



# Report of External Evaluation and Review

## Alpha Training and Development Centre

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 14 March 2012

# Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction .....	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review .....	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results .....	6
Findings .....	8
Recommendations .....	15
Appendix .....	16

MoE Number: 8816  
NZQA Reference: C05599  
Date of EER visit: 7 and 8 November 2011

# 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

Location:	1-3 Smith Street, Lepperton, Taranaki
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1992
Number of staff:	Two full-time; two part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	<p>A range of domain and standard consents to assess up to level 4. The most active at the time of the EER were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Level 4: carpentry, carpentry theory, engineering (fabrication), engineering (materials), engineering (measurement), engineering core skills, interpersonal communications, welding</li><li>• Level 3: engineering machining and tool-making, fluid power (hydraulics), fluid power (pneumatics), introductory communication skills, maintenance and diagnostics in mechanical engineering, mechanical assembly, mechanical installation, reading</li><li>• Level 2: engineering drawing and design, writing, work and study skills, social and cooperative skills, self-management</li><li>• Level 1: measurement, mechanical engineering technology, number.</li></ul>
Sites:	Lepperton

Distinctive characteristics: Alpha Training and Development Centre (Alpha Training) is a small, family-owned PTE. The organisation works with individuals and companies to deliver training in engineering hand and power tools and workshop health and safety, and to enable individuals to practise and/or undertake tests for welding tickets. The training is carried out on the family-owned, freehold one-acre site.

Students are able to achieve the Certificate in Welding (Level 4) and the National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering Technology (Level 1) (formerly the National Certificate in Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering (Level 1)). The latter qualification can be achieved through enrolment in the Targeted Youth programme. Both programmes provide a pathway to employment or further training and are funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

Student numbers are small, with approximately 11 students currently enrolled in the Certificate in Welding and six Targeted Youth trainees. There are also approximately 16 students engaged with the Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) programme.

Recent significant changes: Alpha Training has been affected by a reduction in TEC funding over recent years.

A new tutor was appointed in 2011.

Previous quality assurance history: The most recent quality assurance visit by NZQA was an external evaluation and review (EER) conducted in December 2009. The findings of this EER were:

- Confident in educational performance
- Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope of this EER included:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Certificate in Welding (Level 4).

The first focus area is mandatory. The Certificate in Welding is the largest programme delivered by Alpha Training.

## 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/for-providers/docs/eer-policy-conduct.pdf>*

A team of two evaluators visited Alpha Training over two days. Interviews were held with the managing director, the deputy manager (administration), the deputy manager (operations), the senior welding tutor, a tutor, and students. Telephone interviews were conducted with three industry and two community stakeholders. A range of documents was sighted and reviewed.

Alpha Training has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and submissions received have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Alpha Training**.

Student achievement at Alpha Training is very strong, for these reasons:

- Course completion rates have been consistently high, ranging from 88 per cent in 2007 to 90 per cent in 2010
- Qualification completion rates for the Certificate in Welding show a steady improvement, from 75 per cent in 2008, to 82 per cent in 2009, and 97 per cent in 2010
- Completion rates for the National Certificate in Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering (Level 1)<sup>1</sup> within the Targeted Youth programme are also very good, at 76 per cent in 2009 and 89 per cent in 2010.

The positive trend of these results is comprehensive evidence that Alpha training is meeting the educational needs of its students and has effective processes in place that contribute to learning.

In addition to the acquisition of course-related skills and knowledge, students are gaining skills that will prepare them for employment, such as timekeeping, interpersonal skills, literacy and numeracy, motivation, confidence, and self-esteem.

Programmes provide pathways to higher-level education and employment. For example, in 2010 six of nine students who completed the Targeted Youth programme gained employment. The remaining three progressed to the Certificate in Welding. The management team reported that employment outcomes for students who complete the Certificate in Welding remain good despite fewer jobs being available in this sector at present because of the economic climate. In 2010, eight of 16 students who completed the Certificate in Welding gained employment and two progressed to further training.

Teaching practices at Alpha Training are highly effective, especially given the challenges faced by many of the students. Both tutors are industry specialists and have considerable experience teaching practical engineering skills. The calibre of the teaching goes hand in hand with the excellent level of guidance and support provided by Alpha Training, which is viewed by the evaluators as an area of strength.

The evidence drawn on in reaching these conclusions is contained within the body of this report.

---

<sup>1</sup> Replaced with the National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering Technology (Level 1) in 2011.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Alpha Training**.

Staff at all levels of the organisation engage in self-assessment activities, both formally and informally. It is evident that self-assessment is genuine and clearly focussed on the needs of learners, employers, and the wider community. Self-assessment information is used to inform business decisions and to improve educational outcomes.

Alpha Training has strengthened the process for monitoring student progress and reporting achievement. Data is now collated in one report which is monitored and discussed regularly within the team. This enables immediate intervention when the need for additional support is identified. The management team attributes the steady improvement in qualification completions to its self-assessment activities.

The managing director records the pertinent outcomes of stakeholder engagement through team meeting notes. In addition, comprehensive market research was undertaken during 2011, collating information gained from letters, visits, and emails to industry. While this information is yet to be formally analysed within the management team, the managing director was able to provide examples of the organisation's responses to this feedback.

Graduate destinations are recorded for the purposes of TEC reporting, but there is no formal collation of graduate information beyond the required two-month destination data. The value of medium to long-term employment and study outcomes for students is not yet fully known. The organisation may benefit from more formal analysis of information from both graduates and their employers and, where possible, how well students have achieved in further study. Information of this nature is likely to better inform activities such as course design, practical components, and teaching practices.

Over the past 18 months, self-assessment activities have progressed to the development of a document aligning policies, procedures, action items, and reporting requirements with the EER key evaluation questions. The management team has recognised that this document could be streamlined. The evaluators agree that a more simplified system that is clearly focussed on educational outcomes will further strengthen the organisation's self-assessment capability.

# Findings<sup>2</sup>

## 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 **Excellent**.

Over the past three years, course completion rates have been consistently high, ranging from 88 per cent in 2007 to 90 per cent in 2010. Qualification completion rates for the Certificate in Welding have also been strong over this period. Reported outcomes show a steady improvement, from 75 per cent in 2008, to 82 per cent in 2009, and 97 per cent in 2010. These figures are confirmed through TEC published data and the organisation's database.

Students enrolled in the Certificate in Welding aim to achieve up to three welding "tickets" within the AS/NZ 2980<sup>3</sup> welder qualification, a requirement for gaining employment in welding and related industries. There has been 100 per cent achievement of the welding tickets over the last two years.

Students enrolled in the Targeted Youth programme are able to achieve credits towards the National Certificate in Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering (Level 1). Qualification completion rates for the previous two years have been very good, at 76 per cent in 2009 and 89 per cent in 2010.

Course delivery focuses on developing skills that will prepare students for employment such as timekeeping, interpersonal skills, literacy and numeracy, motivation, confidence, and self-esteem. The organisation's self-assessment processes, including staff observations, student evaluation surveys, and communications with employers, identify that students are achieving well in these areas. The evaluators were impressed with the level of engagement and confidence students displayed during discussions at the time of the evaluation visit.

Alpha Training has strengthened the process for monitoring student progress and reporting achievement. Data is now collated in one report which is monitored and discussed regularly within the team. This enables immediate intervention when the need for additional support is identified. Recent examples of such interventions included extra tuition, assistance with reading and mathematics, and assessment extensions. The management team attributes the improvement in qualification

---

<sup>2</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

<sup>3</sup> Formerly NZS 4711 Qualification Tests for Metal-Arc Welders.



completions, particularly over the last two years, to the improvement in monitoring as part of the organisation's self-assessment 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**.

Programmes provide pathways to higher-level education and employment. In 2010, six of nine students who completed the Targeted Youth programme gained employment. The remaining three progressed to the Certificate in Welding. Of seven students enrolled in 2011, three remain engaged in the youth programme, two have progressed to the Certificate in Welding, and one has progressed to further training at the local polytechnic.

The management team reported that employment outcomes for students who complete the Certificate in Welding remain good despite fewer jobs being available in this sector at present because of the economic climate. In 2010, eight of 16 students who completed the Certificate in Welding gained employment and two progressed to further training. Two of the 14 students in the 2011 cohort have already secured employment.

Although the number of external stakeholders contacted during the evaluation was small, feedback from those interviewed confirmed that Alpha Training is making a valuable contribution to the Taranaki community. The local high school confirmed that the STAR programme services the school well and good outcomes are achieved. There is a noticeable improvement in the school students' attendance, skills, motivation, and confidence through engagement with Alpha Training. Staff observe an improvement in the way students think about what they are doing at school.

Alpha Training was contacted by the Police Youth Task Force when it was recognised that the organisation could assist the task force in its role of reducing recidivist offending within the Taranaki community by reconnecting young offenders with education or employment. While neither party formally collates and analyses outcomes data specifically for these students, a representative of the task force confirmed that Alpha Training is a valuable contributor to this project. Alpha Training reported verbally that the three students referred by the task force successfully completed the National Certificate in Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering.

An industry stakeholder reported employing about ten graduates over the years, one with 12 years' tenure with the company. Graduates generally have very good skills which he attributes to the focus on extracurricular activities, good connections with industry, and the practical training in a well-resourced workshop.

Self-assessment in this area is an activity that could be further enhanced. Graduate destinations are recorded for the purposes of TEC reporting, but there is no formal collation of graduate information beyond the two-month destination data. The value of medium to long-term employment and study outcomes for students is not yet fully known. Anecdotal evidence is received through regular contact with some employers and incidental contact with former students, but not formally collated and analysed to determine how work-ready the students are or whether employment outcomes are sustained over time. The organisation intends to implement a “brag book” as a tool for analysis of valued outcomes and evidence purposes. The evaluators agree that while graduate destination information is useful, the organisation may benefit from more formal analysis of information from both graduates and their employers, including, where possible, how well students have achieved in further study. Information of this nature is likely to better inform activities such as course design, practical components, and teaching practices.

### 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**.

Alpha Training understands its student profile well. Courses and activities are purposefully aligned to match the students’ needs. Examples include provision of free transport, flexi-weeks, flexi-hours, and a significantly higher practical component than theory within the Certificate in Welding. Students interviewed described how they chose to engage with Alpha Training because there was more practical training compared with another provider, and they are able to achieve the welding tickets necessary for employment. Students confirmed that flexible start dates and hours within the day enable them to fit their learning within family commitments. Students also spoke of Alpha Training’s good reputation within the community.

All courses comprise unit standards from the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Alpha Training uses course material prepared by the relevant industry training organisation, and uses only pre-moderated assessment material. The management team reported that Alpha Training performs well in external moderation activities.

Alpha Training is well connected with its industry and community stakeholders through regular communications, both formal and informal. Communications with local employers and professional organisations such as the New Zealand Heavy Engineering Research Association (HERA) and Stork Technical Services ensure course content and delivery remain current and aligned with industry requirements.

The managing director records the pertinent outcomes of stakeholder engagement through team meeting notes. In addition, comprehensive market research was undertaken during 2011, collating information gained from letters, visits, and emails

to industry. While this information is yet to be formally analysed within the management team, the managing director was able to provide the evaluators with examples of potential growth areas in response to industry feedback and areas that Alpha Training could pursue in the future, subject to resource availability.

The senior tutor reported that before the current economic recession, employers would phone Alpha Training to request their students. In a tighter employment market, he reports that employers have lifted their criteria so that only those who meet the higher standard will be offered jobs. These changes relate only to the current economic climate and do not reflect the quality of the training offered at Alpha Training.

Regular analysis of student evaluation information, and informal discussions and monthly staff meetings, assure the management team that programmes and activities are matching the needs of the students. Staff reported that feedback is always highly positive and there are seldom issues to rectify. This information was verified within the organisation's survey and summary reports examined by the evaluators and consistent with the evaluators' discussion with students during the visit.

#### 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**.

Teaching practices at Alpha Training are highly effective, especially given the challenges faced by many of the students. Both tutors are industry specialists and have considerable experience teaching practical engineering skills. Although tutors do not currently engage in professional development activities around learning styles and pedagogy, they reported that their teaching skills have developed through working and managing people in the workplace.

Staff upgrade their welding certificates every three years, which is an industry requirement and keeps their practices current. Staff have a good rapport with the students and this was clearly evident to the evaluators during the visit.

Teaching practices cater to individual learning styles. Tutors observe students undertaking a simple, practical task soon after they enrol. The tutor is able to gauge how the student learns and determine what delivery methods will work best for them. The senior tutor spoke about the importance of open communication as a way to teach students that they have to speak up in the workplace, particularly on health and safety matters. An example was provided where tutors use "toolbox" meetings as a communication strategy. Toolbox meetings are a common practice within industry.

Students interviewed held the tutors in high regard and spoke about how much they are learning at Alpha Training. They confirmed that assessment requirements are

made clear to them and they get good feedback on their learning progress. Tutors are always available to help the students when needed.

Self-assessment in this area is largely based on the tutors' sense of rapport with the students, the students' level of engagement, formal evaluation data, ongoing informal communication with students, and the high achievement results of the external testing undertaken by Stork Technical Services. A representative of this company contacted during the evaluation confirmed that Alpha Training delivers excellent welding instruction and that welding instruction in Taranaki is significantly better than in other parts of New Zealand.

## 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**.

Guidance and support provided by Alpha Training is an area of strength. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of learner needs, and a strong culture of pastoral care is evident. The senior tutor emphasised that students are treated as individuals and every attempt is made to support their holistic needs. He also reported that tutors act as role models or "father figures" for many of the students.

The organisation provides additional tuition in mathematics, reading, and writing to assist with improving language, literacy and numeracy skills, and staff believe this additional tuition has improved student achievement. Students can be referred to external agencies if there are support needs beyond those which Alpha Training is able to provide, although this is seldom required.

Students interviewed spoke highly of the support and encouragement they receive from the teaching staff. Students are comfortable in approaching staff on any matter and said there is always a staff member available to assist them. External stakeholders contacted also spoke about the organisation's high level of support for students. They said the small, family environment works particularly well for the students who come to Alpha Training, which they viewed as a point of difference compared with other providers.

Feedback from stakeholders is consistent with that reported by Alpha Training. Self-assessment in this area is largely through regular communication among the team, review of student progress data, and evaluation surveys undertaken by the students. Self-assessment information has identified that the main barrier to students' success is their lack of motivation. If students attend and engage in the learning, they are able to pass with the tuition and support Alpha Training provides. Improving attendance and engagement is therefore an area of focus. Strategies include provision of free transport, building a strong rapport with students as early as possible, encouraging students to observe and support each other, and encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. The

management team attributes the high level of student achievement to the success of these activities.

## 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 small governance and management team is clearly focussed on supporting educational achievement. The organisation's purpose and direction are driven by a commitment to learners and to the local community. There are well-established stakeholder networks within industry and the Taranaki community. These networks provide staff with a good understanding of the needs of students, the engineering industry, local employers, and other community groups such as the local high school and Police Youth Task Force. Guidance and support is a fundamental aspect of Alpha Training's delivery. An appropriate level of resource is available to ensure these needs can be met.

There is evidence of thoughtful decision-making and planning for business continuity. The examples provided include recent succession planning, adapting to reductions in government funding, and re-assigning of tasks and responsibilities to draw on the individual strengths of the team. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They spoke of a collaborative approach within the team and continual communication about student progress and performance outcomes.

Alpha Training uses self-assessment information to inform business decisions and to improve educational outcomes. For example, the enquiries database identifies the media from which enquiries originate and the regional locations where enrolments come from. This enables more targeted and cost-effective marketing strategies. As previously mentioned, improvements in course and qualification outcomes have been partly attributed to the improvements made to reporting and analysing student progress.

Since the previous EER, self-assessment activities have progressed to the development of a document aligning policies, procedures, action items, and reporting requirements with the key evaluation questions. The management team has recognised that this document has become too cumbersome to maintain and monitor and does not appropriately reflect the size of the organisation. Plans are in place to move to a more streamlined approach based on the principles of Lean Dynamics. The evaluators agree that a simplified system that is appropriate to the size and nature of the organisation will further strengthen self-assessment capability.

## 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: Certificate in Welding (Level 4)

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 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 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>*

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E [eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz)

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)