarded by the students not only as a valuable learning opportunity, but for many who did not have access to a workshop or tools, as an opportunity to save personal costs by maintaining their own or their families' vehicles. In the words of one of the students, 'If I could bring my bed here, I'd never need to leave!'

The organisation is very employment-focused and graduates appear to be getting good employment and further study outcomes, although without a process of engaging with graduates it was difficult for Mara to definitively demonstrate the outcomes for its graduates.

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**.

Mara's effort to meet the individual, personal, and academic goals of every student is a stand-out feature of the organisation. The Mara management team believes that the most critical factor in its success is being known to provide good value to its students and the industry.

Continuous engagement with industry and stakeholders is core to the business. Mara has a formal partnership with a local dealership, Courtesy Ford, which enables students and staff to access training opportunities and work experience. All Mara teaching staff have worked in the automotive industry locally and all have

maintained their industry networks which they then use to help provide opportunities for student work experience and employment.

Mara utilises a variety of mechanisms to understand what students want. Teachers meet with individual students four-weekly to review their progress. Staff and students interviewed at this evaluation confirmed that this was valued and contributed well to their overall progress.

Mara seeks feedback from learners through a variety of mechanisms. As well as the formal student feedback process, staff members have an open-door policy and it is clear that students approach them with problems and issues. Staff members were able to cite examples of how course content and delivery methodology had been changed as a result of feedback from learners or external stakeholders.

Mara has worked hard over time to ensure that its teaching is closely related to the needs of the students. The evaluation team saw lots of evidence of regular feedback being gathered about each class and every teacher. Students complete written feedback once per term; this information is then shared at the next staff meeting and all staff are encouraged to contribute to ideas for improvement. There were examples given of how this feedback has influenced the content and delivery of courses, for instance the development of a pictorial wall to create a more tactile environment. However, a more systematic approach to recording and analysing this information and the tracking of subsequent actions may help identify trends and lead to further enhancements to programme delivery.

Mara has engaged well with the current NZQA Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ). One of the Mara tutors represents the PTE sector on both the governance and advisory committees for the Automotive TRoQ. This in itself is testimony to the high regard of the sector for Mara and its programmes. Evidence from stakeholders, including MITO, indicates that Mara engages well with its industry and is valued for the contribution that it makes.

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**.

There is clear evidence of excellent teaching practice taking place at Mara. Staff are enthusiastic and passionate about their curriculum and teaching, and they are well supported by management. Every staff member at Mara has a role in student learning and they take a collegial, whole-of-organisation approach to ensuring that all students achieve. Teachers and students relate well to each other and students spoke highly of Mara's teaching staff. They liked the open, friendly style and have good access to the teaching staff outside of class hours. Students noted that staff members were responsive to the concerns or issues they raised. The strong rapport between students and staff was evident from discussions and evaluation

survey outcomes. The low staff-to-student ratio allows for personal attention when appropriate.

Mara teaching staff are well qualified in their respective disciplines and all teaching staff hold an appropriate teaching and/or workplace assessment qualification. It is notable that several staff members have gained or are studying towards teaching qualifications well above the minimum requirements and are encouraged and supported by management to do so.

There was evidence of the whole organisation purposefully engaging in meaningful discussion about teaching practice and student progress. Teaching staff spoke about how they share ideas, experiences, and knowledge through their daily interactions, staff meetings, peer observations, and professional development activities. Mara management closely monitors student and client feedback and takes immediate action where there is any indication of less than satisfactory delivery.

Mara has a peer observation procedure in which all the teaching staff participate. In fact, the staff informally engage in peer observation on an ongoing basis. Teaching staff commented on the value of the peer observation process and were able to cite examples of how they had improved teaching delivery as a result.

All staff are performance-reviewed formally on an annual basis, but this does not preclude regular and ongoing feedback of a formative nature. Mara management encourages the staff to engage in professional development activities and supports them to do so. However, staff development planning appears to be ad hoc rather than linked to staff performance reviews or organisational strategy.

Moderation is seen not only as a necessary compliance but also as a tool to enhance quality delivery. All assessment material is pre-moderated before use. Students reported receiving clear information about assessment tasks and receiving detailed, timely feedback about their learning progress.

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 **Good**.

Mara staff and management are highly student-centred and committed to the success and well-being of their students.

The variety of funding Mara receives and the programmes it offers attract a diverse group of students to the organisation. Many students come with no school qualifications, low literacy and numeracy skills, and/or at-risk backgrounds. Mara staff acknowledge that it would be a simple matter to tighten selection procedures, which would probably improve completion rates and make their job easier. However, management and staff are strongly committed to accepting a few students each year who they know will struggle but who they believe, given good

support, have a reasonable chance of success. The success of this strategy was borne out in evaluation interviews with several such initially marginal students, who are now progressing well and are destined to become good citizens and a future asset to the automotive industry.

Mara has a process for monitoring punctuality and attendance in the belief that students who attend classes have a greater chance of success. While strictly enforced, the system is supportive and seeks to identify and address the reasons why students may not be attending classes.

In addition to the good support provided by automotive teaching staff, Mara has employed a designated learning support teacher who works one-to-one with the students. The way in which he works collaboratively with teaching staff ensures a wrap-around, seamless academic support structure which students obviously appreciate. Students have access to Mara staff outside of class hours either in person, by telephone, or by text. Students reported that they feel comfortable contacting staff and always get a helpful response.

While the support systems at Mara are student-centred, well resourced, and well intentioned, and appear to be producing results, to date there has been little formal analysis of exactly how these system have contributed to student achievement. Some analysis would give Mara a better understanding of how to prioritise areas that require student support.

Mara has recently been approved as a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, but has not enrolled any international students to date. The application process to become a signatory involved establishing all of the required systems and services to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. The international student strategy has been well thought out, ensuring a measured and carefully managed approach to international education. For 2013, the international student intake is likely to be three or four students referred from local secondary schools.

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**.

Mara has a clear strategy and understanding of its business. The organisation recognises where it fits in the marketplace, and any deviation from its niche is the result of research and planning. The organisation is well led, with a very flat management structure and a distributed leadership. The responsibilities of staff are clear and known.

Effective resourcing is planned and provided for all courses, and repairs and maintenance of resources is well budgeted for. The quality of course material is good and the training environments support learning.

The organisation has, over time, employed, developed, and retained a competent, well-qualified, and dedicated group of staff. Staff said they enjoyed the environment and worked hard, but were rewarded well and felt valued. The conscious decision by Mara to employ all teaching staff on a full-time basis has led to a high level of commitment by staff to the organisation and its students.

Monitoring of performance at all levels of the organisation is regular, transparent, and open, although a greater level of systemisation would help Mara to identify opportunities for improvement. It was evident that the monitoring of performance, while often challenging, is always supportive and focused on improvement. Recent difficulties at one of the satellite campuses, although managed appropriately once detected, highlighted a need for closer and more regular monitoring of activity at satellite campuses.

The organisation enthusiastically encourages opportunities for reflection on its role and how to better meet student and stakeholder needs. This has led to a reflective environment and a 'no blame' culture throughout the organisation. Evidence indicates that the owner and staff actively seek feedback from many sources to use as a learning and improvement tool.

The focus of Mara's self-assessment to date has been largely ad hoc and intuitive. The next challenge for Mara is to focus its efforts towards increasing its systematic self-assessment of educational performance by embedding methodical, whole-of-organisation analysis and ensuing action from self-assessment activities.

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: International student support

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

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

Mara has recently been approved as a signatory to the Code of Practice for international students but has not yet enrolled any. The intention is to enrol a small number of international students from local high schools in 2013.

2.3 Focus area: Programme design and delivery

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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